



# Best Practice Report

## Telecollaboration for Intercultural Communication and Foreign Language Learning

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# Best practice

Telecollaboration for Intercultural Communication

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## 1. Purpose and objectives



In the EU project TILA, which was supported by the European Lifelong Learning Programme from Jan 2013 until July 2015 (<http://www.tilaproject.eu>), telecollaboration is pedagogically used to support and enhance spoken and written communicative interaction between pupils from different European countries and cultures. The overall project objective is to facilitate foreign language acquisition *for* and *through* communication in intercultural encounters.<sup>1</sup>

This Best Practice report is based on insights, experiences and material from TILA courses<sup>2</sup>. It is intended for foreign language teachers who wish to explore and deploy the pedagogic potential of synchronous and asynchronous telecollaboration tools and environments for enhancing written and spoken intercultural communication practice in their foreign language classrooms.

With its focus on examples of best practice and suggestions for pedagogic design and implementation, the report has a strong practical orientation and should be used in complementary fashion along with the TILA Teacher Guides (which can be accessed in the “Teachers’ corner” on the TILA Moodle platform – [www.tilaproject.eu/moodle/](http://www.tilaproject.eu/moodle/); also accessible via “Resources” on the TILA website – [www.tilaproject.eu](http://www.tilaproject.eu)). Following the clarification of key pedagogic concepts shaping the overall rationale and approach, emphasis is on telecollaborative task development and teacher guidance. Issues addressed include the following:

- intercultural communication and foreign language learning
- tandem and lingua franca constellations
- telecollaboration for intercultural foreign language learning
- blended learning and flipping intercultural communication practice
- task sequences and best practice design
- pedagogic implementation step by step

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<sup>1</sup> Jauregi, K., Melchor-Couto, S., & Vilar Beltrán, E. (2013). The European Project TILA. In L. Bradley & S. Thouësnny (Eds.), *20 Years of EUROCALL: Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future. Proceedings of the 2013 EUROCALL Conference, Évora, Portugal* (pp. 123-128). Dublin/Voillans: © Research-publishing.net.

<sup>2</sup> This report draws on Hoffstaedter, P. & Kohn, K. (2015). Telecollaboration for intercultural foreign language conversations in secondary school contexts: Task design and pedagogic implementation. In TILA deliverable 3.1: *Research results on telecollaboration*. [<https://uni-tuebingen.academia.edu/KurtKohn>]

## 2. Pedagogic rationale

### 2.1 Intercultural communication and foreign language learning

Over the past few decades, an overall communicative orientation has become a commonplace for the foreign language classroom. This is more than a mere surface phenomenon and finds its roots and justification in a close mutual interdependence between communication and language learning in general.

Communication is not only the goal of learning but also its medium. Young children in first language acquisition are able to understand utterances containing unknown words and structures because of context-based meaning assumptions. Contextual knowledge enables them to push understanding beyond the reach of their lexical and grammatical knowledge. It is because of this overflow of contextual meaning that they eventually manage to intuitively acquire initially unknown words and structures. The same holds true for adult learners when engaged in using their foreign language under conditions of natural communication.

If communicative competence is the goal of foreign language learning, rich opportunities for communication practice are of key importance. The type and amount of communicative exposure significantly influences and shapes learners' foreign language competence development. In short, learning a foreign language is all about using it in communication. With the acknowledgement of a fundamentally communicative orientation, teaching towards learner autonomy, collaboration and authenticity is brought to the fore as well as methodological approaches such as task-based learning and content and language integrated learning (CLIL).

With its focus on communicative contact and interaction between pupils from different European countries, the TILA telecollaboration approach to foreign language learning adds a distinct intercultural dimension. It is important to note, however, that in the TILA context the notion of intercultural is in the first place understood and used to refer to an interactional quality. Communicative exchanges in TILA are considered intercultural because of the involvement of pupils from different countries and lingua-cultural settings. "Soft" cultural topics such as "fashion", "eating" or "social media" are used to facilitate interaction and the development of intercultural communicative awareness and strategic skills.



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Shifting the main focus from intercultural content to interpersonal exchange makes it easier to see that people's competence for intercultural communication is firmly rooted in their competence for ordinary communication. From an interactional perspective, the problems speakers encounter in intercultural communication due to cognitive, emotional and behavioural differences are largely similar to those they encounter in ordinary communication. The awareness and strategic skills they need to achieve communicative success are largely similar as well. For pedagogic purposes it is thus advisable to strengthen the ordinary communication basis of pupils' intercultural communicative competence. In TILA, this involves facilitating intercultural communicative exchanges about topics pupils can identify with, and helping pupils to become aware of the ordinary communication problems they encounter and to work out strategic solutions.

## **2.2 Tandem and lingua franca constellations**

Communicating in a foreign language under intercultural conditions is not only demanding for pupils, it also involves reaching out beyond traditional classroom interactions and requires a new pedagogic perspective on the target languages involved.

In TILA courses, intercultural exchanges make use of two different types of target language constellations, tandem and lingua franca. "Tandem" refers to pairings of school classes in which each of the two has the native language of the other as target language, e.g. a French class with target language German and a German class with target language French. "Lingua franca" refers to pairings of school classes of different native languages sharing the same target language, e.g. a Spanish and a Dutch class with French as target language. In this case, all pupils will communicate in French, i.e. they share the same non-native language (e.g. French) as a lingua franca.

These two target language constellations differ in the pedagogic affordances they offer for intercultural communication practice in the pupils' foreign language.

In a tandem constellation, the interacting pupils switch from one of the two languages to the other either within or between sessions, thus changing from native speaker expert to learner and back. As learners, they profit from having communication with a native speaker, whom they can also ask for lingua-cultural help and feedback as needed and desired. As native speaker experts, they are communication partner, provide a lingua-cultural role model, and act as a kind of teaching assistant. In addition to these pedagogic functions serving the learning needs of the non-native speaker they interact with, they can also practice accommodating their native speaker performance to the proficiency level of their respective exchange partner. A tandem constellation is clearly in line with the (still prevailing) general preference in foreign language teaching for native speaker standards and conventions and communication with native speakers.

In a lingua franca constellation, the interacting pupils are non-native speakers of the same target language they want or have to learn; they are all in the same boat. From a traditional foreign language teaching perspective, this might easily be perceived as a disadvantage. However, when taking into account the communicative conditions under which non-native speakers are usually required to perform in real life, the lingua franca constellation appears quite close to reality. And what is more, communication with other non-native speakers, preferably of different lingua-cultural origins, also has the distinct pedagogic advantage of creating authentic and relevant opportunities for intercultural communication learning. For the pupils involved, this includes collaborating with

their peers in creating their very own lingua-cultural context, which can then serve as a dynamically evolving shared common ground, or “third space”<sup>3</sup>, for their communicative exchange.

To achieve this, pupils need to notice and explore cognitive, emotional and behavioural (CEB) similarities and differences between themselves and their partners, develop appropriate strategies of accommodation, meaning negotiation or “let it pass”, and acquire suitable linguistic-communicative means and moves of expression. At the same time, they need to become aware of the need for empathy, tolerance of ambiguity, and behavioural flexibility<sup>4</sup>. And last but not least, our foreign language pupils should be encouraged to explore and trust their own non-native speaker creativity and to develop a natural sense of communicative speaker satisfaction and confidence<sup>5</sup>.

### 2.3 Telecollaboration for intercultural foreign language learning

The traditional foreign language classroom offers few opportunities for pupils to engage in truly intercultural communication practice, regardless of whether in a tandem or lingua franca format. This is where telecollaboration comes in.

Over the past decade, the pedagogic exploitation of telecollaboration for purposes of intercultural foreign language learning and teaching has been pioneered in particular in higher education contexts<sup>6</sup>. In secondary education, the challenges for implementing telecollaboration activities are considerably higher partly due to constraints resulting from the fact that pedagogic interaction is largely being organized in face-to-face school settings. However, considering the discrepancy between the communicative and intercultural aspirations of foreign language pedagogy in schools on the one hand and the naturally weak lingua-cultural diversity of the traditional classroom on the other, the intercultural communication potential of telecollaboration exchanges deserves very serious attention.

