TELECOLLABORATION AS AN ELF ENVIRONMENT IN THE GLOBAL AGE

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Abstract. The focus of this paper is telecollaboration as a re-mote-learning environment and a way of transcending the distance between two or more groups of learners from different cultures/nations, who use English as a lingua franca (ELF), via computer-mediated-communication (CMC). It is regarded in the light of the qualitative content analysis of numerous theoretical and empirical research, according to which: 1) basic notions concerning ELF and its pedagogical implications, including the issues of culture and identity, are provided; 2) then, telecollaboration in foreign language learning is introduced through a theoretical framework and its general principles; 3) mainstream features of the such virtual educational environment are considered from the global aspect; 4) moreover, the way telecollaboration could be applied for practising the use of ELF is presented, and, finally, 5) its benefits for becoming a competent ELF user are emphasized, as well as possible limitations and suggestions for further researches. Accordingly, the main point of this brief overview is twofold: 1) to promote the possibilities of telecollaboration as a contemporary educational way of virtual information exchange within the ELF paradigm and English language teaching (ELT) field in general, and, 2) to arouse the interest of other researchers in keeping the pace with the similar future educational trends.

Introduction

Nowadays the world has become a global community where there are no longer barriers or obstacles to transcend the physical distance among different nations. Numerous theoreticians and practitioners have been interested in finding ways of establishing transnational contact within the framework of various fields. Thus, education and particularly teaching and learning the English language has been through a number of modified models and approaches that have been adjusted to the current social changes, job market requirements, international communication and collaboration. Due to the fact that 21st-century citizens find computers, mobile phones and the Internet indispensable, for most of them, information communication technologies (ICT) are an inseparable segment of their everyday life. Consequently, computer-mediated communication (CMC) via a plethora of online networks, platforms and virtual environments is also a part of their personal and professional needs. It makes users digitally literate citizens of the world who are enabled to mutually internationalize and participate in all remote social activities.

Apart from the internet, ICT and CMC, as essential tools for online information exchange in general, English language competence is also necessary for successful meaningful communication all over the globe. In other words, it is omnipresent in every sphere of life and needed for mutual understanding, virtual information exchange and making contact with foreigners. They may belong to the Inner Circle (native speakers of English), Outer Circle (speakers of English as a second language), or to the Expanding Circle (speakers who speak English as a foreign language) according to their use of English (Kachru, 1988). However, the non-native speakers outnumber the native English speakers. Considering some estimates, there are approximately 80% of non-native speakers of English all over the world, which makes English a global lingua franca (Seidlhofer, 2001; Simpson et al., 2013). Thus, this language has spread across educational contexts and become a part of almost all school curricula worldwide.

Bearing in mind all previously mentioned facts, alongside the contemporary concepts of education and language learning and teaching in the 21st century, educationalists have recently designed a model (Furstenberg et al., 2001; O'Rourke, 2005; O'Dowd, 2011; Guarda, 2013; Helm, 2015; Godwin-Jones, 2019) that would meet these requirements. They started implementing telecollaboration as a way of transcending geographical boundaries in education. Some of the reasons were establishing contact among different nations and cultures and developing intercultural awareness (Baker, 2012). It also provided authentic activities for communication among non-native speakers of English. Lastly, it enabled overcoming physical distance and becoming a part of the virtual world exchange community, where it is easier to nurture feelings of proximity and mutual support (Guarda, 2013).

For these reasons, the subject of this paper is a thorough examination of telecollaboration and its possibilities for ELF use in the global age. Qualitative content analysis is conducted on the basis of numerous theoretical and empirical research concerning the topic, in the following way: 1) texts from various articles are considered; 2) important issues that are significant for the research questions are introduced and analysed; 3) key concepts of the paper are determined and their relationships are explored, and, finally, 4) conclusions are made and certain interpretations are provided. Correspondingly, this study represents a brief overview of integrating the already mentioned key issues, where the following goals were achieved: 1) the basic notions concerning ELF and its pedagogical implications, including culture and identity, were provided; 2) theoretical framework and general principles of telecollaboration were introduced; 3) mainstream features of this remote-language learning environment were considered from the global point of view; 4) afterwards, the way telecollaboration could be applied in ELF communication was presented, and 5) finally, within the concluding remarks, benefits for becoming a competent ELF user in the virtual global environment as well as certain limitations of this approach and suggestions for further researches were offered.

