

# TILA Research Results on Telecollaboration<sup>1</sup>

## Chapter 8

### INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES OF TILA LEARNERS

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#### 1 SUMMARY

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Nowadays, the intercultural dimension in language learning and teaching has become a key educational issue. However, the very notion of intercultural communication is not settled and requires more empirical studies. As an intercultural educational environment, TILA provides a possibility for such an empirical research. Hence, this case study presents what intercultural communication is from the perspectives and experiences of TILA learners. Based on interviews of thirteen learners from different countries and languages, we acquired insights into how they experienced the intercultural dimension they participated in. First, they concretely discovered how others are different from and similar to them, which helps to de-centre, and as such, is the beginning phase of developing intercultural awareness and competences. Second, they discovered more about language learning either through tandem or lingua franca situations, and as a result, they greatly valued the importance of interaction and exchange - a key element of language acquisition. Finally, the whole TILA experience works as the evident way of completing language learning for them, as they are eager to communicate with others through the language they learn. An intercultural environment is, however, not sufficient to develop learners' intercultural communicative competences as these competences can only be fostered through the feedback and awareness activities of language teachers.

#### 2 BACKGROUND DISCUSSION

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As we were interested in presenting an analysis of the intercultural dimension of TILA (for an overview of TILA, see Jauregi et al, 2013; Pol, 2013) through two case studies, one focusing on teachers (see case study of teachers) and one focusing on learners as they complement each other, the theoretical framework supporting the research objectives and questions is basically the same. TILA's environment

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with its challenges and complexities will be outlined through the intercultural dimension and from the perspectives and experiences of learners.

So, the question of TILA's "impact" as an intercultural environment will not be addressed as the term "impact" may imply a direct cause-effect relation, which cannot be so simply expressed and extracted from any kind of intercultural setting. There are so many parameters to account for in approaching what interculturality or the intercultural dimension is. The concept of "Intercultural communicative competence" is still questioned and belongs to the fascinating debate about ICC, IC (Byram, 1997, 2008) or just interculturality (Dervin, 2010, 2011, 2012) or pluriculturalism (Zarate et al, 2008; 2011; Moore, 2006; Martinez et al, 2008; Kramersch, 2009) (see case study of teachers).

Inscribed in this enlarged theoretical framework, the case study presented is based on the use of technologies (O'Dowd 2007, 2013; O'Dowd & Waire, 2009; Lamy & Zourou, 2013; Potolia & Zourou, 2013), of a task-based approach (Peterson, 2010) and of the telecollaboration of learners viewed as social actors (Council of Europe, 2001; Kern & Liddicoat, 2008) from different languages and countries and addressing the larger issue of plurilingual/pluricultural education in Europe (Beacco & Byram, 2007; Beacco et al, 2010; Byram, 2008; Starkey, 2002, 2011; Zarate et al, 2008, 2011). Only through a broadening of concepts could we present a clearer and more refined picture of the TILA intercultural dimension as a learning environment foreseeing one key aspect of the future of language – culture education in Europe and the world: addressing the plurilingual and intercultural dimension of individual and collective encounters (CEFRL, 2001).

### 3 OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH

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#### 3.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

The research questions are also similar in both case studies as they are empirical investigations informing "interculturality", the first one through the teachers and the second one through the learners. How is interculturality – defined as a process of "inter" between cultures (see Abdallah-Pretceille, 1986; Abdallah-Pretceille & Porcher, 1999; Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999; Deardorff, 2009; Dervin, 2010, 2011, 2012; Dervin & Liddicoat, 2013) – perceived and experienced through TILA? What are the parameters to enhance the intercultural dimension within a European learning environment aimed at intercultural language acquisition? How can the intercultural dimension be developed in order to foster intercultural communicative competence and the intercultural skills of learners?

#### 3.2 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the research questions, an analysis of individual or (group) interviews of learners about the TILA environment was conducted with regard to its main objective of intercultural enhancement. The interviews are related to the multimodality of documents produced by the learners (chats, posts, BBB etc.). There are thirteen learners from TILA class telecollaboration: nine in ELF partnerships and four in TANDEM. Recordings were carried out through BBB or mp4 with hand transcription.

Either quantitative or qualitative data collections proved to be difficult to obtain in the given period of time (see case study of teachers), notwithstanding the fact they were complementary and resulted in a better understanding of what intercultural telecollaboration is and could be within a European educational space (Beacco & Byram, 2007; Beacco et al, 2010, Starkey, 2002, 2011). Data collection from learners proved especially difficult, as researchers had no direct access to them and depended on their teachers for the learners' agreement in participating in an interview, arranging a suitable time, carrying out the interview, and transcribing-translating the content from the learners' mother tongues<sup>2</sup>.

