

Achieving Communication through Multi-modal Language Exchange

Nathaniel Carney (ncarney@kwansei.ac.jp)
Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan

Abstract

The continued development of computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools offers foreign language instructors numerous ways of helping language learners connect and communicate with internationally-situated peers who use their target language daily. This paper describes a language exchange project between English language learners at a Japanese university and Japanese language learners at a United States community college. Through the use of blogs, wikis, Skype text, voice, and video chat and the exchange of homemade DVDs movies, the authors found that learners communicated in qualitatively different ways and that each manner of CMC offered a valuable type of communication. Using the communication goal of the National Standards of Foreign Language Education of the United States as a measure, the authors found evidence of distinct communicative styles based on each separate CMC mode.

Introduction

As computer-mediated communication (CMC) technologies continue to advance, more and more tools for international language exchange become available to teachers and language learners across the world. In the language learning literature, projects involving such computer-mediated communicative means to connect language classes in different parts of the world have been referred to as telecollaboration (Belz, 2003). Belz's own definition reflects the depth and breadth available to telecollaborators:

Telecollaboration involves the application of global computer networks to foreign (and second) language learning and teaching in institutionalized settings. In telecollaborative partnerships, internationally-dispersed learners in parallel language classes use Internet communication tools such as e-mail, synchronous chat, threaded discussion, and MOOs (as well as other forms of electronically mediated communication), in order to support social interaction, dialogue, debate, and intercultural exchange. (Belz, 2003, p. 2)

Since Belz's definition was published, various other forms of electronically mediated communications have become viable means of telecollaboration. These include synchronous voice and video chat, blogs, wikis, and online video publishing sites. Despite the increasing availability and variety of new technologies for CMC, within the last five years many telecollaborative projects tend to use only one technology such as email (e.g., Itakura 2004; Torii-Williams, 2004; Pais Marden, 2007) and bulletin boards-type

asynchronous forums (e.g. Basharina, 2007; Markey, 2007; Ware, 2005) though as OfDowd and Eberbach (2004) note the use of different communication tools (and combinations of them) can offer both teachers and learners various advantages. Indeed, in studying a number of different CMC tools used by ESL students in a controlled study, Smith, Alvarez-Torres, and Zhao (2003) found significant differences in the the quality of interaction purveyed by different CMC tools (see also Levy & Stockwell, 2006, p. 95-109, for an excellent discussion on different modes of CMC). While communication with international peers by no means always leads smoothly to positive, useful communication (Stockwell, 2004; OfDowd & Ritter, 2006; Ware, 2005), such communication via CMC tools in a classroom setting does offer foreign language learners a teacher-supported opportunity to communicate with native and expert speakers of their target language, an experience which many of them never have.

This paper describes the use of a variety of CMC tools in a collaborative language exchange project between a university English-as-a- Foreign-Language class in Japan and a university Japanese language class in the United States. The project involved exchanges through three different computer-mediated communication technologies: a blog, a wiki, and Skype in addition to the exchange of homemade student-produced DVD quality movies introducing the classes of respective universities and communities. The project goal was to improve students' communicative language abilities and increase opportunities for use of the target language through specific instructor-designed communicative tasks mediated through CMC. As one of the telecollaborating instructors was situated in the United States, communicative goals were measured via the United States' National Standards of Foreign Language Education goal of communication, one of the g5Csh proposed by the National Standards for Language Education of the United States. Through the use of multiple technologies, data shows how students communicated in qualitatively varied ways that satisfy goals in all areas of communication as defined by the National Standards.

National Standards for Foreign Language Education of the United States: Communication

The National Standards for Foreign Language Education of the United States (2006) offer five goal areas in language learning, known as the 5Cs: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. Each goal area prescribes two or three gcontent standardsh. The content standards for Communication are written below in Table 1.