English as a Lingua Franca – General Characteristics

The global spread of English initiated with the migrations to North America, expanding the Inner Circle (Kachru, 1988) and the colonization of Asia and Africa, resulted in the development of a number of English as a second language, or Outer Circle contexts (Jenkins, 2015; Kachru, 1988). The expansion of British colonial power and the economic power of the United States in the second part of the 20th century resulted in the increased use and importance of English worldwide. English's global importance led to a larger number of English learners and the augmentation of the Expanding Circle (Crystal, 2003;

Kachru, 1988). Nowadays, the majority of English speakers are non-native and most of the communication in English is realized between non-native speakers (Jenkins, 2015), resulting in the emergence of a phenomenon labelled English as a lingua franca, the first global lingua franca in the history (Seidlhofer, 2001).

ELF generally refers to the communication between non-native speakers of English with all other speakers of English, including native speakers (Jenkins, 2006). In ELF contexts native speakers need to adjust to their non-native interlocutors, implying that the native-speaker norm is not a yardstick against which ELF proficiency is measured, unlike in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) paradigm (Jenkins, 2006). Indeed, ELF views errors as those deviations which cause communication breakdown, and not all the deviations from the native-speaker norm, as in EFL. Jenkins & al. (2011) argue that non-native Englishes are regarded as different within ELF, not deficient, as in the EFL framework. While EFL is grounded in the L1 interference and fossilization theory, ELF is based on the theories of contact language and culture (Jenkins et al., 2011). Another difference between ELF and EFL lies in their perceptions of code-switching, which refers to the non-native speaker using linguistic resources from their L1 (the first language) while speaking English. Although it is regarded as a deficiency in EFL, in ELF it symbolizes the speaker's use of their multilingual resources and their national culture and identity. Finally, while EFL belongs to the Modern Languages paradigm, ELF is a part of the Global Englishes one.

Defining ELF has been a source of debate since its emergence. It is characterized by fluidity and variability, but its systematicity cannot be neglected either. Since it cannot fit into the traditional categories of language variety or community of speech, the researchers tend to regard it as a community of practice (Jenkins et al., 2011; Jenkins, 2012). The delineation of ELF is closely linked to its possible codification. Despite Seidlhofer (2001) considering possible ELF codification, Jenkins (2006; 2012) rightly argues that ELF is a particular means of communication in English. The inherent fluidity and variability of ELF render it difficult to codify, although, as Seidlhofer (2001) advocates, it would be an ultimate aim. To that end, language features that have become regularized in ELF contexts have been described (see below). However, with the diversity of ELF in mind, it has been rightly referred to as accounting for 'the ever-changing negotiated spaces of current language use' (Pennycook, 2009, p. 195, cited in Jenkins et al., 2011) or as emerging in each particular context (Canagarajah, 2007, cited in Jenkins et al., 2011). Thus, the camp against ELF codification due to its inherent characteristic seems to provide more convincing arguments than the one in favour of ELF standardization.

Despite its variability, it can hardly be labelled as a case of 'anything goes', as the ELF critics have characterized it (Jenkins, 2009). The regularities on phonological and lexicogrammar levels are mirrored in the establishment of lingua franca core (LFC) in the field of pronunciation as well as VOICE (the

Vienna–Oxford International Corpus of English) and ELFA (English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings), the corpora of ELF communication (Jenkins, 2009; Jenkins et al., 2011). LFC contains the phonological features that are found to be crucial for intelligibility and which, along with accommodation skills enhance effective communication (Jenkins et al., 2011). VOICE and ELFA corpora identify the intelligible lexicogrammar forms across diverse ELF contexts, from the speakers of various L1 (Seidlhofer, 2001). In the field of pragmatics, the research centres around enabling mutual understanding and avoiding miscommunication, highlighting the value of accommodation strategies (Jenkins et al., 2011). These developments in the description of ELF are far from definitive and researchers have recently paid more attention to the functional value of the ELF linguistic features and the way they contribute to the effectiveness of ELF communication (Jenkins et al., 2011). The research in this field is hence valuable for providing insight into linguistic and cultural aspects of this phenomenon.

