

All School-Age Learners

Exploring the EFL Curriculum Through the Use of a Virtual Forum

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Motivation for the Pedagogical Innovation

Our motivation to write this chapter is our interest to share with other teachers around the world the learning experiences that a group of teachers and students in Colombia have had as participants in an online story-sharing and learning forum. This project represents a joint effort of two universities in Colombia and Scotland to effectively apply information and communication technology (ICT) with teachers and students from public educational institutions in Bogotá. The purpose is to open frontiers in the classroom and become part of a global forum, to develop digital literacy and intercultural understanding through dialogue and stories among participants from a number of countries.

Aligned with the public policy proposed by the Secretary of Education of Bogotá, through this pedagogical innovation we propose to offer students and teachers greater access to ICT by helping them become familiar with the different strategies that involve using this technology. The project provides opportunities for students to develop autonomy as learners and increase their motivation for learning. We have been able to provide opportunities for students from different cultural backgrounds to interact in ways that were simply unthinkable in the past. We have seen more student participation in learning mediated by ICT, which in turn can help prevent unequal treatment of public school students and provide them with equal opportunities.

The project started as a pilot study carried out over the course of 2 years (see Appendix A for a project timeline). It was first implemented during 2005 at San Agustín Public School in the Bogotá district. In this global academic exchange, teachers and students were able to participate in video-conferences and communicate with peers in other countries, and teachers could work together to make decisions about teaching and to show students learning outcomes.

In 2006 six more schools and a group from the initial teacher education program from Universidad Distrital in Bogotá joined the project. This allowed the impact of the pedagogical intervention to be studied across a wider set of contexts. In this chapter we describe the curricular activities carried out in 2006 in a private elementary school and a teacher preparation program.

Principles and Beliefs That Informed the Project

Thinkers and educators such as Freire (1970) have provided a foundation of challenges and practical recommendations that not only are firmly rooted in the realities of the spectrum of Latin American contexts, but also are relevant to Europe and North America. In all of these local contexts, students need to find their voice, seek reduction in inequality, and find opportunities that are not only in their own interest but also in the general interest of society. The virtual forum builds on these principles and provides students and teachers with opportunities to use language for learning. In interaction with peers, participating students use language to establish and maintain communication that results in the creation of communities of learning and communities of interest.

In our project, these communities share an interest in learning a foreign language (for some Spanish and for others English) and a motivation to explore topics of common interest. Through the use of personal and group blogs, participating students maintain interaction in the forum, which enables them to use their new language to learn about a variety of different topics. In this way, from the point of view of language learning, their learning has been extended beyond learning about language.

Teachers and students are guided by the following six basic pedagogic principles that support the virtual forum and are associated with students' experiences. These issues are important and relevant to education today and, to some extent, are neglected in the way educational technology is implemented and deployed.

1. *Language:* Whatever language students use to post their blog entries, native or additional, they have an opportunity to use that

language in its most natural, and probably informal, way. Peer reading and interaction reinforce the practice of idiomatic use of language.

2. *Media literacy*: Students should be encouraged to post material that is relevant to them and who they are. They should use as broad a range of media as they have access to and are able to handle.
3. *Online identity*: This online space encourages students to reflect on their identity and how they wish to portray that identity to strangers and new peers. This should cause them to reflect on their evolving identity as they mature and become independent members of society. Feedback and peer comment contribute to this process.
4. *Reflective thinking*: Any stories or blogs that students create should be of direct personal interest. It is expected that they will seek resources and source materials that support their opinions, positions, and attitudes, rather than accept the first references that they find in a casual Internet search. Feedback and peer comment contribute to reflection and may result in conformance to peer opinion or assertion of individual opinions.
5. *Heterogeneous learners*: In this space, the students have ample opportunity to demonstrate their individuality in terms of likes, dislikes, social skills, and personality as well as more academic characteristics such as skills, competencies, and preferences within communication and literacy skill sets.
6. *Cross-cultural awareness*: Interactions and opinions exchanged in this part of the forum directly reflect the shades of local and popular culture lived by the students. In this area, students are themselves. As students engage in dialogue with each other, they encounter differences because of culture, but they also find points of common interest. It is here that friendships form across the cultures.