Choosing the learners? It was not possible to stick to a protocol as information came very late. First, we wanted to pick up learners after reading their BBB or chat productions for what could be described as some kind of intercultural communicative incident. We managed that only with the Spain/France ELF partnership. For the other partnerships, we managed to get the Dutch learners corresponding to the French ones chosen by the French teacher on the basis of a "good" learner and a "weaker" learner. The corresponding English learners were chosen just out of convenience for the teacher-interviewer. Teachers proved to be valuable interviewers because of their closeness to their pupils, who thus perhaps shared their TILA experience more readily with them. However, teachers are not trained interviewers.

This means that for collecting sound qualitative data under the circumstances, we would have needed time to make a first analysis of the learners' productions, select them carefully according to the intercultural communicative incidents, and take time through the teachers to organise the interviews carried out by researchers who would have gone to different parts of France and Europe. This would also have implied having a common session with researchers from other countries participating directly in this research i.e defining "intercultural communicative incidents" from the communicative production of learners, selecting them through the same grid, designing common guide questions and interview protocols, then carrying out the interviews, transcribing them in the same way, and translating them accordingly to the languages mastered by the researchers<sup>3</sup>.

Or, had we maintained the teachers as interviewers, we would have had to train them in their L1 in interviewing pupils for research purposes, in particular, in not inducing answers of the respondents, while creating a favourable communicative situation. However, reaching that level of understanding and know-how in the task of interviewing requires time, even more so as some teachers thought that an interview could just be like a questionnaire, asking the pupils questions and reporting key words on the sheets. One teacher even repeated this approach with the selected learners<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, interviews were conducted either individually or in pair or groups of pupils even though we had explicitly stated the need for individual interviews.

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<sup>2</sup> The guide questions had to be translated into Spanish and Dutch to help the interviewer-teacher. In the Netherlands, the learners were not interviewed by their teacher but by a TILA university member.

<sup>3</sup> All researchers have a good command of English except two researchers in France.

<sup>4</sup> As reported in the case study of teachers, we are incredibly grateful to all the teachers who spent so much time and energy in the project.

However, guiding questions proposed by WP3 were used as to facilitate potential comparisons when using the same tools and were translated and “adapted” into Spanish, French and Dutch<sup>5</sup>.

Interviews and the productions of learners are invaluable data to understand what was done, undertaken and understood about intercultural telecollaboration: a more ethnographic kind of methodology should have been carried out as we needed the learners’ intercultural communicative productions to select them for interviews and would have even used their tasks to make them reflect further if interviews had been planned not too far from the experience. Consequently, the format of the case study seems much more compliant with the multimodal set of data produced and collected, even if it was sometimes sparse, and with all the flaws and limitations mentioned. However, this kind of research is also the most appropriate way to get insights into the construction and the observation of an emerging intercultural learning environment for intercultural language acquisition from the experience of learners.

To sum up, data collected through a wide variety of instruments (questionnaires, interviews, tasks) proved to be invaluable for a better understanding of the possibilities offered by an intercultural learning environment that TILA provides and what this means for learners.

### 3.3 CORPUS

The learners interviewed present a sample of learners’ representations of the intercultural dimension of language acquisition and we were careful to select learners of different languages and countries.

**Population interviewed:** the thirteen learners aged from 14 to 16 years old, come from four different countries (England, France, the Netherlands, Spain) and the languages they learn are English, French and Spanish. There are two ELF partnerships (Spain/France with two French learners and two Spanish learners, and Holland/France with two French Learners and three Dutch learners). There is also a TANDEM partnership (English/French with two English learners and two French learners).

**Codes used to refer to learners:**

FL1-ELF-SP (to be read as French Learner 1 doing ELF with Spain), FL2-ELF-SP, SL1 -ELF-FR (Spanish Learner 1 doing ELF with France), SL2 -ELF-FR, FL3 -ELF-NL, FL4-ELF-NL, DL1-ELF-FR (Dutch Learner 1 doing ELF with France), DL2-ELF-FR, DL3-ELF-FR, FL5-Tandem-EN, FL6-Tandem-EN, EL1-Tandem-FR, EL2-Tandem-FR

Learner productions ranged from one task completed in Tandem French/English to four and five tasks in ELF. All the tasks started with “introductions” and topics varied such as “food habits”, “organising a party”, “discussing”, “finding out false information”, “stereotypes”. It is worth noticing that there is coherence in the development of tasks (more guided first to more complex achievements in terms of learners’ autonomy):

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<sup>5</sup> What we mean by “adapted” is that we made it clear as instructions to teachers that the questions underlined within this interviewing guide should be carefully addressed as they dealt more with communicative and intercultural issues.