In the TILA courses, preference was given to videoconferencing and 3D virtual worlds for synchronous oral communication, text chat for synchronous written communication as well as forum, blog or wiki for asynchronous written communication. Each of these tools has its special mode of communication and favours certain types of communicative interaction and language use as indicated in the boxes below.

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<sup>3</sup> cf. Kramsch, C. (2009). Third culture and language education. In V. Cook (Ed.), *Language Teaching and Learning* (pp. 233-254). London: Continuum.

<sup>4</sup> cf. Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

<sup>5</sup> cf. Kohn, K. (2015). A pedagogical space for English as a lingua franca in the English classroom”. In Y. Bayyurt & S. Akcan (Eds.), *Current perspectives on pedagogy for ELF* (pp. 51-67). Berlin: de Gruyter Mouton.

<sup>6</sup> cf. <http://uni-collaboration.eu>; O’Dowd, R. (2013). The competences of the telecollaborative teacher. *The Language Learning Journal*, 1-14; O’Dowd, R. (2012). Intercultural communicative competence through telecollaboration. In J. Jackson (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication* (pp. 342-358). Abingdon: Routledge.

### Oral communication in the videoconferencing platform BigBlueButton

#### Modes of communication:

- Synchronous voice chat with video option
- Synchronous text chat option
- Space for presentation material, multimedia documents

#### Pedagogic affordances:

- Real-time spoken conversations, discussions, or presentations
- Practicing spoken communication and strategic skills in authentic peer interactions
- Practicing using the webcam for non-verbal communication and “show and tell”
- Multi-modal combination of (spoken) video and (written) chat communication

### Oral communication in the 3D virtual world environment OpenSim

#### Modes of communication:

- Synchronous voice chat between pupils’ 3D graphical avatar representatives
- Synchronous text chat option
- Contextualization through 3D graphical environment with “stage props” and display options

#### Pedagogic affordances:

- Real-time spoken conversations, discussions, and presentations
- Practicing spoken communication and strategic skills in authentic peer interactions
- Using avatar activities and interaction for situated communication and learning
- Multi-modal combination of voice and text chat

### Written communication in a text chat, e.g. in Moodle

#### Modes of communication:

- Synchronous text chat

#### Pedagogic affordances:

- Real-time written conversations and discussions
- Practicing written communication of semi-oral quality in authentic peer interactions
- Practicing chat-specific communication skills, e.g. maintaining conversational coherence

### Written communication in a forum, blog or wiki

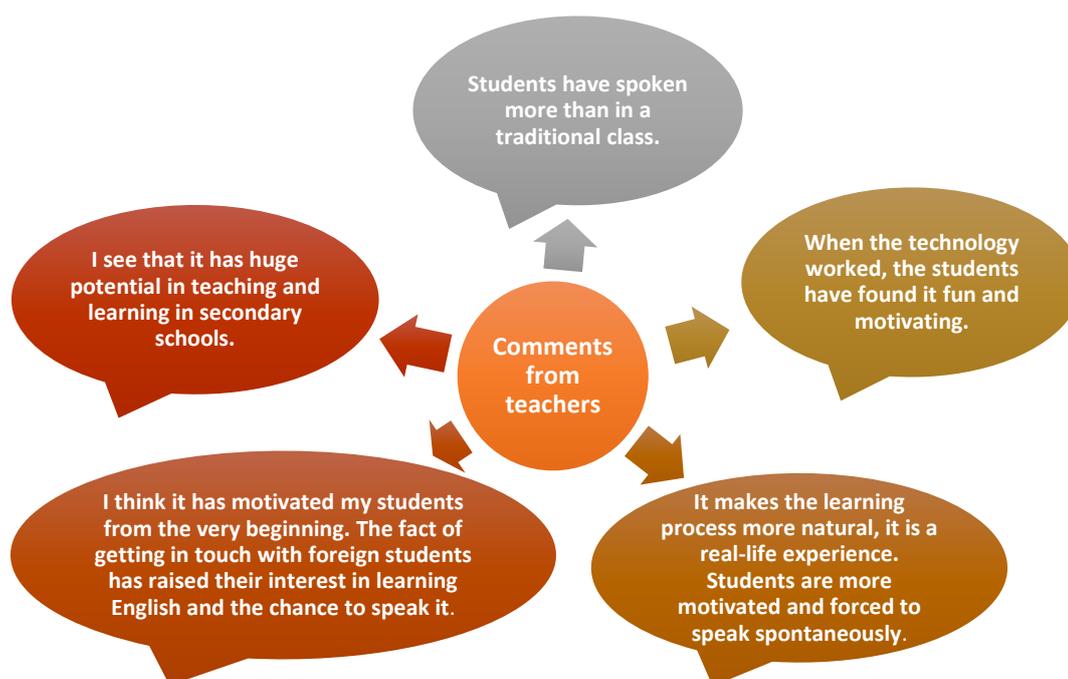
#### Modes of communication:

- Asynchronous writing with multimedia options

#### Pedagogic affordances:

- Time-delayed written production of expository and conversational texts with possibilities for planning and revision
- Embedding of accompanying documents, visuals and audio/video recordings
- Collaborative writing, peer review and assessment
- Maintaining a discussion in a forum, commenting in a blog and collaborating in a wiki

There should be no doubt that the various tools for synchronous and asynchronous telecollaboration offer a rich and exciting potential for real-life intercultural contact and authentic foreign language communication beyond the communicative offerings of the traditional classroom. In addition, when pupils are given the opportunity to communicate with peers from other countries, they also experience a need and natural desire for using the respective foreign language to achieve communicative success and are more likely to develop an intrinsic motivation for communication and learning. This is clearly confirmed by comments from teachers involved in the TILA courses.



Comments from teachers

The TILA research studies show that pupils are particularly attracted by the possibilities for synchronous oral communication and the authentication potential of videoconferencing (BigBlueButton) and game-like 3D virtual worlds (OpenSim). At the same time, it becomes also clear that preferences for certain tools are ultimately individual and strongly influenced by familiarity and availability. What is of crucial importance in the end, however, are pedagogic considerations concerning learning objectives and corresponding tasks. Available technologies should be judged and selected according to their task suitability and the requirements that need to be fulfilled for successful pedagogic implementation.

Task suitability and ease of implementation do not necessarily match. This is particularly true for telecollaboration tools used to facilitate synchronous oral communication. In the case of BigBlueButton and OpenSim, successful implementation may be seriously hampered by two challenges:

- finding matching time slots for the participating school classes and pupils,
- providing pupils with appropriate computer equipment and sufficiently strong and reliable internet access.

In view of huge discrepancies as regards school hours across Europe, the challenge of matching time slots for collaborating school classes can only be met on the basis of large numbers of potential partners as in the European eTwinning programme (<http://www.etwinning.de>).

Concerning access to computers and internet, teachers' natural preference is for the school's computer lab. TILA courses made it quite evident, however, that computer labs in our schools are not always equipped to meet the technical requirements for simultaneous oral communication between large numbers of participants. More often than not, telecollaboration exchanges were seriously impaired by

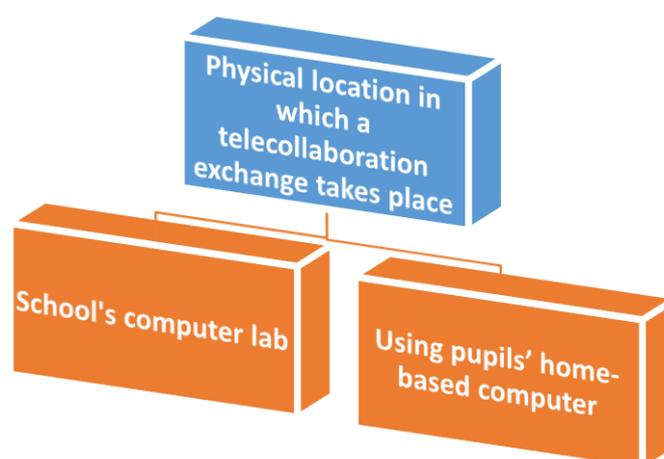
- insufficient sound or video quality due to a lack of required bandwidth and equipment.