The authentic learning environment provided by the virtual forum contributes to building virtual communities among the participating students. Wenger (1998) describes how being part of a learning community profoundly affects and enhances the learning experience. His discussion of learning within *communities of practice* and the more broad *communities of interest* builds heavily on a refined model of a social theory of learning and depends on social interaction between learners.

For this particular project, we focus on a community of individuals who share similar interests in learning about language and culture. These shared interests motivate them to maintain regular contact and make decisions

together about the common goals for learning. This participatory decision making among teachers consolidates existing communities and generates a nontraditional way of creating the curriculum, which means expanding decision making to include students.

The Curricular Context

The pedagogical innovation described in this chapter was designed by a team of five faculty members from the fields of language teacher education, educational technology, and applied computing from the Distrital University in Bogotá and the University of Dundee in Scotland. We put together a pedagogical proposal aimed at promoting the use of ICT to develop language and digital literacy among teachers and students. The two team members from Bogotá (Amparo and Luz Mary) were concerned with promoting the use of technology among teachers and students. Their main goal was to explore best practices with teachers in order to integrate ICT into the processes of language learning and teaching through mentoring sessions. The aim of the collaborator from Dundee (Nicolas) was to connect technology innovations to educators' needs. His principal concern was to ensure that technology responds to the main pedagogic issues in education. His role was to provide technical support to students and teachers in using the forum by assigning IDs and passwords, providing access to the different blogs that they used, and efficiently responding to the need to schedule videoconferences.

The classroom teachers were mentored and supported by the four members of the faculty team in Bogotá so that they could carry out the pedagogical innovation. Our role as mentors focused on the following tasks:

- providing professional development to teachers
- supporting teachers' use of ICT with students in the forum's blog
- establishing contacts with other teachers from the countries participating in the forum
- supporting implementation of the project through weekly school visits to help teachers address pedagogical and technical challenges inherent in the use of ICT as a new tool in language learning
- making decisions related to the use of videoconferences whereby students could share results of their learning

The professional development component was structured in 12 sessions oriented toward providing information about the use of ICT in the classroom, exploring different writing genres that could meet students' interests and needs, and explaining the use of blogs as ICT tools that enhance language development.

The role of the classroom teachers was to implement the pedagogical innovation in their classrooms according to the specific curricular objectives they identified in their educational contexts. They designed activities that engaged students in communication with others through the use of personal, theme-based, and debate blogs in the forum; made pedagogical decisions that were often negotiated with their fellow teachers in Colombia, Canada, and Chile; supported student interaction and communication in the forum; and evaluated the outcomes of such interaction.

The Process of Designing and Implementing the Pedagogical Innovation

Promoting the use of ICT and development of language by teachers and students is an ongoing process and includes the phases described in Table 1.

The initial phase, Preparing the Ground, began with recruiting teachers from different institutions who were interested in using an online forum as a platform to communicate with other students in order to learn about language and culture. We then set out to determine institutional needs related to technology; we found out what equipment was available for teachers at each institution to use in order to participate in the project. Next, we established agendas for communication between the teachers and the supporting team. In this first phase, it was important to help teachers

Table 1. Phases of the Project

	Preparing the Ground	Connecting Worlds	Building Communities of Practice
Participants	University team	University team and school teachers	Students, teachers, and university team
Duration	3 months (January–March)	1 month (February)	8 months (April–December)
Activities	Recruiting teachers, identifying their institutional needs, implementing workshops for teachers about uses of ICT as a tool for language development, introducing them to the virtual platform	Organizing the schools by educational levels to match their goals and interests with a school in another participating country, having teachers communicate via e-mail or the forum to decide on pedagogical activities to carry out and themes to explore	Using the blogs for communication in the forum, having videoconferences for teachers to make curricular decisions and for students to discuss local cultural practices

understand the pedagogical purpose of the online platform so that they could motivate students to see how it empowered them to use language as a means for learning together. It was also crucial to encourage teachers from the three countries (Colombia, Chile, and Canada) to feel committed to working together and maintaining regular communication.