ELF and the Issues of Culture and Identity

Non-adherence to Anglophone culture has been a characteristic of both ELF and EFL contexts in recent years. Indeed, there has been a shift away from the target culture in English language teaching, toward the international, global, as well as learners' local cultures, especially within the English as an International Language paradigm. Such a move can easily be noticed in the use of ELT materials worldwide (Shin et al., 2011). However, ELF culture not only departs from the target culture, but is also fluid and dynamic in nature (Baker, 2011). The concept of culture in ELF is so intricate that it certainly transcends the national-level culture. Therefore, there are various unarguable perceptions of culture in ELF. Pennycook (2003) demonstrates the local appropriation of global phenomena and points to the concept of transcultural flow (Pennycook, 2007; cited in Baker, 2011). Baker (2011) argues and evidences the construction of hybrid cultures, not pertaining to either local or global cultures, similar to Kramsch's third place (1993, cited in Baker, 2009). Certain cultural references are not tied to one culture or country, emerging in a particular instance of communication. Due to some global references, ELF interlocutors may feel as belonging to a certain culture, e.g., video game players or anime fans. Thus, the speakers of ELF need to attain not only intercultural competence (Byram, 1997), but also intercultural awareness (Baker, 2012), being conscious of the dynamic nature of culture in an ELF environment.

The issue of identity in ELF is closely related to the cultural aspect. ELF users' identities are characterized as those of multilingual speakers who can successfully communicate using more than one language (Baker, 2009). Besides their first language (L1) and their target language identity, the ELF speakers might also share

a common identity, focused on the same task, i.e., attempting to communicate in a foreign language. Another form of expressing their identity is by exploiting plurilingual resources in ELF communication in code-switching (Jenkins et al., 2011). Therefore, as in the issue of culture, different identities emerge depending on the particular instance of ELF communication. A number of traditional perceptions of concepts such as culture and identity seem to be questioned in ELF settings, another reason why English learners should be aware of it.

ELF – Pedagogical Implications

The manner of ELF implementation in the second language classroom has been widely discussed by researchers. Jenkins (2012) and Dewey (2012) advocate giving a choice to learners regarding the paradigm of English, EFL or ELF, whichever learners wish to be taught, based on their needs. However, this might not be always feasible, especially in contexts when learners are not aware of their future needs. Also, the factors of language policy and high-stakes exams adhering to the native-speaker model need to be considered. Nevertheless, there is a general consensus regarding the need for exposure to ELF interactions in the classroom. As Jenkins (2012) advocates, learners should be introduced to the sociolinguistic reality regarding the spread of English and prepared for the use of the global lingua franca.

ELF research is highly relevant to English teaching in the field of pragmatics, especially in terms of accommodation strategies, which enable learners to avoid potential misunderstandings in communication (Jenkins et al., 2011). These strategies encompass repetition, clarification, self-repair and paraphrasing. EFL users tend to exploit all their linguistic resources to display solidarity with their interlocutors, including the use of code-switching. Such strategies are valuable to all English learners, regardless of the context. Since exposing learners to authentic communication is one of the well-known targets of communicative language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), it seems that ELF communication is likely to be one of the goals in ELT. In the global and more precisely digital era, the opportunities for engaging in such communication are vast. One of such possibilities for participating in ELF interaction is through telecollaboration projects, as discussed in the following paragraphs.

Telecollaboration in Foreign Language Learning – Overview

An umbrella term under which telecollaboration belongs is the virtual exchange (VE) (O'Dowd & O'Rourke, 2019). It does not refer only to the virtual dialogue but it is regarded as an instrument of intercultural correspondence among

culturally diverse groups from different geographical regions who are unable to engage in physical mobility (O'Dowd & O'Rourke, 2019). This is a type of space where learning foreign languages takes place through a collaboration of learners whose native languages are different.