An additional shortcoming resulted from

- a lack of communicative privacy due to noise interferences between simultaneously speaking pupils.

Reducing the number of simultaneous exchanges to avoid network overload or solve the privacy issue is hardly pedagogically sustainable since teachers generally need to involve the entire class. Dividing the class into smaller groups of "speakers" and "supporters" is pedagogically sound but usually leads to distractions and disruptions because of background noise.

Regarding synchronous written communication in a text chat, finding matching time slots and having access to the school's computer lab is the principal challenge. All the other challenges mentioned above do not apply. This advantage of a lack of technological constraints holds for asynchronous written communication as well. And what is more, asynchronous communication does not require time arrangements. Text chats, forums, blogs or wikis thus offer serious alternatives in cases where synchronous spoken communication cannot be supported satisfactorily.



Pedagogic implementation goes beyond making things work from a technical and organizational perspective. It also involves considerations regarding the physical location in which a telecollaboration exchange takes place. In many respects, locations on the school compound such as a classroom or computer lab are a natural choice. Another possible location that offers more than a stopgap solution is the pupils' home. Even if technological robustness can be ensured for synchronous spoken telecollaboration in the school's computer lab or tablet pool, issues regarding communicative privacy and classroom organization remain valid. One of the advantages of e-learning is its emancipatory potential for giving pupils a space where they can practise and develop

collaborative autonomy and engage in learning activities that bridge over from school to real life. Using pupils' home-based computer and internet facilities for telecollaboration should be seen an extension of traditional homework approaches. As TILA research has shown, this format offers the pedagogically highly valuable opportunity for pupils to communicate and interact with their peers in other countries under their teachers' overall guidance but at the same time in their own fashion in a private and potentially relaxed and unthreatening atmosphere. The increasing use of smart phones and other mobile devices opens up further possibilities for telecollaborative interaction "anytime and anywhere".

## 2.4 Blended learning and flipping intercultural communication practice

TILA courses have a focus on communicative intercultural telecollaboration and language acquisition in the 3D virtual world of OpenSim or the web-based videoconferencing platform BigBlueButton and by forum, wiki, or blog tools. These Web 2.0-based environments and tools are ideally suited to support intercultural encounters through synchronous and asynchronous spoken and written communicative interaction.

However, even the best and most suitable technological solutions for language learning can only unfold their full potential when they are embedded in more comprehensive blended learning scenarios. In a nutshell, blended learning is about pedagogically harnessing different modes of learning and teaching – from classroom to homework, from face-to-face to online – in such a way that their respective strengths can be exploited without the handicap of their shortcomings<sup>7</sup>. TILA courses are thus seen and designed as blended learning task ensembles involving heterogeneous, yet pedagogically motivated combinations of physical environments and technological media.

### Guiding Principles for intercultural telecollaboration

- Primacy of pedagogy over technology: Always start from pedagogical considerations. What are your learning objectives and how do you want to achieve them?
- A communicative view on intercultural competence: Focus on communicative interaction between pupils from different countries and cultures
- Need for a blended learning approach: Combine traditional face-to-face classroom activities, with synchronous or asynchronous interaction in the web (as homework or in a computer lab)

Blended learning, however, is not a solution in itself. Any design decisions must be grounded in pedagogic reflections about learning objectives and ways of getting there, always in consideration of the respective educational setting with its specific learning and teaching conditions and available infrastructures. In TILA courses, blended language learning designs are mainly used for three purposes:

- a) embedding telecollaboration sessions within an overall face-to-face classroom approach,

<sup>7</sup> cf. Kohn, K. (2009). Computer assisted foreign language learning. In K. Knapp & B. Seidlhofer (Eds.), *Foreign Language Communication and Learning* (pp. 573 - 603). Berlin: de Gruyter Mouton. [<https://uni-tuebingen.academia.edu/KurtKohn>]

- b) transferring part of telecollaboration to pupils' homework activities to avoid limitations due to conflicting schedules, insufficient network capacity and lack of communicative privacy,
- c) combining different types of telecollaboration in one pedagogically coherent multi-modal approach, in particular synchronous oral (videoconferencing), synchronous written (text chat) and asynchronous written communication (forum).

A multi-modal approach makes it possible for pupils to develop their digital literacy by learning to communicate successfully in different, yet complementary telecollaboration environments. In addition, because of pupils' familiarity with text messages, forum posts or short written exchanges in a chat might be an advantage for them and could also be used as scaffolding steps towards synchronous oral communication in OpenSim or BigBlueButton.



A recently much discussed variant of blended learning, the flipped classroom approach, is particularly suitable for helping pupils to enhance their communicative competence for intercultural encounters.<sup>8</sup> In its original version, the notion of flipped classroom refers to moving content teaching from the classroom to self-study at home using online video lectures and other web-based multimedia resources. In this way, classroom time is made available for discussing and collaboratively exploring and further enriching what learners bring back from their home studies. In TILA, this narrow and pedagogically somewhat conservative understanding of classroom flipping is generalized and extended to include outsourcing of any learning objectives and activities deemed pedagogically relevant yet difficult to pursue in a physical classroom environment. Intercultural communication practice is one such objective and activity for which flipping to telecollaboration involving pupils' home computers opens up new pedagogic leeway beyond the traditional classroom. It should be added, though, that flipping to home-based e-learning may not be a viable solution in all educational settings.

Implementing and pedagogically organizing blended learning activities across different environments and modes of learning and teaching can be quite a challenge in particular when interactions between groups of learners from different countries and cultures are involved. To better handle the organization of blended learning, the TILA telecollaboration facilities include a Moodle platform for course administration, task instructions, provision of learning resources, and pedagogic

<sup>8</sup> cf. Kohn, K. & Hoffstaedter, P. (2015). Flipping intercultural communication practice: opportunities and challenges for the foreign language classroom. In Colpaert, J., Aerts, A., Oberhofer, M. & Gutiérrez-Colón Plana, M. (Eds.), *Task Design & CALL. Proceedings of the 7th International CALL Conference, Universitat Rovira i Virgili*, 6 - 8 July 2015, 338-345. [<http://www.fundacio.urv.cat/congressos/call-conference-2015/proceedings-book>]

communication between teachers and pupils. The TILA Moodle site also provides information and guidance about and access to the various telecollaboration tools trialled and tested within TILA.

#### The TILA Moodle platform ([www.tilaproject.eu/moodle](http://www.tilaproject.eu/moodle))

On the TILA Moodle teachers have access to

- video-recorded Teacher Guides
- Teacher Webinars and Teacher Training Materials
- Telecollaboration task descriptions
- Information about the telecollaboration tools deployed in TILA (from Moodle courses (with chat, forum and wiki) to the videoconferencing platform BigBlueButton and TILA's 3D virtual world in OpenSim
- Moodle courses for teachers' own telecollaboration exchanges

## 2.5 TILA task sequences

In keeping with the blended learning approach and also in order to ensure pedagogic integration into the overall curriculum, it is advisable to design TILA tasks not as isolated units but rather as sequences of (sub)tasks combining class and online activities. Regarding the organization of task sequences, it is useful to distinguish between three phases: 'preparatory', 'main', and 'follow-up'.