The second phase, *Connecting Worlds*, involved establishing connections among schools in Colombia, Canada, and Chile to set up the exchange. The teachers started communicating with each other via e-mail so that they could discuss the logistics of interaction among their students. Once they agreed on how to work together, they identified common pedagogical goals and activities, and negotiated the topic to be explored during the first term. Using the target language (English for Colombians and Chileans, and Spanish for Canadians) to communicate and learn about the others' language and culture was the main goal for teachers and students alike. The initial activity proposed, adhering to the agreed-upon topic of local culture, was for students to use the personal blog to introduce themselves and explore each other's interests and cultures.

Assigning each student a peer blogger was important. Doing so would make sure that each student would maintain interaction with at least one student from the other group. Another important aspect that teachers noticed in this second stage was the need to create additional spaces, other than the personal blog, that would encourage students to discuss curricular themes.

The third phase, *Building Communities of Practice*, involved using two additional blogs for students to explore curricular themes in groups and to engage in debate. In the group blog students created texts collaboratively on topics negotiated with their teacher. The debate blog was a space in which students became critical and reflective about current issues that generated controversy; it encouraged them to use strong arguments and personal points of view. By identifying in their peers' opinions different ways of thinking about the same topic, students became aware of multiple ways of approaching and understanding an idea.

Three videoconferences were held in this third phase so that students could meet their peers personally to show cultural traditions from each country and to expand on topics discussed in their blogs. These virtual encounters between the students provided additional motivation for students and teachers to continue participating in the forum once they met their peer bloggers. They were challenged to speak and make themselves understood in the target language. It was also an opportunity for students to show their abilities to dance, play, cook, and narrate their experiences.

Learning Platform and Practices

This section describes the pedagogical innovation carried out in two institutions in Bogotá: a private elementary school that serves approximately 1,500 children from middle-income backgrounds and a public university that serves 27,000 students from low- to middle-income backgrounds.

THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Twenty fourth-grade students, ages 9–11, from a private school in Bogotá participated in the interaction with Canadian and Chilean students. Working in the language classroom during regular English classes, the Colombian students prepared texts to post on the forum's blogs. They also spent time in the technology laboratory learning about ICT and becoming familiar with the forum's Web site. The school's staff and the technology teacher collaborated to organize and carry out the videoconferences among the various groups of students.

At the elementary school level, the project was developed in two cycles. The first cycle began with having students write drafts of their narratives to introduce themselves before posting them on the forum. Students included personal information and a short discussion of their favorite sports. After revising their drafts in consultation with their peers and the teacher, students were asked to save this information on the computers in the technology lab. They were then given passwords to access the storytelling forum and asked to browse it in order to become familiar with it and to identify the participating schools.

After browsing, students were asked to post their blogs on their page, which had already been created, to be shared with their new international friends. Here is an example:

Hello Dear friend. My name is J. S. I live in Colombia. I'm 9 years old. I study in the school Agustiniano Ciudad Salitre. I like the fish and chicken etc. my favorite color is blue. In Colombia, the people practice sports like soccer, basketball, tennis, volleyball etc. My favorite sport is soccer. What is your favorite sport? I practice paintball and karate. Bye, bye.

The Colombian teacher observed that the students put quite a bit of thought into the content of their blogs when writing to their foreign peers. Before posting to their blogs, they asked the teacher or a close friend to check their spelling. This happened every time they posted a blog entry because it made them feel more confident about their writing in the foreign language.

The Canadian students started to post in June, using both English and

Spanish in response to the bilingual postings of the Colombian students. They expressed interest in getting more information about Colombia, the school life of the students, and their favorite food or sport. As the Colombian students had, they wrote describing the main aspects of their lives and some of their free-time activities:

Hi, my name is G and yes I love soccer. In my spare time I like to ride my skateboard and watch TV. I go to the school Geary Elementary. What language do you speak? What is like up there? Do you like playing the play station 2?