Telecollaboration is also referred to as an online intercultural exchange (OIE) or a particular form of networked language learning developed in the 1990s, when text-based and video-based communication became more advanced than earlier (Chun, 2011). Years ago, telecollaboration was conducted through written and asynchronous communication such as email or discussion forums. Nowadays, it is conducted through both synchronous and asynchronous communication and oral, written, and media-sharing communication among learners (Guth & Helm, 2010; Lamy & Hampel, 2007). An asynchronous environment alongside the synchronous application is necessary because posting information and products by means of a blog enhances the self-publishing of project work. Moreover, it also encourages ownership and responsibility on the part of the participants, who are more likely to be more thoughtful (in content and structure) if they know they are writing for a real audience (Jones, 2003, p. 13). While collaborating, groups of learners not only use video-conferencing platforms (e.g., Skype, Zoom) for making audio-visual contact with each other, but they also use chat rooms, social media, or online platforms (e.g., wiki-blogs) for written communication. In such a way, the purpose of telecollaboration is not only to participate in authentic oral communication and improve speaking and listening skills. Written communication is just as important, thus writing skills are developed too. In order to complete certain tasks, groups of learners upload and find some articles, pictures, etc. according to which they analyse and compare available data, improving their reading skills too.

With this in mind, it can be said that telecollaboration in language learning contexts is an internet-based intercultural exchange between groups of learners of different cultural/national backgrounds (O'Dowd, 2007), with the aim of developing language skills. Apart from this, the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) (Byram, 1997) is another outcome of telecollaboration because it aims to transform language learners into intercultural speakers who possess linguistic skills and intercultural awareness (Baker, 2012; Guth & Helm, 2012). With such abilities, learners become efficient interactive users of the foreign language who can collaborate with people from other cultures/nations. Consequently, they become global citizens who learn how to overcome differences, accept each other's perspectives, and work on joint tasks in order to conduct meaningful communication. The possibility of the exchange of experiences from various parts of the world indicates the significance of the global aspect of telecollaboration, further discussed in the following lines.

Global Perspective of Telecollaboration
in Foreign Language Learning

In the age of advanced information communication technologies and virtual networks-based society, geographical boundaries are no longer an obstacle to any kind of communication. Considering education in general, physical distance should not prohibit instructors and learners from gaining the global collaboration skills needed to be successful in their courses, workplaces, and communities (Ikeda, 2020).

Learning the English language is regarded as quite significant for this modern age as, without it, most instances of global communication cannot be realized. Accordingly, it requires as many real-life opportunities for remote language practice as possible since authentic exposure to the language they learn is necessary for improving contextual use. Therefore, in such cases, telecollaboration through synchronous and asynchronous communication is undeniably a significant opportunity to use VE to foster global conversations on universal issues and to disseminate simulated experiences (Di Gennaro & Villarroel Ojeda, 2021). The outcomes of telecollaboration are team products of learners from different parts of the world. They use knowledge, skills and beliefs to analyse some global problems and understand world cultures and customs, thus developing critical thinking. Taking this into account, Gaudelli (2003, p. 11) defined global education as a curriculum that seeks to prepare learners to live in a progressively interconnected world where the study of human values, institutions, and behaviours is contextually examined through a pedagogical style that promotes critical engagement of complex, diverse information toward a socially meaningful action. This is the main point of modern education that is realized through interaction with others, broadening perspectives from local to global ones, and creating active citizens who are used to interconnectedness and constant change.

Since telecollaboration is based on the common issues for both groups of participants, they need to exchange information, identify the problem, and sometimes even conduct research and find a solution. Hicks (2003, p. 4) supports this educational concept of the 21st century, emphasizing that it must explore not only the nature of a problem but also possible solutions, and provide learners with the tools to effect change. He concluded that not doing so would be an educational crime since the result is to disempower learners rather than empower them to take part in responsible action for change (Hicks, 2003, p. 4). For instance, since 2019, citizens all over the world have been participants and witnesses of global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. These circumstances changed the way teaching and learning were carried out so both teachers and learners were forced to adapt themselves to some virtual information exchange surrounding and develop some new skills. Telecollaboration was