Table 1:

Communication content standards: National Standards for Foreign Language Education of the United States (2006)

Standard Interpersonal	1.1:	Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.
Standard Interpretive	1.2:	Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.
Standard Presentational	1.3:	Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

The National Standards for Foreign Language Education emphasize the goal area of communication, recognizing that communication is at the heart of second language study (National Standards, 2006, p.31). The document recognizes that to communicate effectively requires multiple skills and knowledge which involve not only an awareness of the inherent linguistic and cultural intricacies and anomalies of the language but overall communicative competence as well. Thus, communication is categorized into three modes: Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational. The interpersonal mode is defined as direct oral and written communication between individuals, which is typically characterized by active negotiation of meaning (National Standards, 2006, p. 36). As opposed to the interpersonal mode, which directly involves more than one participant of communication, the Interpretive and Presentational modes, representing receptive and productive communication respectively, are focused on the language learners' gone-way communication. This approach of communication is reflected in the Communication content standards 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 respectively, as written in Table 1 above (see also Phillips, 2008 for further elaboration).

Methodology

Context and Participants

All English class participants were second-year chemistry majors at a large private university in Japan, where English is a required foreign language course and students attend three distinct hours and a half English classes (communication, writing, reading) per week over a 14-week semester. All English class participants were native Japanese speakers and were 19-21 years old. 22 English class participants were involved in all exchange project activities and two additional participants were involved in some of the activities.

Japanese class participants were enrolled in a Japanese advanced conversation at a state-funded community college in the U.S. The class focused on students' acquiring Japanese cultural awareness and communication skills. This particular class, which requires completion or concurrent enrollment of Japanese 3 (third semester of elementary Japanese), took place once a week for three hours over a 16-week semester. All 6 students enrolled in the class participated in all of the exchange activities, except for one student who had to drop the class in the last month of the semester to relocate. The ages and the first languages of the students vary greatly: two out of six were 18-year-old high school

students who were enrolled in a college course concurrently with their high school education; three of them were 20-year-old full-time students; one of them was a 68-year-old retired man. In terms of language background, one of them was a bilingual speaker of Japanese and English (a Japanese heritage language learner), one of them was a Chinese native speaker and expert English speaker, and the four other students were monolingual native English speakers. In addition to the variety of students' backgrounds, the students' Japanese proficiency levels were ranging from the novice-low level in both literacy and oral abilities, intermediate level in literacy skills but a novice in grammar knowledge and oral abilities, and the advanced level in oral abilities but the intermediate level in literacy skills.

Procedure

The Japanese English exchange project took place over seven weeks. The exchange involved four different projects: a blog exchange, Skype meetings, a homemade DVD exchange, and a wiki picture project. As the schedules and activities for the Japanese class and the English class differed slightly, each will be explained here separately.

English Class

For the English class in Japan, the exchange project took place over seven weeks, starting the first week of the term. While blog posts, wiki posts, and some of the DVD filming were assigned as homework, generally all exchange work occurred during class meetings. Classrooms are equipped with laptops for every student arranged on pentagonal tables. Skype is installed on all student computers and all computers have an available USB webcam. Because the Japanese class was already in session for 9 weeks when the English class in Japan began, the very first English class meeting was used to introduce the partners, set up blogs, and introduce the overall project and goals while also having students complete a pre-project questionnaire.

For the blog exchange, six of the seven-week exchange English class participants posted L2 blog entries of 150 words or more on topics mirroring those already written by their Japanese class counterparts before the exchange had begun. The six topics included writing a self-introduction, talking about high school experiences, introducing their family and hometown, their daily life, their university, and finally writing about a topic of their choice. Also as part of the blog exchange, six out of the seven weeks English class participants commented on their Japanese class partners' blog entries. All comments were done in participants' L1s (Japanese).

For the DVD project, the English class used English class time over four weeks (roughly 6 hours) to prepare and film the video. Participants worked in groups of 4-5 people. Each group introduced one of five aspects of the students' university or community: the university campus, the cafeteria, the bookstore, and the science department building, and local town (which included a trip to a fast-food sushi restaurant and a participant's apartment). The students had to prepare and memorize a script that had been checked by the instructor, then practice the script in front of the instructor, thus allowing students to talk in front of the camera without paper and with comprehensible speech.