- introduction and exchanging about tastes
- speaking about tastes (food) and organising a party
- speaking, negotiating, compromising about finding out a common topic to be presented

These tasks require either class or home activities, synchronous and asynchronous, different tools such as Moodle, wiki, BBB etc.

All the learners were interviewed in their mother tongue and the transcription was then translated into French to be analysed by the French team of researchers, except for the English from the English learners. The extracts selected from the learners' interviews illustrate the analysis and they are mainly in French.

To sum up, the learners' case study presents a variety of languages and countries, of language combinations through ELF or TANDEM situations with synchronous and asynchronous tasks, all performed during class time.

## 4 ANALYSIS OF LEARNERS' INTERVIEWS

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Learners are all extremely motivated and enthusiastic about TILA as they are eager to meet other learners from different countries and to communicate with them using the language they learn.

They find telecollaboration an obvious way of practising language and can be very frustrated when technology fails to operate. What is implicit all throughout the interviews is that learners cannot see why TILA has to be an exploratory environment and why this is not the way of practising language as part of the language curriculum. In fact, the "practising" of any textbook should be replaced by TILA telecollaborative engaging activities with "foreign" learners.

The analysis will be organised into three parts, how they discover the "other" is different through collaborative or individual working cultures and through intercultural awareness, how they discover the "other" is similar and then how they discover more about language learning and the importance of interaction and exchange either through ELF or TANDEM situations.

### 4.1 DISCOVERING THE "OTHER" AS BEING DIFFERENT

From the interviews, there is a clear awareness of the "other" as being different, which can be exemplified by the overuse of "us" and "them".

#### 4.1.1 Differences can be interpreted as collaborative or individual ethos

The partnership between Spanish and French pupils clearly illustrate two educational, learning cultures:

**I : Avez-vous aimé cet échange ?<sup>6</sup>**

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<sup>6</sup> All transcripts are in French, the common language for the research team, except for the English learners. The questions asked by the teacher-interviewer are in bold letters. I = teacher-interviewer and see above codes for respondents.

[...]

**FL2-ELF-SP:** moi, j'ai l'impression qu'on donnait plus, nous, en tout cas on donnait plus qu'eux, ils donnaient... c'est comme si eux, ils avaient pas envie de faire le projet... même si après... en fait à la fin, ils ont fait leur travail mais nous, pendant le travail, on a fait plus d'efforts... on a TOUS essayé de faire des efforts et puis, quand il fallait montrer le travail, on voit qu'eux, ils ont fait leur travail et nous, on avait rien fait

**FL1-ELF-SP:** ils ont pas travaillé en équipe, en fait

[...]

**I: Dans le cadre de la communication interculturelle (entre 2 cultures), avez-vous l'impression que vous avez appris quelque chose sur l'autre pays ?**

**FL1-ELF-SP:** honnêtement, ils ont pas l'habitude de travailler en groupe, ils ont une manière de travailler

**FL2-ELF-SP:** oui, c'est vrai ; parce que nous, en France, dans toutes les écoles, souvent le travail, c'est en groupe ; après c'est plus facile ; mais eux, on a vu, c'était pas bon...

**FL1-ELF-SP:** ils connaissent pas ; ils savent pas s'organiser

**vous voulez dire qu'ils travaillent plus individuellement ?**

**FL2-ELF-SP:** voilà

*(Group interview)*

These extracts are rich in pronouns such as “on”, “nous”, “ils”. “We” refer to some kind of group work, which is familiar in the FL classroom in France, expressing some kind of educational culture opposed to a more individual way of working, which would be more familiar in the FL classroom in Spain. French pupils made a judgment about the difficulty of working collaboratively with Spanish pupils in order to work together for a common goal. There is some distance taken by the French interviewees, reflecting on the experience and suggesting an explanation about educational learning cultures. It seems that what counts more for the French pupils here is the process whereas the results might have been the priority for the Spanish pupils, casting aside at the end, the others.

The French pupils also became tired of asking questions with no answers and lost interest in the project:

**I: Est-ce que vous êtes satisfaite(s) de VOTRE contribution, de votre apport à cette communication ?**

**FL1-ELF-SP:** oui

**FL2-ELF-SP:** un petit peu... oui, pas complètement... parce que j'avoue que... parfois comme j'avais aucune réponse, j'insistais pas davantage... à envoyer une tonne de messages... au bout d'un moment... **(FL1-ELF-SP c'est sûr que quand une personne répond pas, cela donne plus envie), oui, ça donne plus envie après...**

*(group interview)*

However, the Spanish learners insist more on the quality of connection, which hampered smooth communication. They therefore seem to show a more pragmatic attitude towards the tasks to be completed:

**I: Qu'est-ce que tu n'as pas aimé ?**

**SL1-ELF-FR:** Les pannes qu'il y a eu pendant les télécollaborations parce qu'il y a eu trop de problèmes avec la technologie.