frequently used and its effects were explored by many researchers during the COVID-19 lockdown (Huertas-Abril, 2020; Di Gennaro & Villarroel Ojeda, 2021; Ennis et al., 2021; Toscu, 2021; Casañ Pitarch et al., 2022). One of them is Huertas-Abril (2020), who considered telecollaboration in emergency remote language learning and teaching. She emphasized the development of numerous competences and skills, as well as motivating and engaging learners in learning the language through computer-assisted language learning (CALL) as its benefits. Moreover, she highlighted that the teachers should be professionally trained for such a learning model and that it should become an integral part of everyday curricula. Another research pointed out the use of a project-based approach through telecollaborative learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Casañ Pitarch et al., 2022). The results showed increased communicative competence (see also Toscu, 2021) in international online environments, the development of intercultural and digital skills (see also Di Gennaro & Villarroel Ojeda, 2021) and positive effects of telecollaborative project work on foreign language learning. Besides these global outcomes of telecollaboration that were explored, there is also a study by Ennis et al. (2021), where the authors explored the possibilities for giving and receiving peer feedback and meta-awareness of how language is used in the real world, in their case how English as a lingua franca is used, and intercultural communicative competence in general.

     With this global view of education and language learning in mind, it is obvious that teaching and learning need to be flexible and regularly adjusted to all social reforms. Thus, appropriate approaches, methods and curricula should make learners critically enabled citizens who: 1) are ready to connect and collaborate with others, 2) appreciate themselves but different values as well, and 3) are able to consider certain issues in simulated situations they might experience one day in real-life circumstances.

Telecollaboration in Foreign Language Learning: Theoretical Framework and General Principles

After defining and determining the role of telecollaboration for language learning within the global concept, it will also be considered in regard to the: 1) communicative approach; 2) experiential learning; 3) interactionist approach; 4) task-based language learning; 5) project-based learning; 6) intercultural learning; 7) learner autonomy; 8) 21st-century skills (such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, information literacy, media literacy, technology literacy, leadership, initiative, productivity, social skills (Stauffer, 2022)); and 9) ELF communication.

     Firstly, telecollaboration focuses on using the language in authentic communicative situations, gaining experience through learning by doing, negotiating

meaning and form with a meaningful partner (Block, 2003). Learners are required to deal with certain global issues (e.g., climate change, gender equality, hunger, economic inequality, etc.) with their partners from a different country while using the language they learn. Thus, learners' goal is to establish and maintain effective communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This is possible by means of finding adequate resources in that language, analysing them, considering them, discussing with partners, presenting the task solution in that language, etc. While performing all these activities and communicating with each other, they are actually practising the language skills and systems, improving fluency as well as accuracy, in line with the tenets of the communicative approach (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

This is a contextual language use in meaningful and purposeful situations and tasks where learners gain experience in virtual communicative activities with non-native speakers of that language. Due to this experiential learning and participation in such activities, learners collaborate and establish mutual interaction. In such interaction, they often need to negotiate for meaning so the interactionist practice is also included, based on comprehensible input and output (Chun, 2016).

Learners share their information, analyse and compare them so that they could design and present the product (e.g., a video, a newly co-constructed webpage, leaflets, posters, etc.) based on their common decisions. These actions are not possible without setting the task that needs to be completed, indicating that the methodological approach adopted in telecollaboration is task-based language learning (Long, 2016; Mueller-Hartmann, 2007).

The whole process is organized around a collection of sequenced tasks, which are actually possible real-life problems that learners consider using the language they learn. In other words, completing a series of tasks in order to obtain the final product is also typical of a project-based learning approach. Thus, the telecollaboration process could be regarded as a project itself (Guth & Helm, 2012), because it is focused on group work, tasks, information exchange, analysis, solving the problem, critical thinking and presenting the conclusions in the form of a product.

Considering the fact that it is most frequently conducted between two groups of learners of different nations/cultures, intercultural communicative competence and intercultural awareness are developed too (Baker, 2012; Belz, 2002; Byram, 1997; Helm, 2009). Namely, it promotes intercultural learning, avoiding differences and enhancing tolerance. They are considered to be extremely important educational concepts of the 21st century, promoting the view of the world as a global community of numerous nations and cultures.

Furthermore, telecollaboration is only organized and arranged by teachers, while the language learning process is conducted by learners themselves because they are the main participants of the virtual information exchange. In such

circumstances, learner autonomy is nourished (Benson, 2006) since learners become responsible for their own decisions, activities, and most importantly, for their own learning.