The Skype meetings occurred twice during the 7 weeks, once in Japanese, and once in English. The meetings lasted between 30-40 minutes, the first 10 minutes of which was text chat and the last 20-30 minutes of which was voice or video chat. In both Skype meetings, four English class students were paired with one of the Japanese class students. For the English Skype session, English class participants were asked to prepare 5 questions for their partners and take notes on their partners' answers. Beyond this, no topic for discussion was predetermined for the English Skype session. For the Japanese Skype session, no preparations were required for English class participants.

A final activity was the photo project. For the photo project, participants posted pictures on a wiki corresponding to 10 different topic categories selected by the teachers. The categories included supermarkets, convenience stores, vending machines, public/private bathrooms, public objects, freeway systems, public transportation, lunch diary, what \$5/500 yen can buy, and what \$1/100 yen can buy. English class students each had to post 2 pictures on a category of their choice and then write a 25-50 word explanation under the picture in their L2. The photo project was designed as an opportunity for intercultural comparison and collaboration through the creation of wiki pages that would facilitate reflective observations of each group's culture and that of their partners as well as visually experiencing the lives of those using their target languages.

Japanese Class

The Japanese class in the U.S. conducted the projects over sixteen weeks, though the overlap with the Japanese class only involved the final seven weeks of the term. Since the classroom was not equipped with computers, all the exchange activities that required the use of computers were carried out as homework assignments rather than in-class activities, including the Skype meeting and the blog comments. Since the Japanese class started 9 weeks earlier than the English class in Japan, for the first 9 weeks that the English class was not in session, the Japanese class started off creating and posting individual blog entries for the blog exchange and shooting some footage for the DVD exchange.

For the blog exchange, the students were directed to post blog entries in Japanese as weekly homework assignments, which consisted of 10 full sentences or more on topics that were assigned by the instructor. The thirteen topics, which were deliberately designed to correspond to the conversational topics covered as part of the L2 classroom instruction, were intended to serve as a practical writing exercise of what was orally discussed in the classroom through offering a portrait of each student's own life. The fourteen topics included writing a self-introduction, introducing their families and school, comparing the American and Japanese education systems, talking about their hobbies, their best memories of school life, their best trips, sharing a recipe of their favorite American food, designing a trip itinerary proposal for their Japanese partners as well as their plans for an ideal trip to Japan, explaining one of the American national holidays, writing a thank you letter for Mother's day, writing about their plans for summer vacation, and finally a topic of their choice. Seven of the thirteen total blog entries had been posted before the English class in Japan started. For the seven overlapping weeks when both classes coincided, the Japanese class participants posted comments in English on the first four English class blog entries.

The DVD exchange project was carried out over 8 weeks as a classroom activity as well as a weekly homework assignment. Topics to be included were roughly sketched out by the instructor and presented to the students who then further developed each topic into several segments of original content. Each student worked individually as well with a partner for different segments of the footage and, therefore, every student engaged themselves at least once in all tasks including scriptwriting, speaking in front of the camera, and operating the camera. The segments consisted of an oral self-introduction, landmarks of the school campus, interviews of their friends and family members as to their impressions about Japan and Japanese people, and tours of their respective homes. The first two topics were done in their target language, Japanese and, therefore, most of the footage was scripted and rehearsed by the students prior to filming, although some participants spoke without any preparation. The last two topics were done in English with the intent that English class partners would be able to practice their listening skills through this DVD exchange project.

Skype session details are as described above in the English class section. However, in the Japanese class case, participants Skyped from their home computers (i.e., from their homes) since computers were unavailable for the Japanese class. Practically speaking this meant their teacher was not able to monitor their conversations and students had different equipment available to them (three did not have webcams). For the Skype meeting in Japanese, Japanese class students were instructed to complete a task sheet to obtain appropriate responses according to its four predetermined topics. Students submitted the sheet after in the class following the Skype meeting.

The wiki photo project details are as described above in the English class section. However, in the Japanese class case, students were each directed to post five pictures taken personally that were addressing two different topics of their choice and to write at least 5 full sentences in Japanese to describe each picture.