**I: Tu as d'autres préférences ?**

**SL1-ELF-FR:** Eh bien... qu'on pourrait le faire d'une autre façon avec laquelle on n'ait pas autant de risques de pannes technologiques.

**I: La qualité technologique a été suffisante pour la tâche ?**

**SL1-ELF-FR:** Eh bien... comme je disais, elle n'a pas été vraiment adéquate parce que la connexion à Internet ne fonctionnait pas très bien et ça compliquait beaucoup la tâche.

(...)

**I: Quels aspects de l'échange de télécollaboration devraient être changés et améliorés ?**

**SL1-ELF-FR:** La qualité de la technologie devrait être assez meilleure pour ce type de tâches et pas grande chose d'autre réellement

(...)

**SL2-ELF-FR:** On devrait améliorer et changer, euh... améliorer, dans ce cas-ci, la technologie. Car parfois ça ne marche pas trop, autant la nôtre comme parfois la leur peut aussi ne pas fonctionner, mais je ne sais pas si c'est ainsi. Et c'est tout. Le reste, je crois que ça va.

(Individual interviews)

We can notice there was much frustration due to technology on BBB, which was apparently not the case with the pupils who used chats, even though they regretted not being able to speak to and see the partner:

**I: Et est-ce que ton correspondant ... est-ce qu'il t'a fait des propositions ?**

**FL3-ELF-NL:** Euh ben ... je ne sais pas, il voulait m'entendre de vive voix ou même en caméra

(...)

**I: Est-ce que tu aurais une préférence pour une technologie différente ? Comment on peut faire pour que ce soit encore mieux ?**

**FL4-ELF-NL:** je ne sais pas (rires)

**I: Tu ne sais pas ! est-ce que tu aimerais par exemple, les voir et les entendre tes correspondants comme sur skype ?**

**FL4-ELF-NL:** oui

**I: Tu penses que ça serait encore mieux ? ou pour toi, ça n'a pas de différence ?**

**FL4-ELF-NL:** oui ça peut être mieux

**Oui ! le fait de les voir, tu ne serais pas timide ?**

**FL4-ELF-NL:** non

**I: Non ! et tu penses que de les entendre, ça serait mieux que de leur écrire ?**

**FL4-ELF-NL:** ben oui ... c'est bien aussi de leur écrire

**C'est bien de faire les deux**

**FL4-ELF-NL:** oui

**EL1-Tandem-FR:** Video could be added to help with on the spot thinking and speaking

**FL5-Tandem-FR:** La vidéo, se voir

(individual interviews)

**Summary:** Synchronous tasks are the added-value for motivating learners and allow intercultural communication and exchanges. Frustration due to technological problems is increased with BBB (speaking interaction with camera): under these circumstances, pupils might feel even more rejected or excluded when interaction is constantly interrupted. Two interesting behaviours emerged to tackle the problem: the Spanish learners opted for a pragmatic approach of getting the results and completing the task. This attitude could be perceived as an individual attitude ingrained within an educational, cultural context. Conversely, the French learners opted for the group *ethos* of doing whatever was possible even if the task was partially completed, something they phrased as being more used to group work than their Spanish partners. They showed some degree of intercultural awareness in the interviews, something that could be exploited further through post-tasks or experience diaries.

#### 4.1.2 Differences as emerging awareness to be worked on

Through interviews, different judgements about the “others” are reported, proving that journal experiences or diaries would be relevant tools to explore perceptions along with feedback sessions of intercultural telecollaboration as to challenge and reflect on them.

In the following extract, the French pupils find the Dutch partners more direct, not always “polite” when they do not answer to “hello”, a bit less friendly, but this is not “important”:

**I: Est-ce que tu as l'impression que les autres élèves, les élèves néerlandais communiquent de façon différente ? par exemple, elles sont plus directes, plus polies, moins polies, plus amicales, moins amicales ?**

**FL4-ELF-NL:** elles sont plus directes

**I: Et par rapport à la politesse, tu les trouves plus ou moins polies ?**

**FL4-ELF-NL:** des fois, elles ne répondent pas quand je leur dis bonjour mais sinon, en général oui

**I: Pour toi, c'est impoli qu'elles parlent quand on leur dit bonjour ? toi, tu vas le percevoir comme une impolitesse en fait ?**

**FL4-ELF-NL:** oui, mais ça ne me dérange pas

**I: Ça ne te dérange pas ! donc tu les trouves donc plus amicales ou plutôt pas amicales ... ou moins amicales ?**

**FL4-ELF-NL:** moins amicales mais pas trop ... non ...

(individual interview)

Another French pupil finds the Dutch partner rather cold, more “down to earth” and more “direct”:

**I: Est-ce que tu as rencontré des problèmes de communication avec ton correspondant ?**

**FL3-ELF-NL:** En ben ... du coup oui, il était assez froid

**I: Tu le trouves froid ?**



**FL3-ELF-NL:** Oui

(..)