It needs to be noted that telecollaboration facilitates the development of the 21st-century skills that learners need in a highly globalised and technology driven world (Gutiérrez, 2020). Namely, it is based on collaboration and communication between groups of learners from different countries. They are faced with some global issues that need solving, so different kinds of information resources are considered, analysed and compared. As a result of these activities, critical thinking is developed and a sequence of tasks is completed, so final solutions are presented in certain forms of products based on learners' creativity. All these activities are not possible without ICT and CMC, thus developing technology, media and digital literacy as well. Learners are responsible for their roles in teams, some of them are team leaders who take the initiative for completing certain steps of the tasks. Telecollaboration itself implies establishing social relations among learners so the last of the 21st-century skills, social ones, are also promoted.

Another framework through which telecollaboration needs to be examined is the way it promotes using English as a lingua franca since it reflects the real use of English in today's world. Through telecollaboration learners participate in such authentic ELF communication through a series of different tasks, as discussed above. Thus, learners are able to experience the fluidity of ELF communication in which each new type of task entails new challenges to the effectiveness of communication. It might occur that certain types of language exchange or certain topics require different accommodation strategies, especially if the topics belong to the learners' L1 culture. On the other hand, different topics might be quite easy to discuss if they are globally well-known. Thus, these exchanges raise learners' intercultural competence since they are likely to become conscious of the multifaceted concept of culture in ELF. Despite coming from different L1 cultures, learners might feel that in one instance they share the same culture as their interlocutor if the cultural reference is a global one. Thus, learners should be prepared to focus on the emergent cultural resources instead of dwelling on generalizations and stereotypes (Baker, 2012).

Telecollaboration has been theoretically considered here only from several previously discussed frameworks, the number of which is not definite. We tried to briefly delineate some studies that focus on these already known educational concepts and trends, aiming to point at its appropriateness and necessity for the language learning of the 21st-century generations. The next chapter provides insight into the procedure of telecollaboration in foreign language learning with a practical example where learners used English as a lingua franca.

An Example of Telecollaboration
in Using English as a Lingua Franca

It has already been stated that task-based language learning represents one of the main methodological approaches of telecollaboration in language learning due to the fact that this process is conducted through task completion. According to O'Dowd and Ware (2009), there are three main categories of tasks commonly used in telecollaboration, as follows: 1) information exchange; 2) comparison and analysis; and 3) collaboration and product creation. Each of these categories consists of: 1) pre-task activities; 2) task activities; and 3) post-task activities. To illustrate learners' roles and actions in these tasks, one specific example will be presented. It refers to the telecollaboration between learners from Italy and Germany who used English as a lingua franca. This study was conducted by Guth and Helm (2012, pp. 44–47). Some of the main characteristics concerning the preparation and realization of this telecollaboration project are presented here.

Firstly, two educational institutions, one from Germany and the other one from Italy, agreed to arrange to learn and practise the use of ELF within the virtual environment. Weekly discussions (i.e., synchronous communication) between their groups of learners were organized in dyads or small groups using Skype over a period of six weeks. A wiki was used as a platform to carry out an asynchronous discussion, organize project groupings, set out timetables and tasks, publish learner productions, and post recordings of Skype sessions. After agreeing on the plan, three stages of telecollaboration were conducted.

The first stage, information exchange, was organized for familiarizing learners with one another and with the online environment that will serve as the virtual space for communication. In this case, learners interviewed each other using Skype, but before that they created their personal wiki page where they introduced themselves, read each other's introductions and later became friends on the social networks. They also prepared questions for interviewing via Skype. Finally, they shared their initial impressions in the classroom and then reflected on their language learning during this first stage in their diaries on the wiki.

In the second stage, learners were involved in a series of analysis and comparison tasks for which they had to investigate online news, cultural artefacts, conduct surveys using questionnaires and thus gather the necessary data. The task was comparing media coverage of a current news event, at that moment a major global issue, a referendum in Switzerland about the building of minarets. After gathering data, learners had to summarize them, consider them critically, upload their findings to the wiki and prepare for the debate concerning this topic using Skype.