The Colombian children responded with information about the diversity of food in Colombia, their favorite free-time activities, and the different sports that Colombians practice:

The people in Colombia is gentle, the typical food in Colombia is ajiaco, bandeja paisa. I like the meat, the flora in Colombia is fantastic, and the fauna is beautiful. The animals are pretty for example a dog, cat, rabbit, a turtle, the fruits are delicious. For example the oranges, apples, bananas, punch and other exotic fruits. My favorite music is the reg-ueaton; my favorite singer is Daddy Yankee and my favorite song rompe.

The second cycle started in September. The Colombian teacher and her students considered the possibility of interacting with the Canadian and Chilean kids in both English and Spanish, and everybody involved agreed to do so. The teachers exchanged ideas about which topic to explore and decided to focus on the topic of natural disasters.

A hypermedial approach was adopted to structure the stories about natural disasters. Students constructed a map to storyboard the natural disasters narratives, and then they sought information using traditional library and online sources. Figure 1 shows how the Colombian children organized the information that they found, which they then developed further as teams (Figure 2 shows the English translation). Each team presented its work to the whole class and then posted it on the forum.

Another topic explored at this time from a social and cultural perspective was that of Halloween, which, given the time of year, inspired a more spontaneous interaction between the students in different countries. This activity was not constructed using the same formal methods as the natural disasters topic. The Colombian students made virtual cards and sent them to their foreign peers and received messages and cards in return. Figure 3 shows an example of one of the cards.

During this cycle, students engaged in synchronous communication with their international peers by participating in two videoconferences in which they shared various cultural information. These were enriching