A final project for the Japanese class was a survey project (the English class students did not do the survey project). The survey project consisted of questionnaires covering topics of each student's choice that were suitable for a cultural comparison between Japan and the U.S., in which the same five questions were posed to ten American people and ten Japanese people. Results of the questionnaires were used to analyze differences and similarities between the two bodies of subjects, write a presentation script of the analysis, and finally present the results and the analysis in class. The Japanese class enlisted the English class's participation by posting their questionnaires as blog entries and requesting that the English class post their responses as comments. Each student then solicited responses from ten different American people to whom they had easy access, either orally or via e-mails. The chosen topics included the use of public transportation, music, anime and manga, video games, and attitudes towards interracial culture and community.

Data

Project data from the English class included pre and post-project questionnaires, written participant reflections before, during and after the project, transcripts of Skype text chats, DVD videos, and copies of all blog entries, comments, and wiki writing. Pre and post-project questionnaires consisted of yes/no questions, multiple response questions, and

Likert Scale questions aimed at revealing participants' experience pre and post-project. Written participant reflections, only completed by English class participants, were submitted three times during the exchange: during the first week, after the English Skype meeting (fourth week), and at the end of the project. Skype voice and video chats were not recorded as the instructors on both sides did not have the means available at the time to record them. However, as the English class participants Skyped during class time, the instructor took field notes while text chatting with the Japanese class instructor during that time.

Results and Discussion

The discussion of results from this study is organized via the three content standards for communication of the National Standards of Education in their respective order.

Content Standard 1.1: Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

The exchange project afforded interactive communication under Standard 1.1 through two Skype meetings, one in Japanese and one in English. The Skype meetings consisted of text chat, voice chat, and video chat (the video was only available to half of the participants). For some of the participants, this was their first opportunity to speak with a native English speaker (or foreign expert speaker) besides their language teacher. Participants on both sides were asked to prepare questions for the Skype exchange in their second language. Questions included asking simple questions such as How is the weather there to asking about more personal questions related to information that had been exchanged through the blog writings, such as Is your sister pretty? The communication during the Skype exchange would be best characterized by the Standard 1.1 of the Communication C, as students exchanged basic information and feelings during their conversations. An excerpt from one Skype conversation (text chat) is as follows:

[14:26:23] Ryo: What food do you like?
 [14:27:11] George: My favorite type of foods are like submarine sandwiches. DO you know what those are?
 [14:27:20] Ryo: (h) (h) (h) Thank you (h) (h) (h)
 [14:28:07] George: What are your guys favorite types of food?
 [14:28:09] Sho: We donft knowc
 [14:29:03] George: A submarine sandwich is a long sandwich.
 [14:29:22] Ryo: I like Susi!!!
 [14:29:29] Sho: oh, I want to see it!!
 [14:29:39] Shunsuke: What subject do you like? and why?
 [14:30:07] George: Here is a picture of that kind of sandwich.
<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/2/28/QuiznosSub.jpg/250px-QuiznosSub.jpg>
 [14:30:36] Sho: Thank you!!
 [14:31:07] Takuma: Oh!!! It looks delicious.

While the above text chat offers some idea of topic and interaction in a synchronous environment, text chat is quite different from voice and video chat. For example, the overlapping threads of conversation seen above and common in text chat (Herring, 1999) were not present in the voice and video chat. In the voice and video chat, turn-taking was more organized. On the one hand, there was less communicative production by students. On the other hand, the voice and video chat achieved a different quality of communication not afforded in the text chat. For example, students on both sides relied on body language for communication during the Skype chat. In one group of four on the English learner's side, a student in the group had to pass the headphones to the next student. During this time, they put their hands up vertically, palms facing the webcam to signal to their video chat partner in America to wait because they were passing the headphones. Another group exchanged the thumbs-up sign at one point to signal agreement. Smiles were common during the Skype exchange, though noticeably much more so during audio and video chat than during text chat (these conclusions are drawn from some video footage taken of English language learners during the chat as well as the author's field notes taken during the exchange).