The last stage refers to the final task, the collaborative development of a digital collage of images that could represent what it means to be a global citizen

and an intercultural communicator, considering the previously mentioned topic. Firstly, they were involved in a series of readings on global citizenship and intercultural communication followed by questions for reflection. Secondly, they had to look for images they wanted to include in the collage and upload them to the wiki. Learners co-constructed the collage during the Skype session deciding which images to include in it, where to place them, etc. Lastly, they had to reflect on the collaborative process and how their group managed or did not manage to work together in their diaries.

It is important to highlight that this example of telecollaboration in the context of using English as a lingua franca differs from the context of using English as a foreign language in the following ways: 1) first of all, these learners are non-native speakers of English, which, among others, can be regarded as a characteristic of this ELF telecollaboration model, however we should bear in mind that ELF communication, beside non-native speakers, includes native speakers as well (Jenkins et al., 2011); 2) secondly, ELF speakers do not have native speakers as language models, whose language they have to imitate, which is typical for EFL environment (Jenkins, 2006); 3) thirdly, standard native speakers' pronunciation is not the final goal for ELF speakers, whereas it is one of the ultimate goals of EFL speakers (Jenkins, 2006), because as far as EFL learning is concerned, the foreign accent is not accepted; 4) furthermore, there is a wide variety of accents in ELF communication (in this example German and Italian speakers used English), thus speakers are required to show only clear pronunciation (Zoghbor, 2018); 5) code-switching is regarded as something bad for EFL users, while it is acceptable for ELF speakers (Seidlhofer, 2001); 6) since there is no immediate teacher's corrective feedback during ELF communication, fluency is more emphasized than accuracy (Zhiming, 2003), unlike the EFL context where learners would be collaborating with native speakers who are regarded to be the experts of English language, hence non-native speakers would feel anxious about making possible language mistakes (Guarda, 2013); 7) the issue that the ELF speakers consider within the above example is global (in this case, it was comparing media coverage of a current news event, the referendum in Switzerland about the building of minarets), whereas the issues within the EFL context would mainly refer to the target culture of the native speakers of English (e.g. British or American) (Smith, 2015), and 8) finally, the general focus of ELF telecollaborative communication is on intelligibility (Jenkins, 2006) and the ability to communicate the message in international contexts rather than on the native speakers' standard model (Jenkins et al., 2011; Zoghbor, 2018), and that was the case in the above example where ELF learners participated in the debate and made together their digital collage of images.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, this paper has attempted to explore the concept of telecollaboration as an ELF environment through various aspects, pointing out the benefits of using telecollaboration and providing an example of its successful use.

It needs to be highlighted that telecollaboration entails learners engaging in real, authentic, intercultural communication in English. Since it is an interaction between non-native speakers, it can also be typified as an instance of ELF communication, which seems to prevail in the use of English nowadays. Thus, learners are required to act as multilingual speakers, accommodating to their interlocutors and attaining intercultural awareness. From a personal aspect, learners are able to gain insight into different cultures and aspects of life in the other country. Hence, they might even establish a personal relationship with foreign learners (Godwin-Jones, 2003). Since telecollaboration is an instance of CMC, learners can improve their digital literacy skills as well as to master working in virtual teams. Through this collaborative task-based work, participants in telecollaboration may perfect their social skills as well as their critical thinking skills. Finally, learners' motivation for English learning could be enhanced by participating in these interactions. On the organizational level, institutions can include these international partnerships in their educational programs and thus attract foreign learners (Di Gennaro & Villarroel Ojeda, 2021).

However, this concept is not without its limitations and potential challenges. Firstly, since it relies on the use of technology, technology-related anxiety can occur in cases where learners are not proficient in using the tools, which might have a demotivating effect on learners. Another reason for the lack of motivation might be the task itself or a much more competent interlocutor (Helm, 2015). In all these cases, thorough preparation and organization are required by the teachers in charge. Thus, the learners should be well versed in using the tools required for their tasks and paired with the learner of similar language proficiency. Another important issue is the level of competence needed to undertake such a project since the lower-level learners might struggle with the tasks and eventually abandon completing them. An affordance of telecollaboration, using both synchronous and asynchronous channels of communication also demand caution. It might happen that learners overuse written medium because it provides them with more time to reflect on their output, but does not lead to much learning. On the other hand, only communicating synchronously might impose cognitive demands on the speakers (Helm, 2015). Thus, it is crucial to monitor the type of communication used by the learners, enabling them to exploit all the affordances of CMC.