The **Preparatory phase** typically involves subtasks that help prepare the ground for the main telecollaborative task. This may concern in particular

- getting to know each other and creating first connections between the two country/culture groups using asynchronous tools such as email and/or the Moodle forum,
- knowledge development within each country/culture group (in class or at home, with or without web quests, forum, wiki, or blog),
- mock interactions within each country/culture group in preparation of intercultural interactions (face-to-face or with telecollaboration support),
- exploratory discussions within each country/culture group (face-to-face in class or with forum, BigBlueButton or OpenSim),
- practising interaction modes that will be relevant in telecollaboration (e.g. pair work and small groups),
- getting familiar with various aspects of the technological environment and tools (e.g. Moodle, BigBlueButton, OpenSim, forum, wiki, or blog).

The **main phase** focuses on (intercultural) communicative interaction in synchronous and/or asynchronous telecollaboration environments. A central aim is to engage pupils in natural and authentic communicative exchanges with peers from the other country. In the European context, this seems to work best when the topics and tasks enable pupils to talk about their personal experiences and opinions, their likes and dislikes. It should be mentioned, though, that this approach is not

necessarily transferable to other cultures where pupils might find it challenging to talk about themselves.

Synchronous oral communication in BigBlueButton or OpenSim seems to favour more spontaneous communication; pupils often tend to talk about topics beyond the actual task. Written communication, however, may be easier to organize and also has its own pedagogic objectives and relevance. Offering pupils a multi-modal approach with synchronous and asynchronous options to choose from (e.g. BigBlueButton, chat, and forum) makes it possible to involve the entire class.

During the **follow-up phase**, pupils typically engage in activities designed for securing learning results and reflecting on the past telecollaboration exchange; this may include combinations of the following:

- reporting back to the class,
- follow-up discussions in class or in a forum,
- reflective interviews with the teacher,
- peer assessment and reflection (What did I/we learn? Which linguistic and intercultural aspects did I/we notice?),
- assessment and reflection of outcomes (individual or group portfolios).

Activities in the follow-up phase could be carried out face-to-face in class or from home; and they might also make use of telecollaboration tools such as e.g. forum, wiki or blog.

The following **Task development template** can be used for planning and specifying tasks and activities for the preparatory, main and follow-up phase with regard to thematic content, learning objectives and expected outcomes, pedagogic environments and telecollaboration tools or environments.

<b>Title of TILA task</b>	
Partner team (schools and teachers)	
Thematic description	
Language constellation (Lingua franca / Tandem)	
Target language	
CEF level	
Learning objectives: linguistic, communicative, and intercultural (See CEF and ICC “can do” statements)	
Description of blended learning approach	
Task outcome(s) (pupils’ performance and products)	
Technical specifications of tools to be used	

**Preparatory phase**

Description of subtask(s)	
Learning objective(s)	
Environment and tools (classroom, homework, forum etc.)	
Form of interaction (pair work, small groups, teacher centred)	
Expected outcome(s)	

**Main phase**

Description of subtask(s)	
Learning objective(s)	
Telecollaboration environment and tools: synchronous (e.g. OpenSim, BigBlueButton) or asynchronous (e.g. forum)	
Physical environment, e.g. classroom, computer lab, home	
Organisation of the telecollaborative interaction: number and size of telecollaboration groups	
Expected outcome(s)	

**Follow-up phase**

Description of follow-up task	
Learning objective(s)	
Physical environment (classroom, home etc.) and tools (forum, blog, wiki, Word document etc.)	
Form of interaction (pair work, small groups, teacher centred)	
Expected outcome(s)	

Task descriptions from telecollaboration exchanges that were carried out and explored in the TILA project can be found on the TILA Moodle platform ([www.tilaproject.eu/moodle](http://www.tilaproject.eu/moodle) > “Telecollaboration tasks and tools”; also accessible via “Resources” on the TILA website [www.tilaproject.eu](http://www.tilaproject.eu)).

### 3. Examples of best practice

The following examples illustrate three telecollaboration scenarios in tandem and lingua franca constellations using different tools (OpenSim, BigBlueButton, chat or forum) accessed from the school's computer lab or from pupils' homes.

#### 3.1 Tandem exchange in a virtual world environment (OpenSim)

The first example concerns a series of tandem telecollaboration exchanges in an OpenSim environment between French pupils learning German and German pupils learning French. The pupils were between 14 and 15 years old, their level of proficiency was A2/B1, and they accessed OpenSim during class hours from their school's computer labs. Each exchange consisted of a preparation phase in class, the main telecollaboration session in OpenSim, and a follow-up phase during which experiences from the telecollaboration session were presented and discussed in class.

The main telecollaboration activities involved pair conversations at various learning stations consisting of thematic posters with textual and/or visual prompts. The pupils were matched in French-German pairs, who met in front of a poster and talked about the topic presented, e.g. "environment", "veggie day", or "fashion".

**Topic: Fashion**



**Students from France and Germany**



**Session language: German**

Age: 14  
Level: A2/B1

**Group access to OpenSim from PC lab at school**

**Blended learning ensemble**

- Prep in class: topic, pictures
- Main: conversations in OpenSim
- Follow-up: discussion in class

- Students took pictures of themselves in their favourite outfits
- Pictures were placed on posters in the OpenSim environment
- Students met in pairs (4 pairs) in front of their pictures
- A worksheet with keywords guided them through their conversation

During these sessions, the pupils used a worksheet with keywords that guided them through their discussion (see worksheet below). They were asked to take notes during their telecollaboration session to be able to be able to discuss the results of their exchange in the follow-up session in class.

**Worksheet für OpenSim | Session zum Thema Mode**

Mit deinem / deiner Partnerin unterhältst du dich über Mode und Klamotten. Notiere, was du über die verschiedenen Rubriken erfahren hast.

**Mein(e) Partner(in) heißt:**

<b>Lieblingskleidungsstücke</b>	
<b>Farbe</b>	
<b>Outfit für die Schule</b>	
<b>Regelung an der Schule</b>	
<b>Outfit zu anderen Anlässen</b>	
<b>Haltung zu Marken</b>	
<b>beliebte Marken in Deutschland</b>	
<b>einen besonderen Stil</b>	

**Keywords from worksheet:**

- Favourite outfits and colours
- Outfit for school
- Outfits for special events
- Attitude towards brands
- Favourite brands in Germany and France
- Styles
- Shops
- Pocket money

Worksheet for the OpenSim session on “fashion”

The preparation activities took place in the pupils’ classrooms and were devoted to discussing the respective topics, preparing posters for the learning stations, as well as introducing and practicing useful words and phrases and tandem-related communication strategies.

As regards the language switch between French and German, alternative options were explored. In some of the encounters, the switch occurred within a class hour session and was triggered by the language used on the poster. The pupils would thus walk in pairs from one learning station to the next and switch their language of communication as well as their role as learner or language expert as required by the respective poster. In other encounters, the language switch was between class hour sessions; the pupils would thus use the same language throughout a session.

The “one session, one language principle” was adopted in the case of the fashion unit, for which German was the only language of communication. The pedagogic focus was on the French pupils learning German. Throughout the meeting in OpenSim, the French pupils were thus learners and required to speak their target language, while the German pupils had to use their native language in their role as language experts. The role distribution was also reflected in the pupils’ preparation activities.

Pupils in both groups took pictures of themselves in their favourite outfits, which were then placed on the learning station posters in the OpenSim environment for the main telecollaboration task. As regards topic and language, however, the preparation activities in the two groups were different. The French pupils discussed the topic in class and their teacher introduced relevant means of expression

for talking about fashion in German, i.e. their foreign language. The German pupils were mainly given with recommendations on how to accommodate to non-native speakers' proficiency level when speaking German, e.g. by avoiding complex sentences and sophisticated vocabulary, using shadowing techniques, or making vocabulary suggestions.

### ***Assessment based on participant observations and feedback from teachers and pupils***

Pupils said they liked the **spoken interaction** with peers from the other country. The topics worked well for them because they felt involved and were able to draw on their own knowledge, opinions and preferences. The communication was fluent and authentic. Pupils took the opportunity to get to know each other, and they also spontaneously addressed topics of their own choice.