**I:** Mais par rapport à ta façon de communiquer ?

**FL3-ELF-NL:** Euh ben oui ... comme je l'ai dit, il était froid quoi

**I:** Tu l'as trouvé plus froid ?

**FL3-ELF-NL:** Oui vachement ... vachement

**I:** Plus froid et plus direct ?

**FL3-ELF-NL:** Plus terre à terre

**I:** C'est-à-dire ? qu'est-ce que tu veux dire par terre à terre ?

**FL3-ELF-NL:** Euh ben plus ... je ne sais pas plus direct enfin

(individual interview)

Conversely, the Dutch express some judgements on their French partners, some of them based on pre-conceptions (serious and stubborn) and show how these perceptions have changed through the intercultural telecollaboration:

**DL2-ELF-FR:** Eh bien, au début je pensais qu'elle était très sérieuse, mais plus tard, plus tard il n'en était plus ainsi, mais c'était un peu la première impression que j'avais d'elle, et je l'ai vue aussi sur Facebook et Instagram et Snapchat je l'ai vue aussi et oui, elle était beaucoup plus gentille que je n'avais pensé au début.

**I:** Ok, L, est-ce que tu peux en dire quelque chose ? Qu'as tu pensé ? Est-ce que tu l'as trouvée directe ou aussi gentille ?

**DL3-ELF-FR:** Au début, il s'agit juste de demander et de regarder la réponse mais ensuite elle a commencé à dire plus des choses, plus demander, elle commençait aussi à envoyer des smileys et des choses pareilles {...}

**I:** Ok, donc, au début un peu standard et neutre et plus tard elle s'est sentie plus à l'aise et elle est devenue plus personnelle, est-ce que je le comprends bien de cette façon ?

**DL3-ELF-FR:** Ja

**I:** Ok, S, est-ce que tu as eu une expérience spéciale comme celle-ci ou euh remarqué des choses ?

**DL1-ELF-FR:** Oui je, je pensais que les Français étaient toujours un peu têtus etc mais il s'est alors avéré qu'il n'en était pas ainsi, ils étaient beaucoup plus gentils que je n'avais pensé.

(group interview)

**Summary:** In order to work on emerging judgments of others, regular feedback on telecollaboration as a post-task, along with the use of experience diaries, is necessary to develop intercultural skills when interacting with others. Time is needed to reflect on the communication, to capitalise on one's own attitudes and preconceptions as well as on others'.

## 4.2 DISCOVERING THE “OTHER” AS BEING SIMILAR: AN AGE GROUP CULTURE CONNECTED TO INTERNET, SOCIAL NETWORKS AND “WORLD” CULTURES (POPULAR SINGERS)

Pupils find it easy to communicate with people the same age as they have a common culture

For example, social network and food habits typical of teenagers (snacking) are reported to be part of this common culture:

**I: Et est-ce que vous avez trouvé en revanche des similitudes ?**

**FL1-ELF-SP:** non, à part qu'ils sont adolescents comme nous et qu'ils font un peu les mêmes choses... par rapport aux réseaux sociaux et tout ça

[...]

**FL2-ELF-SP:** il y a des points en commun ; comme on est tous les deux adolescents, on va parler de grignotage, et voilà... après...

**FL1-ELF-SP:** non, il y a pas eu de grosses différences

(group interview)

The informal way of communication between teenagers is also reported:

**I: Tu as la sensation que toi et les autres élèves vous avez communiqué de manières différentes ?**

**SL1-ELF-FR:** Non, plus ou moins nous avons communiqué au même niveau en ce qui concerne le respect, la manière de parler et tout le reste.

**SL2-ELF-FR:** Non, nous avons communiqué d'égal à égal, avec respect et tout.

(group interview)

**EL1-Tandem-FR:** It was mostly the same<sup>7</sup>

(individual interview)

**EL2-Tandem-FR:** No, I think everyone was generally informal and friendly

(individual interview)

**FL5-Tandem-EN:** Amicales. Il y a une jeune fille avec qui j'ai parlé, on a échangé sur facebook et sur les autres réseaux sociaux ... on ne parle pas mais on a échangé.

(individual interview)

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<sup>7</sup> The English pupils answered on paper with very limited words so we kept their answers in English.