On the organizational level, adjusting different timetables, across different time zones even, might be a laborious task for teachers. Other time-consuming activities entail designing the tasks, structuring them and planning, which is

why Helm (2015) opens the possibility of using of pre-packaged telecollaboration projects. Another issue is the assessment of such collaborative tasks, whether and in which way learners are to be assessed (Helm, 2015). Besides the possibility of avoiding assessment, learners might be evaluated according to their final project or teachers might supervise parts of learners' exchanges in order to evaluate their performance. The challenge most frequently stated by the researchers is the difficulty in reaching deeper levels of interaction (Helm, 2015). The solution to this issue may lie in the thorough preparation of the pre-task activities and particularly the 'getting to know' stage. In addition, the nature of the tasks might foster deeper communication exchanges. Therefore, the teachers need to research the topics the learners are interested in, identifying the points in common.

As Helm (2015) rightly argues, a type of a ready-made project might be a good starting point for the practitioners new to the concept of telecollaboration. It might lead to the augmentation of contacts worldwide and more learners engaging in authentic ELF communication. The educational level of learners is another area worth investigating in the future. Since the projects studied so far mostly relate to higher education contexts, perhaps a secondary education level might also prove to be a fertile ground for telecollaboration programs. Needless to say, high school learners are mostly digital natives (Prensky, 2001) and such medium of communication is the one they are quite familiar with. Also, they often lack motivation for learning English and this real use of English, beyond the boundaries of the classroom, might have a motivating effect. Transcending boundaries, spatial or physical as well as cultural and connecting to various ELF speakers seems to be the valuable goal of telecollaboration and it is hoped that it will be the focus of both academic studies and language practice in the future.

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Телеколаборација као ЕЛФ окружење у глобалном добу

Р е з и м е

Рад се бави телеколаборацијом као окружењем за учење на даљину и начином превазилажења физичке дистанце између две или више група ученика који припадају различитим културама или нацијама, а који користе енглески језик као *lingua franca* (ЕЛФ – *English as a lingua franca*), путем компјутерски посредоване комуникације. Последњих неколико година овај феномен постаје све популарнији, будући да живимо у глобалном друштву XXI века, где је свакодневица незамислива без информационо-комуникационих технологија и знања енглеског језика. Вежбањем примене енглеског као *lingua franca* помоћу телеколаборације не долази само до побољшања језичких вештина већ и до развијања интеркултуралне компетенције и интеркултуралне свести

ученика, као важних обележја савременог образовања. Процес усавршавања енглеског језика на овај начин заснован је на више приступа и врста учења, а у оквиру рада сагледан је у односу на: 1) комуникативни приступ; 2) интеракционистички приступ; 3) учењу заснованом на искуству; 4) учењу језика заснованом на задатку; 5) приступу заснованом на изради пројеката; 6) интеркултурално учење; 7) аутономију ученика; 8) вештине учења за XXI век; 9) ЕЛФ комуникацију.

На основу наведених чињеница, одлучено је да се за потребе рада спроведе квалитативна анализа садржаја бројних теоријских и емпиријских истраживања, на основу којих: 1) најпре се стиче увид у основне карактеристике енглеског језика као *lingua franca* и његове педагошке импликације, укључујући културу и идентитет; 2) потом су представљени теоријски оквир и општи принципи телеколаборације у оквиру учења страних језика; 3) размотрена су и основна обележја оваквог виртуелног окружења са глобалног аспекта; 4) приказан је начин на који се телеколаборација може применити за вежбање употребе енглеског језика као *lingua franca*; 5) издвојене су њене предности и недостаци, као и предлози за будућа истраживања. Сходно томе, главна сврха сажетог прегледа кључних појмова рада је двострука. Пре свега, да промовише могућности телеколаборације као савременог образовног начина виртуелне размене информација у оквиру парадигме енглеског језика као *lingua franca*, и наставе енглеског језика уопште, и да пробуди интересовање других истраживача за праћење актуелних образовних трендова.

Кључне речи: телеколаборација; енглески језик као *lingua franca*; интеркултурална компетенција; интеркултурална свест; учење језика; глобално доба.