The variety of topics was limited due to the relatively short time of the Skype meetings (about 45 minutes), the fact that there were only two total meetings, and the number of participants trying to speak. Also, unfortunately, the researchers could not directly record the voice and video chats. Nevertheless, the Skype activity proved to be a breakthrough for both instructors overseeing the project as it enabled learner-directed conversations with a variety of expert or native language peers conversing in real-time. In the short text chat excerpt above, there is clear evidence that learners are meeting goals of the content standard 1:1 as they engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions. This is not to suggest that Skype (or some other synchronous chatting medium) by itself will ensure students' communicating in productive ways, but certainly, the medium is offering a useful platform in which students can achieve these goals while interacting with international peers.

As an addendum, it is finally worth noting that English class student reflections almost invariably rated the Skype exchange as their favorite component of the seven-week exchange project. The author's observations during the Skype meetings concurred with this rating. Why was this task so interesting for students? Was it the type of communication afforded, was it the newness of the technology, or was it the task design? More research into this form of communication might reveal why it was especially motivating for students.

Content Standard 1.2: Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

The blog exchange was the foundation for communication in the exchange project and it offered participants the greatest topical variety. Due to the genre of blogs, the blog exchange, while written language, also offered participants the feel of spoken language. Furthermore, rather than only reading, participants made comments on all blog posts, thus ensuring that there was an element of interpretation to their reading as well. For the blogs,

however, the communication was bilingual since all students posted in their L2, but commented on partners' posts in their L1. So, for example, Japanese class students composed their blogs in Japanese and received comments in native Japanese from their partners, but Japanese students wrote comments for English class partners in native/expert English. This means that there was only target language reading and interpretation when reading comments made on one's blog. Both instructors agreed on this system to offer all students both writing and reading practice in the target language. While comments were generally shorter than posts, they still show a significant complexity and variety of input for partners on both sides of the exchange. Below are a post and associated comment from Miki's blog (with a response from her partner Marco).

Miki (Miki's blog post)

High School Memory

I joined in brass band club. I played the trumpet. I started to play the trumpet from high school. My high school is famous for great brass band club. When I was second grade, our brass band club was chosen for gold medal in Kansai Area. Though our brass band club was strong, it also shows that our brass band club had hard practice plans. I played the trumpet 6 hours on Saturday and almost everyday I practiced it. So when I was third grade, I left the club to study hard for enter a university which I want to go. In my third grade, I studied in cram school. I don't studying very much, but I like my friends and cram school. To eat dinner and talk and rest in cram school with my friends is my most favorite time then. I could fight to entrance examinations because my friends did the same time. So to study hard is also good memory. I think entrance examination systems are different from your university. We have to study only three subjects, math and chemistry and English, to enter our university. How about your university?

From Miki (Miki comments on Marco's blog)

re: 学校生活で一番楽しかった思い出 (My best memory in my school life)

こんにちは。私は元気です。中国の町はどんなでしたか。夜景がきれいだと聞く香港に行ってみたいです。私も高校生の時、生命(生物)を勉強していましたよ。生物の授業で、かいぼうしたこともあります。大学でも生命を勉強しましたが、とてもむずかしかったです。(Hello. I'm good. What is China Town like? I've heard that Hong Kong's night view is very beautiful and I'd like to go see it. I also studied life science (biology) when I was in high school. In Biology class we did dissections. At university I also study biology and it's very difficult.)

From Marco (Marco comments on Mikifs blog)

re: sHigh School Memoryt

Hello, WOW!!! you play the trumpet. It must be great learning to play an musical instrument. I used to play the piano, but i quit because it got to boring, and took to much of my time. In America we really don't have cram schools, and there wasn't much studying

going on in high school. It was mostly having fun at high school and slaking off, then studying heavily senior year. To answer your question on my blog. In Los Angeles we have area call China Town which is next to Little Tokyo. China Town is a place of where people can buy a lot of cheaper stuff than at the local mall. China Town has a big red gate as its entrance so you won't miss it. My university really doesn't have an entrance exam but has a placement exam. The placement exam is like which area of math and english you should take in college. Anybody can get into Hoover College, plus the tuition is cheap like around \$20 a unit. Like a whole semester would cost around less than \$400 without books. Your best high school memory is very interesting and i hope i can learn more about what is different in Japan and here in the states.