The analysis of chats clearly supports the common popular culture they share as pupils. As soon as they get in contact, they suggest their accounts on facebook, instagram, whatsapp. They know the same singers and watch the same American series. It is worth noting that sharing a common culture does not necessarily imply communicating through language as FL5-ELF-EN mentions: “ *we have shared things on facebook and other social networks ... we do not speak but we have shared things ...*”.

**Summary:** Pupils find it easy to exchange and interact with other European pupils of the same age as they share a common “global” culture.

### 4.3 DISCOVERING MORE ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING: THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERACTION AND EXCHANGE

Motivation is enhanced with synchronous activities allowing real-time exchanges with others and the variety of language constellations offers more opportunities to develop and transfer these intercultural skills when communicating with others.

#### 4.3.1 In ELF situations<sup>8</sup>

A way to learn about people from other cultures through the medium of English was reported by all interviewees:

**I: Tu as aimé communiquer avec un autre locuteur non-natif ?**

**SL1-ELF-FR:** Oui, c'est une chose qui m'a toujours intéressée, parler avec d'autres personnes qui ne sont pas anglaises natives mais qui le parlent aussi et pouvoir connaître d'autres personnes qui communiquent aussi avec cette langue.

**I: Comment le système « lingua franca » a influencé ton interaction communicative ?**

**SL1-ELF-FR:** Euh...bien, voyons, la plupart des fois je pouvais comprendre ma partenaire, et les autres fois que je ne pouvais pas la comprendre, c'était simplement parce que la connexion à Internet ne fonctionnait pas et les mots étaient hachés.

**I: Tu as la sensation que tu as appris quelque chose de l'autre pays, la culture et ou les autres élèves ?**

**SL1-ELF-FR :** Oui, j'ai pu apprendre des choses sur la culture de... bon... dans ce cas musulmane, parce que ma partenaire était musulmane, et bon, sur la France, son pays où elle habite.

*(individual interview)*

**I: Qu'est-ce que tu as aimé le mieux dans tout cela ?**

**DL2-ELF-FR:** Eh bien, je ne sais pas, justement, euh, oui je sais pas, justement chatter avec cette personne, surtout parce que elle habite aussi un autre lieu et vit une autre vie etc. et j'ai justement trouvé assez agréable pour chatter avec

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<sup>8</sup> See Kohn, 2011, 2014.

(...)

**DL1-ELF-FR:** Je trouve assez drôle de connaître une nouvelle langue et que euh on peut également avoir des conversations avec des personnes d'un tout autre pays et d'une autre culture etc.

(...)

**DL3-ELF-FR:** Eh bien, j'ai trouvé assez drôle de savoir ce que la France, ou en tout cas cette fille, pense de nous et euh sait de nous, et ce qu'elle veut savoir de nous.

*(group interview)*

**I: Est-ce que tu as trouvé intéressant de parler, en anglais à quelqu'un d'autre qui n'est pas anglophone non plus ?**

**DL2-ELF-FR:** Bien, j'ai bien aimé, et euh, c'était aussi une fois, c'était assez drôle, parce que à ce moment nous avons, Lara et moi, nous avons appris à C, c'était la fille avec laquelle nous avons parlé, nous lui avons appris aussi quelques mots en néerlandais, c'était vraiment drôle.

(...)

**DL3-ELF-FR:** Oui je trouvais, oui, c'était bien agréable, parce que comme ça on apprend tous les deux quelque chose de cela [de cette expérience], sinon, on a le sentiment de : « elle le peut déjà, elle est beaucoup mieux que moi ».

**DL2-ELF-FR:** ... qu'il a à peu près le même niveau d'anglais que toi, et ça j'ai trouvé une idée assez agréable...

*(group interview)*

Reflecting on the experience, which is one of the objectives of the interview has helped learners to figure out some misunderstanding during the interaction:

**DL1-ELF-FR:** Non, elle a compris tout ce que j'ai dit, mais je pense qu'ils n'ont pas compris une question, et moi je n'ai pas compris de, euh, à un moment où ils ont posé la question, est-ce que tu aimes bien le gouda, et moi je pensais qu'il s'agissait de la ville, mais mon impression maintenant est qu'il s'agissait du fromage, qui vient de là.

*(group interview)*

A way to be more adaptive to different accents when communicating with others was also reported:

**SL1-ELF-FR:** Parce que parler avec des personnes qui parlent anglais mais avec un autre accent à cause de leur pays, ça développe ton oreille à cette façon de parler anglais et ça augmente tes connaissances de la langue.

**SL1-ELF-FR:** Parce que parler avec d'autres personnes en anglais aide, c'est-à-dire aide à comprendre l'anglais de différentes façons et ainsi à la fin on s'améliore.