Posters with pictures from pupils were placed into the OpenSim environment

Working with poster-based **learning stations** in OpenSim proved to be an attractive and flexible means for supporting the communication topics and providing guidance for the exploration of personal and intercultural differences and similarities. The poster content could be created by the teachers or by the pupils depending on pedagogic objectives. Pupils liked the idea of having their pictures in OpenSim, which made the communication more personal for them. More building and authoring rights for pupils was considered desirable.

In sessions with internal poster-driven **language switches** pupils often got confused. Despite clear instructions, they were not always sure which language they were supposed to use and in some cases used their mother tongue instead of the target language. When the focus was on just one language per session, as in the fashion example, the pupils always used the target language (in this case German) and the communicative performance was much more fluent. It should be borne in mind, however, that with more experience in OpenSim environments pupils will probably find it easier to move around and attend to changing poster languages and tasks.

Drawbacks resulted from the **computer lab condition**. Due to sound problems because of network overload, the number of simultaneously telecollaborating pairs of pupils was limited. This raised issues of pedagogic class organization. Involving the other pupils as support teams only offered a partial solution since it increased the level of background noise in the computer lab and interfered with the actively communicating pupils' need for **communicative privacy**.



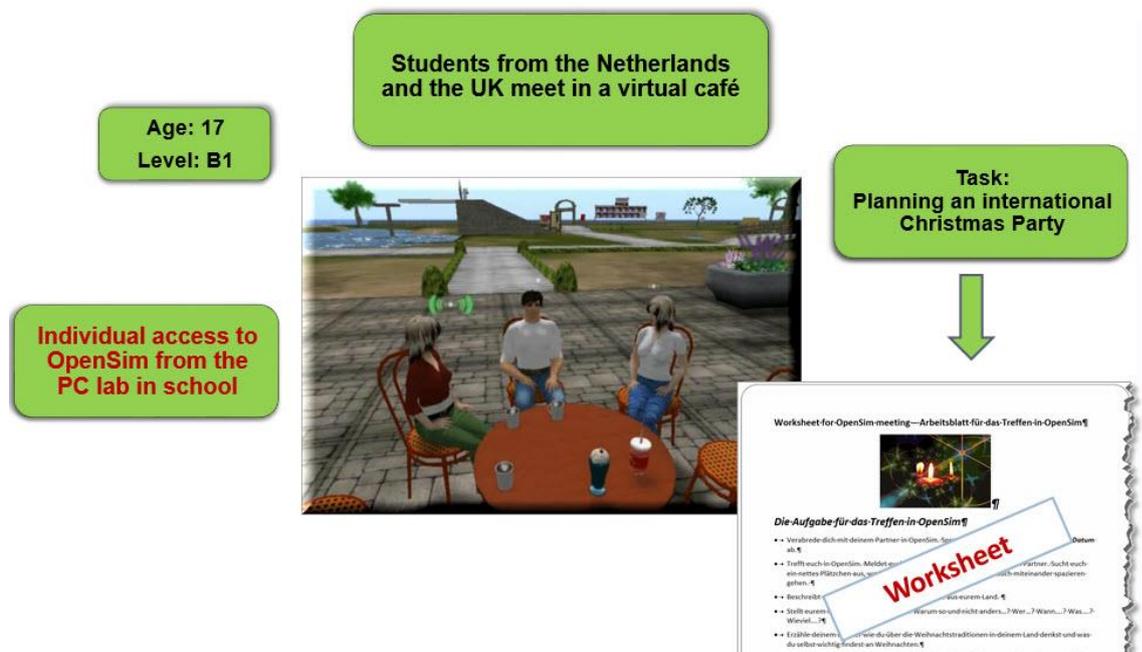
Pupils access OpenSim from the computer lab at school

Computer labs clearly have their value and place in e-learning education. When the pedagogic objective is oral communication, however, the computer lab is not necessarily the most ideal physical environment.

### 3.2 Lingua franca communication in OpenSim during outside class hours

The second example represents a German lingua franca exchange in an OpenSim environment with 7 pupils from the Netherlands and 5 pupils from England. The pupils were 17 years old and their level of proficiency was B1.

In this exchange, the pupils met in OpenSim outside class hours from a computer or laptop in school. They used the Moodle forum to arrange a date for their meeting.



The unit was before the Christmas break and the pupils' task was to talk about whether and how they celebrate Christmas and to plan a "virtual" international Christmas party. Before they met in OpenSim, the pupils in each of the two countries participated in a preparatory session in class in which the topic and the telecollaboration task were introduced. They then met in pairs or small groups of three in a virtual café environment in OpenSim. There was no poster support; the pupils only used a worksheet with a task description and suggestions for the conversation.

**Die Aufgabe für das Treffen in OpenSim:  
Planung einer internationalen Weihnachtsparty**



- → Verabrede dich mit deinem Partner in OpenSim. Sprecht die **genaue Zeit und das genaue Datum** ab.
- → Trefft euch in OpenSim. Meldet euch in OpenSim an und wartet auf euren Partner. Sucht euch ein nettes Plätzchen aus, wo ihr euch hinsetzt. Ihr könnt natürlich auch miteinander spazieren gehen.
- → Beschreibt einander ein typisches Weihnachtsfest aus eurem Land.
- → Stellt eurem Partner Fragen. Warum...? Warum so und nicht anders...? Wer...? Wann...? Was...? Wieviel...?
- → Erzähle deinem Partner wie du über die Weihnachtstraditionen in deinem Land denkst und was du selbst wichtig findest an Weihnachten.
- → Ihr müsst miteinander ein Englisch-Holländisches Weihnachtsfest organisieren. Beratet wie ihr es macht, so dass sich sowohl Englische als auch Holländische Schüler und auch Schüler, die aus religiösen Gründen nicht Weihnachten feiern, bei dem internationalen Fest wohlfühlen. Die Schüler sollen sich etwas über das andere Land lernen. Es soll in sowohl Englische als auch Holländische.

Worksheet for "Planning an international Christmas party"

### **Assessment based on participant observations and feedback from teachers and pupils**

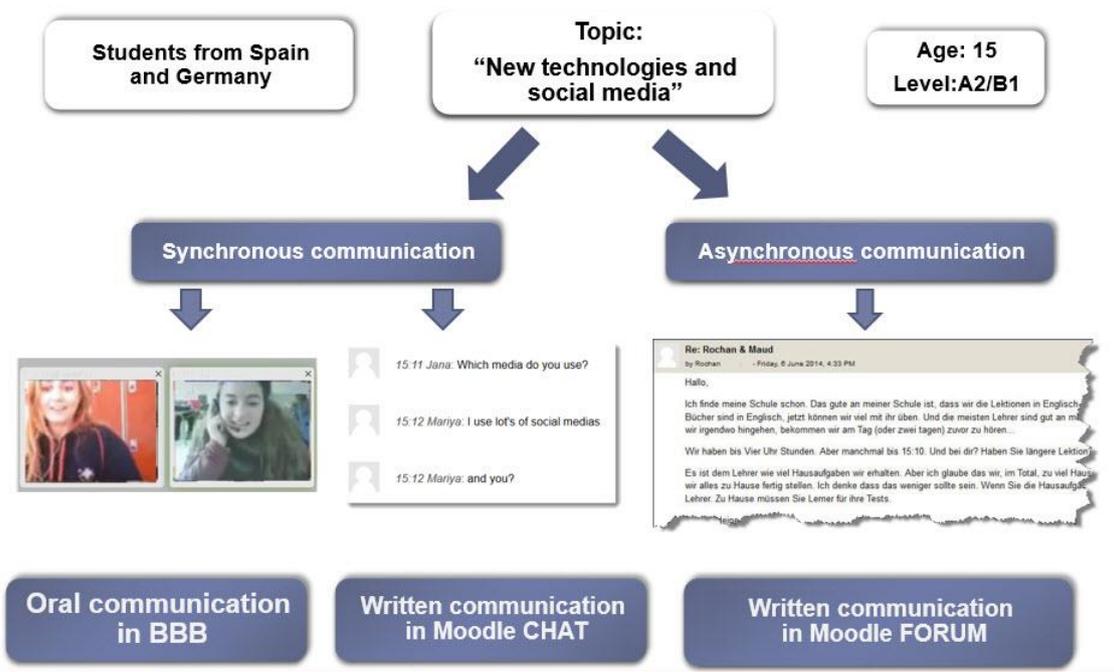
The pupils enjoyed communicating with peers from other countries in their common target language. Some of them said they would like to meet more often and emphasized that this kind of exchange would help them to improve their language and communication skills. One pupil mentioned feeling more comfortable when talking German to her English partner compared to how she felt in her ordinary German classroom. The pupils in particular liked to communicate with other non-native speakers, who are in the same situation as themselves and who know what it is like not to have full command of the language.