In this particular exchange, Miki writes about her high school experience (a topic which Japanese class students had also written about). While offering detail about her experience she also asks a question (How about your university [entrance exams]?) which Marco's ensuing comment answers. He also answers a question that Miki had left on his blog (in Japanese). Thus, though topics for blog posts were directed by instructors, the blog comments allowed learners to move off-topic (e.g., from high school memories to Chinatown) and discuss a greater variety of topics in a dialogic exchange. Especially the cross-blog communication seen here, where Marco gives an L1 answer to an L2 question he had read and understood on his blog epitomizes the best communication that was taking place on the blogs. The bilingual discourse from the blogs clearly shows the need for learners to both understand and interpret direct, personal written communication. Certainly, such ideal communication was not always present throughout the blog exchange. Discovering why good communication occurred through some topics or between some partners and not others is beyond the scope of this paper, though it is a significant question for future research.

In addition to the blog project, the wiki project also offered students a variety of topics about which they could communicate. A further advantage of the wiki project was that it was based on pictures taken by and described by the participants. A disadvantage, communicatively speaking, was that the wiki project did not involve discussion or comments from students on the wiki, and because it was one of the final projects of the exchange, students couldn't discuss it in subsequent blog entries or Skype meetings.

Content Standard 1.3: Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

The DVD exchange offered participants the chance to present a part of their university or community for their exchange class partners. The DVD created by Japanese class students was approximately 50 minutes in length while the English class students' DVD was 35 minutes. The respective introductions of the universities and communities were done in learners' target language, however, there were shorter parts of both videos that were in participants' native language. For example, in the Japanese class video, participants used native English to interview a friend or family member about their knowledge and impressions of Japan. In the English class video, participants introduced themselves at the end of the DVD in native Japanese. Self-introductions were each approximately 30 seconds in length.

Following is the transcript from part of the English class students' introductions of their science building:

(student is standing in a chemistry laboratory in front of the foremost desk in the room which is covered with a variety of bottles of chemicals placed there for the film) This room is chemistry laboratory. We do experiments in this room. On Monday mornings, chemistry freshmen do chemistry experiments in this room. It is very hard for freshmen. Our university has great equipments. We have very wide tables (spreading arms in gesture) and many showers (walks beside a table indicating the location of the sprinkler system tap) and many fire extinguishers (points to the floor fire extinguisher). In addition, this room is bigger than other rooms. So, we can do experiments safely and comfortably.

The DVD project largely fulfilled the goals of content standard 1:3, the presentational mode, of the National Standards. The DVD project required one-way communication with a clear audience and purpose, and it required students to present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics, as stated in content standard 1:3. The primary focus of the DVD project was information, as demonstrated in the above transcript, rather than concepts or ideas. Participants were simply asked to introduce their university. The primary topics in the videos included the university bookstores, the cafeterias, the campus grounds, and some buildings. Nevertheless, one English learner took the liberty to discuss the Christian orientation at his Japanese university, and one of the more fluent Japanese learners described his garden, offering the concept behind his garden and his passion for it. Because DVD video exchange is a natural way to have students communication in the presentational mode (i.e., the nature of video requires presentation), and since the topic choice is very flexible, instructors might find ways to have students sharing more than simple information about where they live, work, or study. Videos could be planned around cultural concepts, scientific experiments, or anything else the instructors or learners deemed appropriate.

In practical terms, the DVD project involved significant preparation when compared with the blogs, wiki, and Skype meetings. Students wrote scripts that were edited for grammar and clarity by the instructor. Then students had to memorize and practice the successful delivery of their scripts. Finally, when filming, students had to consider the visual elements such as gesture, posture, eye contact, as well as the location where they situated their presentation. The video project required six hours on the English learners' side, and roughly the same on Japanese learners' side (Japanese learners did more work out of class for the project, while English learners mostly planned, practiced, and filmed during class time). In addition, video editing, in this case, completed by the instructors on both sides, required another three hours.