*(individual interview)*

A way to make learning easier through gaining different experiences of intercultural communication was also mentioned:

**I: Sur l'apprentissage de la langue étrangère : tu as l'impression que la tâche de télécollaboration a eu des effets positifs sur ta compétence linguistique et communicative ?**

**SL2-ELF-FR:** Oui, parce que, ainsi, on pourrait dire que l'anglais d'un natif est plus difficile à capter que celui de quelqu'un qui ne parle pas anglais avec autant de fréquence qu'eux. Donc oui.

*(individual interview)*

(...)

**FL1-ELF-SP:** ben, ça nous a permis de savoir à quel point on peut parler, sans lire quelque chose et se préparer

(...)

**FL1-ELF-SP:** ben oui... on se sera plus à l'aise à parler, on aura déjà de l'expérience

**FL2-ELF-SP:** voilà ; s'il y a un voyage à faire par exemple et qu'on doit aller dans une famille d'accueil, par exemple, c'est vrai... ce sera plus facile... en tout cas pour ceux qui ont réussi à avoir un bon dialogue... ce sera plus facile

**FL1-ELF-SP** plus tard, quand on voyagera...

**I: Vous pensez que c'est en termes d'expérience... le fait d'avoir vécu une fois le contact**

**FL1-ELF-SP:** qu'on a moins peur... on a plus d'assurance... ça nous donne de l'assurance en fait

*(group interview)*

**I: Est-ce que tu as l'impression que ce genre d'activités, les tâches de télécollaboration ... ça va t'aider à progresser en anglais ? est-ce que tu penses que si tu en faisais plus souvent, ça peut être quelque chose qui t'aide ou pas ?**

**FL3-ELF-NL:** Ah oui ... vraiment

**I: Oui ... toi tu penses que oui ?**

**FL3-ELF-NL:** Oui ... euh ben j'ai même vu la différence ... même on n'en fait pas beaucoup, mais j'ai vu la différence ... déjà l'anglais maintenant, ça m'intéresse beaucoup plus

**I: Donc, c'est une sorte de motivation et tu penses que ça peut t'aider à progresser ?**

**FL3-ELF-NL:** Oui

*(individual interview)*

Telecollaboration offering interaction with foreigners maximises learning as one is forced to interact in the FL and cannot escape it, a context that the traditional FL classroom allows when all learners share the same L1, thus minimising L2 interaction:

**I: Est-ce que vous avez aussi l'impression que vous, cela vous a aussi apporté quelque chose de positif, pour ce qui est de votre compétence linguistique ou communicative ?**

**DL2-ELF-FR:** Bon oui, parce que on ne peut pas alors pour ainsi dire, avec cette personne on ne peut pas parler néerlandais pas un instant, parce que pendant le leçon d'anglais normalement je parle le plus souvent, avec la personne qui se trouve à côté de moi, je parle normalement le néerlandais, mais avec elle on ne peut pas parler le néerlandais parce qu'elle ne comprend pas donc on doit parler forcément l'anglais et c'est vrai que c'est mieux.

(...)

**DL1-ELF-FR:** Oui, oui un peu, comme F l'a dit déjà, oui, on ne peut pas parler néerlandais avec eux quand on le veut, ce qu'on peut faire normalement, mais euh, oui, on doit parler l'anglais, et de ça on apprend déjà quelque chose.

(...)

**DL3-ELF-FR:** Oui je le trouve aussi, on ne peut pas parler une autre langue quand on le veut, on doit euh.

(...)

**DL1-ELF-FR:** Oui, sûrement mieux, parce que normalement on apprend l'anglais dans le livre, mais maintenant on fait des vraies conversations, euh, alors tout cela est un peu la pratique du livre.

*(group interview)*

Chats are also reported as making communication and learning easier as writing gives you time to think about words:

**DL2-ELF-FR:** Oui, en fait je trouve que c'est un bon moyen, seulement, j'aurais peut-être aussi aimé vraiment parler de l'un à l'autre, mais euh, ensuite c'est aussi plus difficile, quand on va parler à quelqu'un d'autre, de trouver les mots justes pour dire en anglais, et quand on tape, je trouve alors que c'est un peu plus facile.

*(group interview)*

We have to point out that the notions of ELF or Tandem can be in themselves new concepts for pupils, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

**I: Est-ce que ça t'a plu de communiquer avec quelqu'un qui n'est pas un natif ? de communiquer avec un hollandais qui apprend l'anglais ?**

**FL3-ELF-NL:** Euh ben ... je n'ai pas vu la différence en fait ... on n'a jamais parlé avec des anglais ... donc voilà

*(individual interview)*

### 4.3.2 In TANDEM situations

Tandem constellations also allow pupils to become more confident in speaking the other language and to know more about the way it is really spoken. Just like for ELF, the screens (BBB or Chats) provide time to reflect and learn and help in boosting learners' confidence in communicating with others. This process of time during communication has to be pointed out and monitored by teachers to help the learning process through communication.