Some pupils encountered technical problems because it was their first time in an OpenSim environment. It is thus strongly advisable to make sure that pupils are sufficiently familiar with OpenSim before they start using the environment on their own.

A drawback of accessing OpenSim from within school was the difficulty of finding a suitable time-slot between regular class hours. The pupils could only meet during lunch break. Because of this time pressure, the meetings tended to be rather short with little room for spontaneous conversations beyond the actual topic.

### 3.3 Multi-modal English lingua franca communication from home

The third example is about an English lingua franca exchange between pupils from a school in Germany and a French school in Spain. The pupils met from their home computers. The telecollaboration options that were made available comprised a multi-modal mix of videoconferencing in BigBlueButton, written chat and forum (both in Moodle). All pupils were required to choose one of these environments for their pair discussions about “New technologies and social media”.



The decision for one of the three telecollaboration options depended on the availability of the required technological infrastructure at home (i.e. computer with good internet access, webcam and mic/headset for BigBlueButton) and the pupils’ (or parents’) personal preferences. The pupils were matched in pairs by their teachers based on their technological preferences and the infrastructure available to them. Those who had opted for BigBlueButton or chat were asked to contact each other by email to arrange a time for their meeting. Pupils who were not able or did not want to meet in BigBlueButton were transferred to a Moodle chat. Pairs unable to agree on a time slot for an online meeting in BigBlueButton or the Moodle chat could discuss their topic in the Moodle forum.

This arrangement of providing multi-modal options for the telecollaboration task ensured that all pupils were able to participate.

For the actual discussion, all pupils were given the same written instruction with questions they were supposed to address, in particular concerning their social media likes and dislikes, how important computers and mobile phones were for their daily lives, and whether they considered new technologies and social media a curse or blessing. They also had a worksheet in which they were required to note down their answers and the answers of their partner (see below).

## TILA WORKSHEET / PROTOCOL

Use the worksheet to note down the gist of how you and your TILA partner addressed the different issues discussed?

### A. Which media do you use and how? What do you like or dislike about them?

You	Your partner(s)

### B. What would it mean to you to be without a computer or smartphone for a day/week/month or longer?

You	Your partner(s)

### C. Are the new technologies (Smartphones, I-Pad) and social media and communication tools (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, Skype, email) a blessing or a curse? Discuss problems and benefits of new technologies.

You	Your partner(s)

### ***Assessment based on participant observations and feedback from teachers and pupils***

Pupils enjoyed talking to other non-native speakers in the target language. They were more self-confident and communicated more because they were less worried to make mistakes. Some pupils said they preferred to communicate with non-native speakers because they were easier to understand and would not speak so fast or use sophisticated vocabulary.

Communicating from home using BigBlueButton seemed to create a relaxed atmosphere. There was no time pressure, no pressure from a teacher, and no disturbing background noise from other pupils. Communication was very fluent and spontaneous, and conversations continued beyond the original topic or the time set by the teachers.

Communication in the written chat was spontaneous, direct and interactive. In this respect, it was similar to the spoken exchanges in BigBlueButton. At the same time, however, there were important differences: the pupils tended to stick to the questions they were supposed to discuss, the turns tended to be very short, and they did not address any other topics beyond the ones specified in the task. A similar thematic restraint could be observed in forum exchanges from other telecollaboration encounters. The difference to oral and chat communication, however, was that pupils had more time to think about their forum posts and to reformulate them if necessary.

More task examples can be found in the video recorded TILA Teacher Guides (see chapter 5 below) and in the task descriptions on the TILA Moodle platform ([www.tilaproject.eu/moodle](http://www.tilaproject.eu/moodle) > "Telecollaboration tasks and tools"; also accessible via "Resources" on the TILA website [www.tilaproject.eu](http://www.tilaproject.eu)).

## 4. Pedagogic implementation step by step

For the implementation of a telecollaboration exchange the advice for teachers is to consider the following steps: find a partner class, establish common ground with your partner teacher, develop task sequences, prepare your pupils for the telecollaboration, support them during the telecollaboration, and finally secure the learning results after the main telecollaboration session.

### 4.1 Finding a partner class

**Finding a partner**

- Decide whether you prefer a tandem or a lingua franca constellation
- Use TILA Partner Search or eTwinning to look for a potential partner
- If you prefer a lingua franca interaction, make sure that age and proficiency level match
- If you prefer a tandem interaction, make sure pupils are in the same age range
- If you plan to use synchronous telecollaboration, you need a partner class with matching class hours or you need to be able to arrange online session outside regular class hours

The first step is to find a partner class for your telecollaboration. Use the TILA Partner Finding tool (see the box below) to look for a partner. Consider the pedagogic language constellation you would like to adopt (i.e. tandem or lingua franca), the pupils' proficiency level and age group, your class hours, and your telecollaboration options.

**The TILA Partner Finding Tool**

- The Teacher Partner Finding tool can be accessed in the Teacher Networking Area on the TILA Moodle platform [www.tilaproject.eu/moodle](http://www.tilaproject.eu/moodle) > "Teachers' corner"
- for further information see TILA Teacher Guide "How to find a TILA partner group" on the TILA YouTube channel:  
<https://youtu.be/OeGDylc6U7E?list=PLHxHR3SYF1grJ0rLuUxIxfrZNWSH8WREd>

For a lingua franca constellation, the age group as well as the proficiency level of the partner classes should be similar. In a tandem constellation, pupils' proficiency level in the two target languages can be different. These recommendations refer to prototypical exchanges and may need to be adapted to special pedagogic objectives.

	Lingua franca	Tandem
<b>Age</b>	Same/similar age group	Same/similar age group
<b>Proficiency level</b>	Same/similar proficiency level	Different proficiency levels are possible for the two target languages

If you plan **synchronous** telecollaboration exchanges (e.g. OpenSim, BigBlueButton, written chat) during class hours in the computer lab, you will need a partner class with matching class hours. As this requirement can be very difficult to achieve, you should also consider the option of synchronous telecollaboration sessions outside regular class hours as part of your pupils' homework. **Asynchronous** telecollaboration exchanges (e.g. forum, blog or wiki) do not require matching time

slots. Pupils can post contributions during or outside class hours from the computer lab or from home.

	Tools	Physical environment	Time
<b>Synchronous communication</b>	- OpenSim - BigBlueButton - Written chat	Class room / computer lab in school	Matching class hours required
		Pupils' home computer (homework)	Pupils make appointments with their peers from the other country
<b>Asynchronous communication</b>	- Forum - Blog - Wiki		No time restriction

## 4.2 Establishing common ground

**Establishing  
common  
ground**

- Meet with your partner teacher (e.g. in BigBlueButton, Skype, or OpenSim) and discuss your pedagogic objectives and approach, your expectations and time frames
- Compare syllabi and decide on topics that fit and are suitable for authentic intercultural communication
- Agree on the telecollaboration tools you would like to use, check access and reliability
- Synchronous oral/video communication from the computer lab may not be possible for all pupils simultaneously - clarify alternative scenarios, e.g. a multi-modal combination of oral (BigBlueButton) and written (chat or forum) as well as working from home

To ensure a successful telecollaboration exchange, it is important that you meet with your partner teacher online (e.g. in BigBlueButton, Skype, or OpenSim) to discuss your pedagogic objectives and approach, your aims and expectations regarding telecollaboration, and your time frame. Compare the two class schedules regarding holidays and exam periods and agree on a timetable for your telecollaboration sessions.