Conclusions

The exchange project offered participants the opportunity to communicate in a variety of ways that would not be possible without computer-mediated communication and video technologies. Furthermore, any of these technologies used in isolation would only partially satisfy the well-rounded communication goals as written in the National Standards (2006). The use of such technologies based in a well-planned language class can offer language learners an unprecedented opportunity for interaction with native and expert speakers of their target language. Such technologically-based group projects do come with their share of caveats including student absenteeism, technical glitches, copious amounts of pre and post-project planning for instructors (see Belz & Mueller-Hartmann, 2003), and unpredictable results. Furthermore, there are a variety of cultural, institutional, technological constraints to be considered when organizing such projects (Belz, 2001, 2002; Carney, 2006). These problems, however, must be weighed against the great potential and opportunity that technological-based class language exchange offers language learners. When considering communication, it must be assumed that the goal of any foreign language learning curriculum is to prepare students to interact with expert speakers of that language. Thus, harnessing the power of new communication technologies toward that end seems integral to a well-rounded curriculum with access to such tools. By integrating a variety of communication technologies, instructors can provide language learners with many ways to use and interpret the target language while also having potentially beneficial side effects such as learning about another culture, place, and person from a country where their target language is spoken.

Acknowledgements

I would like to deeply thank and acknowledge Yuko Terao for her invaluable time and effort in setting up, carrying out, and discussing and researching this exchange project.

References

- Basharina, O. (2007). An activity theory perspective on student-reported contradictions in international telecollaboration. *Language learning & technology*, 11(2), 36-58.
- Belz, J. A. (2001). Institutional and individual dimensions of transatlantic group work in network-based language teaching. *ReCALL*, 13(2), 213-231.
- Belz, J. A. (2002). Social dimensions of telecollaborative foreign language study. *Language learning & technology*, 6(1), 60-81.
- Belz, J. A. (2003). From the special issue editor. *Language learning & technology*, 7(2), 2-5.
- Belz, J. A., & Mueller-Hartmann, A. (2003). Teachers as intercultural learners: Negotiating German-American telecollaboration along the institutional fault line. *The modern language journal*, 87(1), 72-90.
- Carney, N. (2006). Telecollaboration for intercultural learning: An overview of projects involving Japan. *The JALT CALL journal*, 2 (1), 37-52.
- Herring, S. (1999). Interactional coherence in CMC. *Journal of computer-mediated communication*, 4(4). <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol4/issue4/herring.html>

- Itakura, H. (2004). Changing cultural stereotypes through e-mail assisted foreign language learning. *System*, 32(1), 37-51.
- Levy, M. & Stockwell, G. (2006). *CALL Dimensions: Options in issues in computer-assisted language learning*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Markey, A. (2007). Using the Moodle platform in online exchanges. In R. O'Dowd, (Ed.), *Online intercultural exchange: An introduction for foreign language teachers* (pp. 264-268). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- National Standards of Foreign Language Education Project 3rd Edition. (2006). *The standards for foreign language learning in the 21st century*. Lawrence, Kansas: Allen Press.
- O'Dowd, R., & Eberbach, K. (2004). Guides on the side? Tasks and challenges for teachers in telecollaborative projects, *ReCALL*, 16(1), 5-19.
- O'Dowd, R., & Ritter, M. (2006). Understanding and Working with "Failed Communication" in Telecollaborative Exchanges. *CALICO journal*, 61 (2), 623-642.
- Pais Marden, M. (2007). Integrating intercultural email communication and the TV news in the foreign language classroom. *CALL-EJ online*, 8(2). Retrieved February 3, 2008 from <http://www.tell.is.ritsumei.ac.jp/callejonline/journal/8-2/marden.html>
- Phillips, J. (2008). Foreign language standards and the context of communication. *Language teaching*, 41(1), 93-102.
- Smith, B., Alvarez-Torres, M. J., & Zhao, Y. (2003). Features of CMC technologies and their impact on language learners' online interaction. *Computers in human behavior*, 19, 703-729.
- Stockwell, G. (2004). Communication breakdown in asynchronous computer-mediated communication. *Australian language & literacy matters*, 1(3), 7-10, 31.
- Torii-Williams, E. (2004). Incorporating the use of E-mail into a language program. *Computer assisted language learning*, 17(1), 109-122.
- Ware, P. (2005). Missed communications in online communication: Tensions in a German-American telecollaboration. *Language learning & technology*, 9(2), 64-89.