**EL1-Tandem-FR:** to learn about colloquial language ....to learn how French people actually speak it

**EL2-Tandem-FR:** longer time to be spent chatting

**FL5-Tandem-EN:** on était quand même derrière un écran ... on avait le temps de réfléchir à ce qu'on allait mettre ... demander si on ne comprenait pas

*(individual interviews)*

Just like LF, tandem telecollaboration offering interaction with foreigners maximise learning as one is forced to interact in the FL and cannot escape it, a context that the traditional FL classroom allows when all learners share the same L1, thus minimising L2 interaction:

**FL6-Tandem-EN:** oui voilà, on est obligé de parler anglais ... donc, ça nous met des barrières et donc on apprend (rires)

*(individual interview)*

**Summary:** Either ELF or TANDEM constellations support the development of intercultural skills and this variety when on offer should help in transferring these intercultural skills. Through intercultural language acquisition, learners gain some intercultural capital that will prove useful in the more multilingual, multicultural world they will live in. Synchronous activities are favoured for interaction and therefore for intercultural communication. They sustain interest in others and motivation in language and culture learning. To develop reflection concerning intercultural experiences, feedback on tasks from critical communicative incidents and from experience diaries has to be worked on precisely by the educational community and should be part of any teacher training on intercultural telecollaboration.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

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Learners are as enthusiastic about TILA as the teachers. We could even say the kind of environment TILA offers is obvious for them, as they have integrated what technology<sup>9</sup> allows them to do in terms of language learning. Practising with the textbook in the traditional FL classroom seems odd to them when they can practice with real young people through synchronous and asynchronous activities. Synchronous activities are even more valued for the right-now language practice they offer, which means that schools have to invest in the appropriate technology and technical support. Moreover, language learning is enhanced through motivating collaborative tasks, but also through tasks allowing getting to know about others, exchanging ideas, ways of doing things and lifestyles. So telecollaboration

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<sup>9</sup> All the following authors have discussed the integration of technology into language learning and teaching: Bertin & Narcy-Combes, 2010; Boughnim, & Narcy-Combes, 2011; Garda 2012; Guichon 2012 ; Guth, 2012; Jauregi & Banados, 2008; Jauregi et al, 2011; Reinders 2012; Lamy & Zourou, 2013; Potolia & Zourou, 2013.

enhances language acquisition as learners are put in a situation in which they have to speak the target language (they are forced to), and through these language acquisition activities, communicative skills and repertoires are also enhanced thanks to a variety of experiences either LF or tandem constellations. It is important to provide long-term intercultural telecollaborations (either in class or outside class) in order to measure some “impact” as intercultural communicative competences are best developed through sustained interactions with others and with a variety of LF and Tandem constellations fostering these skills and their transferability. Feedback with post-tasks are a prerequisite of any intercultural telecollaboration to help learners reflect on critical communicative incidents and to distance themselves from preconceived ideas and false perceptions. Along with the writing of experience diaries or journals (Molinié, 2006; Moloney & Genua-Petrovic, 2012; Wang, 2013) which could be written in L1 if the level of the target language is not sufficient (A1-A2)<sup>10</sup>, teachers’ feedback on post-tasks is essential to foster a benevolent, open-minded attitude when speaking with others having different cultural and language backgrounds. These benevolent, open-minded attitudes are part and parcel of any educational objective that pervades all subject matters. Language teaching and learning is nevertheless the key subject matter to let learners reflect and explore, in the safe environment of the classroom, on communication and intercultural communication across any borders. Telecollaboration for Intercultural Language Acquisition should not replace the traditional FL language classroom based on language structure, but should be given more space and as much space as the traditional FL language classroom, as this is a space for practicing, maximising language acquisition and above all for reflecting on the intercultural dimension of all human encounters. Developing trans-lingua-cultural skills is something that only education and school can help foster in a much more diverse, complicated and multilingual, multicultural world (Alao et al, 2012; Derivry-Plard, 2014a, 2014b; Zarate et al, 2008/2011).

To conclude, TILA should be the stepping-stone for the setting up of a European educational space in language learning and teaching as it provides authentic language acquisition and helps enhance intercultural, plurilingual competences as a process.

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<sup>10</sup> The L1 teacher could be associated as to help inter-disciplinary activities among languages expanding bridges towards disciplines.