It is also important to find a topic that matches your class syllabus and encourages authentic intercultural communication. If you plan to work in a tandem constellation, you have to decide whether you want to use the same or different topics for the two target languages. To avoid repetition and to keep the task authentic and communication more spontaneous, it seems advisable to select a different topic for each target language.

### Example of a lingua franca constellation

	Class A: German pupils	Class B: English pupils
<b>Target language:</b> Spanish	Similar age range and proficiency level recommended	
	Pupils speak/write in Spanish	Pupils speak/write in Spanish

### Example of a German-French tandem constellation with two topics

	Class A: Native language: French Target language: German	Class B: Native language: German Target language: French
Topic 1 in German	French pupils speak/write in their target language German	German pupils speak/write in their native language German
Topic 2 in French	French pupils speak/write in their native language French	German pupils speak/write in their target language French

Agree on the **telecollaboration tools** you are going to use and check whether the required technological and support infrastructure is available in both schools. Make sure to select those tools that best meet your pedagogic objectives.

It is of utmost importance that the telecollaborative environment and media you choose for your exchanges are accessible, reliable and sufficiently easy to use. All this needs to be carefully checked – continuously.

- Check which technology is available and works well at your school.
- Do you have IT support for installing software (e.g. OpenSim viewer) and helping with tool settings?
- Check when the computer lab or laptops are available.
- Check whether your school's internet connection is strong enough for synchronous oral/video communication.
- Check possibilities for carrying out telecollaboration activities from pupils' home computers (e.g. availability of webcam, headset with microphone and fast internet connection for BigBlueButton or OpenSim).

In the case of **synchronous communication during class hours**, check whether several pupils – and how many – can use the chosen environment (e.g. OpenSim or BigBlueButton) at the same time without sound problems. More often than not, limited network capacities in the computer lab make it necessary to allow only a small number of pupils to use sound and/or video simultaneously.

Consider alternative scenarios for dealing with this restriction:

- In case you work with a teaching assistant, you can split the class and have some pupils participate in the telecollaboration exchange while the others work on a complementary task. Later the telecollaborating pupils report back to the class.
- If you want to work with all pupils in the computer lab, a multi-modal approach might be advisable. Two or three pupils participate in oral communication (in OpenSim or BigBlueButton) while the others use written chat (in Moodle).
- The videoconferencing environment BigBlueButton can also be used in the regular classroom with a computer (equipped with speakers and webcam) and projection facilities. All pupils can watch the video on the projection screen. For their oral contribution, pupils walk up to the webcam and talk into the microphone.

The various restrictions imposed by the computer lab or classroom condition regarding time, technology and organization can be avoided by implementing synchronous oral telecollaboration exchanges **outside class hours as homework activities**.

Throughout all clarifications with your partner teacher, it is advisable to make ample use of the TILA communication environments, in particular BigBlueButton, OpenSim and the TILA Moodle course facilities. This is not only task-efficient but also enables you to become thoroughly familiar with the telecollaboration technologies you are going to use with your pupils. Use a collaborative writing tool (e.g. Google Docs) for keeping a log of your meetings and decisions.

### 4.3 Developing tasks

Developing  
tasks

- Specify linguistic, communicative and intercultural learning objectives
- Develop the main task together with your partner teacher and decide which telecollaboration tools you want to use
- If your pupils are meeting the partner class for the first time, start with an ice-breaker activity to enable them to get to know each other
- Specify preparatory tasks: each teacher has to decide how he/she wants to prepare his/her pupils for the main telecollaboration session
- Specify the main telecollaboration tasks
- Specify follow-up activities for securing learning outcomes, e.g. presentation and discussion in class, collaborative report and assessment (wiki), individual portfolio

Specify the learning objectives and approach for the **main telecollaboration exchange** together with your partner teacher. Pedagogic considerations should come first! Then decide on the telecollaboration tools you are going to use and prepare the materials you need, e.g. worksheets with questions and instructions for oral tasks in BigBlueButton or OpenSim, posters for OpenSim, forum or wiki activities in Moodle.

If your pupils are meeting the partner class for the first time, let them introduce themselves. Start with some kind of ice-breaker activity. Other **preparatory activities** may concern thematic explorations and helping your pupils to become familiar with the telecollaboration tools.

It is also important to plan **follow-up activities** for securing and assessing learning outcomes, raising awareness for similarities and differences beyond stereotypes, and fostering openness and empathy. Tasks might include telecollaborative writing in a forum or wiki, reporting back to class, reflective discussions in class, or writing an entry in a learning diary or portfolio.

	In lingua franca and tandem constellations	Only in tandem constellation
<b>Preparatory tasks</b>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Pupils use the target language</p> <p>Use/create preparatory activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduce pupils to the topic</li> <li>- Provide pupils with relevant means of expression</li> </ul> <p>If the topic is covered in your course book, you can use and adapt suitable activities.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Pupils use their native language</p> <p>Pupils have to be prepared to be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- talk about the topic</li> <li>- accommodate to non-native speakers' proficiency level</li> <li>- help their peers, e.g. by using shadowing techniques (repeating and modifying what the partner had said) or filling lexical gaps.</li> </ul>

	<p>Prepare pupils for the intercultural collaborative experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Foster openness and empathy</li> <li>- Encourage pupils to help each other</li> <li>- Make pupils aware that they can learn from each other</li> </ul>
	<p>Familiarise pupils with the telecollaboration tools they will be using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use the tools in the computer lab to make sure pupils know how to access and use them</li> <li>- Give pupils tasks for practising telecollaboration access from home</li> </ul>
<b>Task for the main telecollaboration session</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Think of simple and straightforward communication tasks</li> <li>- Focus on personal interaction</li> <li>- Choose topics that enable pupils to talk/write about things with which they are familiar, which they can identify with, on which they have personal opinions, or which can be discussed controversially (for higher proficiency levels)</li> <li>- Think of tasks that help make pupils become aware of individual and cultural differences and similarities (e.g. regarding their everyday lives, school issues, attitudes and behaviour, likes and dislikes)</li> </ul>
<b>Follow-up tasks</b>	<p>Think of tasks that help pupils to secure and assess learning results and to reflect on the intercultural exchange, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Reporting back to the class</li> <li>o Follow-up discussions in class or in a forum</li> <li>o Writing an individual or collaborative report or portfolio</li> <li>o Writing a learning diary with reflections on e.g. what they liked, what they didn't like, what they learned, what they found out about their partner(s), what they could do better in the next telecollaboration session)</li> </ul> <p>Think of tasks that help pupils to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reflect on the intercultural exchange: become aware of similarities and differences</li> <li>- reflect their telecollaboration experience</li> <li>- reflect their role as a native speaker interacting with non-native speakers</li> </ul>

Here are some general recommendations and suggestions for **how to use the telecollaboration tools** available in TILA:

<b>OpenSim</b>	<p>Make use of the environments that are available, e.g. Chatterdale, Parolay, Asterix village or Arcadia. Pupils can e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Give directions and let others find their way (alone or in small groups)</li> <li>- Explore the town together and search for certain places (shops or other buildings)</li> <li>- Do a role-play in a restaurant or cafe (e.g. look at the menu and talk about what they would like to eat and what you do not like etc.)</li> <li>- Meet in a cafe and talk about a subject they have been prepared for and discuss particular questions</li> </ul> <p>Create and add posters with text and/or pictures to the environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Place different posters in several places in a TILA OpenSim town and ask pupils to work in pairs and go from poster to poster and complete the tasks specified on the posters (e.g. describe and/or discuss the picture, answer questions, or discuss statements)</li> <li>- To make it more motivating for the pupils, let pupils create the input for the posters themselves (including pictures and statements or questions for their discussion)</li> </ul>
<b>BigBlueButton</b>	<p>Pupils can e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discuss a controversial topic</li> <li>- Talk about likes and dislikes, habits, routines etc.</li> <li>- Talk about questions from a worksheet or questions they have prepared themselves</li> <li>- Talk about uploaded pictures or posters</li> </ul>
<b>Chat</b>	<p>A written chat can be used as an alternative to synchronous oral communication, in particular</p>

	when there are technical problems with e.g. access or sound
<b>Forum/Blog</b>	<p>Pupils can e.g. write text, upload pictures, insert links to videos or sound in order to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduce themselves</li> <li>- Discuss a topic</li> <li>- etc.</li> </ul> <p>Forum interactions can be made more personal by matching pupils in pairs or small groups.</p>

More ideas for tasks and activities can be found in the section “Telecollaboration Tasks and Tools” on the TILA Moodle platform ([www.tilaproject.eu](http://www.tilaproject.eu)).

#### 4.4 Before the telecollaboration exchange

**Before tele-  
collaboration**

- Establish a netiquette for the telecollaboration exchanges paying attention to different netiquette requirements for videoconference, chat and forum
- To get ready for the telecollaboration task, help your pupils to explore the topic and to acquire useful words and phrases
- Help your pupils to become aware of the value of openness and empathy for successful intercultural communication
- Prepare them for helping each other and learning from each other
- Make sure your pupils are sufficiently familiar with the telecollaboration tool
- Find out whether some pupils in your class are already well acquainted with the tools and can help their classmates
- Give pupils precise instructions for the telecollaboration exchange (e.g. prepare worksheets)
- When using BigBlueButton or OpenSim, check access and functions again before your online session
- Agree with your partner teacher on a plan B in case the technology fails



One of your main responsibilities as a teacher will be to develop a telecollaboration task in cooperation with your partner teacher and to prepare your pupils for the telecollaboration exchange.

For a successful and motivating telecollaboration exchange, it is important that pupils feel comfortable with the topic and that they have words and phrases at their disposal that are adequate for the communication task you expect them to engage in.

It is also important that your pupils are ready for the intercultural collaborative experience. Make them aware of the value of openness and empathy. They need an open mind and heart, and they should be willing to learn from each other and to help each other.

Allow enough time for introducing the telecollaboration tools you plan to use. Give your pupils sufficient opportunities for practice. To achieve this, you could for instance use the tools for certain tasks in the preparatory phase. Find out whether there are pupils in your class who are familiar with the technology and can help their classmates.

Make sure that your pupils know what they are supposed to do during the telecollaboration exchange. They need detailed and explicit instructions. It is advisable to prepare worksheets and guidelines for the completion of the task and to discuss the task beforehand in class. Pupils should also be made aware of what they will have to do with the outcomes of the telecollaboration sessions

in the follow-up phase (e.g. report back to the class, write a summary, or assess their experience in a forum/blog post). If your pupils carry out the telecollaboration exchange from home, they also need clear deadlines.

If you are using BigBlueButton or OpenSim, you should check access and main functions again BEFORE your online session begins. Due to frequently changing user groups in a computer lab, the technological settings should not be expected to remain stable. It is also advisable to have a plan B ready in case the technology does not work properly. You could, for instance, be prepared to use Skype instead of BigBlueButton, or switch to a written chat or forum activity in Moodle.

#### **Prepare your pupils for the telecollaboration, e.g.**

- Introduce the topic
- Make pupils familiar with the relevant means of expression
- Foster openness and empathy
- Familiarise pupils with the telecollaboration tools and environments
- Establish netiquette conventions
- Explain the telecollaboration task and the expected outcomes
- Hand out guidelines and/or a worksheet for the telecollaboration task
- Set deadlines

### **4.5 During the telecollaboration exchange**

#### **During tele- collaboration**

- When telecollaborating in the computer lab, support your pupils during the exchange in particular with regard to linguistic-communicative and/or technical problems
- When using a tool for synchronous oral communication, have a plan B ready in case there are technical problems, e.g. be prepared to switch to a written chat or forum

Be ready to support your pupils during the telecollaboration exchange or telecollaboration phase in case they need linguistic-communicative and/or technical help (e.g. when encountering sound problem in BigBlueButton or OpenSim). You will, however, notice that if the technology works well and if your pupils are well prepared, they will be able to manage the interaction autonomously.

If you use a tool for synchronous communication in class, have a plan B ready (e.g. switching from BigBlueButton to Skype or to a written chat or forum task). Make sure you apply plan B as soon as you encounter a technical problems. Don't waste time trying to make things work on the fly. Class hours are short!

The same goes for pupils who use synchronous tools from their home computer. If a technical problem comes up, e.g. with sound in BigBlueButton, a chat room in Moodle should be available as a fall-back option.

It is important to remind pupils of deadlines. Also make sure that they made a telecollaboration appointment with their partner, and check whether they encountered any problems.

#### 4.6 After the telecollaboration exchange

##### After telecollaboration

- If necessary, secure learning results in a follow-up activity (in particular after a synchronous telecollaboration task)
- Use reflective sessions on the exchange and learning diaries to get and give feedback on linguistic-communicative, intercultural or technical problems or achievements
- Use a portfolio approach for assessment and feedback

At the end of the main telecollaboration phase, it is essential to secure learning results in follow-up activities. After an oral communication task in which only some of the pupils were involved, pupils could, for instance, report back to the class or write a blog or forum post about their experience. Pupils could also write a learning diary, for which it might be helpful to give them some guiding questions. Follow-up activities can be individual or collaborative, and they can be carried out in class or at home, with or without telecollaboration support.

Follow-up activities should also include assessments and reflective sessions guided by specific questions. This could be done e.g. with small groups in class or in the form of learning diaries and portfolios.

Teachers could also analyse the pupils' spoken and written performance recordings and give individual or summary feedback on linguistic-communicative, intercultural or thematic aspects.

##### Activities for securing learning results and reflecting on the telecollaboration experience

- Reporting back to the class (presentation of results from discussions with the partner)
- Follow-up discussions (e.g. in small groups in class or in a forum)
- Individual and/or collaborative report writing
- Reflective sessions with small groups in class:  
What did we learn? What did we find out about our partner(s)? Did we become aware of similarities and differences? Was I satisfied with the way I or my partner communicated? Why/Why not?
- Writing a learning diary or portfolio
- Feedback from the teacher

## 5. Teacher guides and webinar recordings

More information about how to design and implement TILA telecollaboration exchanges can be found in the TILA teacher guides and webinar recordings.

### TILA teacher guides

- FL learning & teaching in the 21th century
- Getting started on TILA
- Task design and implementation
- New teacher and student roles
- Assessing telecollaboration
- Ethical issues
- Do's and don'ts in telecollaboration

### TILA webinar recordings

- Intercultural telecollaboration
- Telecollaboration tools
- The virtual world OpenSim
- Telecollaboration tasks
- Organisation of telecollaboration exchanges
- Teachers' experiences

TILA teacher guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• TILA Moodle platform: <a href="http://www.tilaproject.eu/moodle">www.tilaproject.eu/moodle</a> (&gt; "Teachers' corner")</li><li>• TILA website: <a href="http://www.tilaproject.eu">www.tilaproject.eu</a> (&gt; "Resources")</li><li>• TILA YouTube channel: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/user/TILAPROJECTEU/playlists">www.youtube.com/user/TILAPROJECTEU/playlists</a></li></ul>
TILA webinar recordings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• TILA Moodle platform: <a href="http://www.tilaproject.eu/moodle">www.tilaproject.eu/moodle</a> (&gt; "Project documentation")</li><li>• TILA YouTube channel: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/user/TILAPROJECTEU/playlists">www.youtube.com/user/TILAPROJECTEU/playlists</a></li></ul>