Figure 1. Students' Classification of Natural Disasters, in Spanish

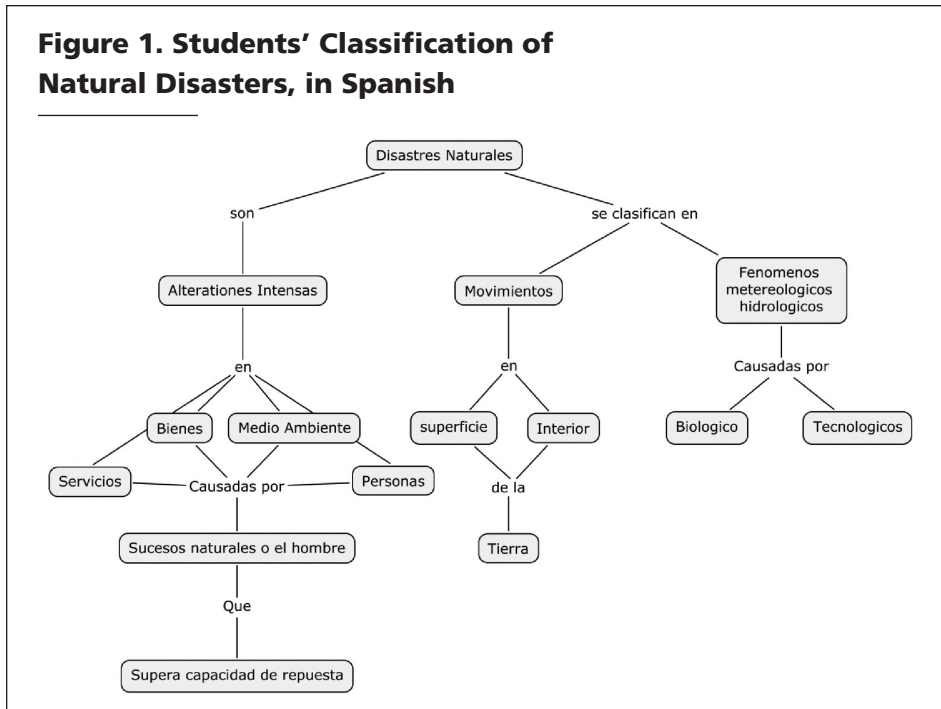


Figure 2. Students' Classification of Natural Disasters, in English

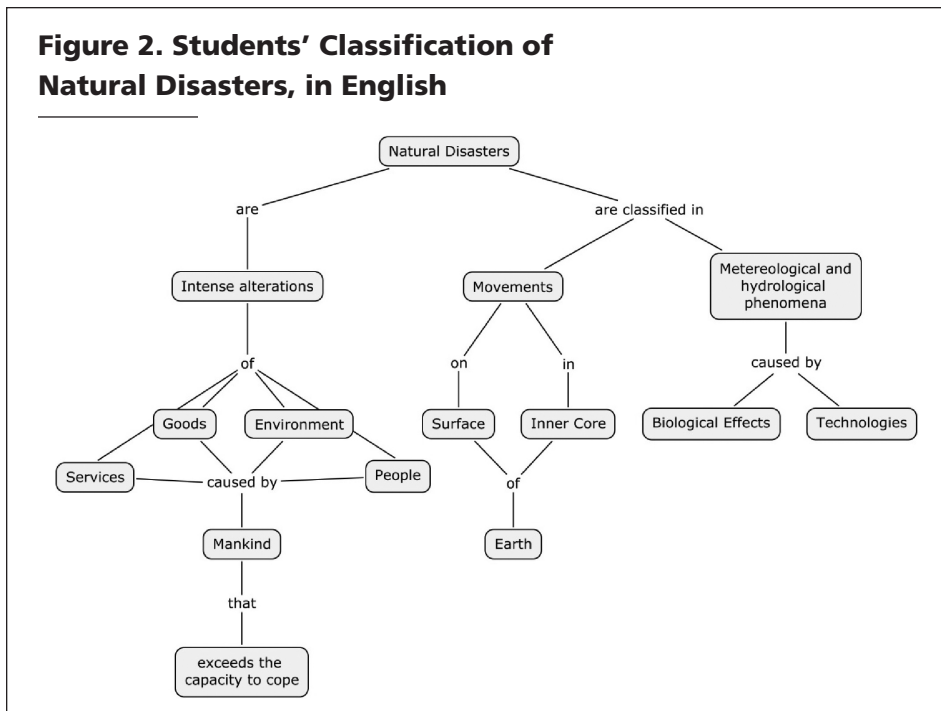


Figure 3. Virtual Halloween Card



experiences that allowed the students to interact in English, to familiarize themselves with each other's school life, to ask and answer questions, and to motivate each other to continue with their interaction.

The theme of the second videoconference was food. Students in each country contributed recipes from their own culture. The Colombian students showed and described traditional recipes such as *ajiaco*, *tamal*, and *arepa*. Similarly, the Canadian students described some of their traditional foods such as garlic fingers, deer, pizza, and cookies. This exchange allowed the various students to identify similarities and differences between their cultures.

As reported by the Colombian teacher, the implementation of the two pedagogical cycles allowed her to reflect on the role of technology in enhancing learning. The topics explored together by the Colombian, Canadian, and Chilean children provided authentic interactions in the forum and raised students' awareness of the cultures of each country.

THE UNIVERSITY

Seventeen undergraduate first-year students, ages 18–23, from Universidad Distrital used the forum with 24 senior high school students in Canada.

These students and their teachers decided to use the two target languages (English and Spanish) in this way because it allowed both groups of students to practice the language they were learning.

Pedagogical tasks were implemented in two phases. During the first phase, which lasted a semester, students wrote in a personal blog about topics of interest to them and about the topic of local culture, which was a focus that both groups had agreed upon at the beginning of the semester. Some students wrote stories and poems, some wrote about personal experiences, and others wrote about current cultural issues. Through the exploration of each other's culture, they showed their perspectives about their own culture and learned about different lifestyles in other countries, all while using the target language to communicate regularly.

In this phase, the teachers played a crucial role in providing guidance on the use of ICT, appropriate ways to generate dialogue with peers, and conventional uses of the language they were learning. The teachers designed workshops that helped students advance in the process of writing (see the sample lesson in Appendix B). Additionally, the teachers corrected students' drafts of texts to include in their blogs before they were posted on the forum and gave students initial guidance on how to attach images, sound, and music to the blogs and about how to create links and tables.

The materials exchanged between students were authentic texts embedded in communicative tasks planned by the teachers or initiated by the students. As students began to understand more about the dynamics of the forum and acquire more knowledge about the target language, their interactions reflected personal perspectives of their own culture as well as the other culture. Figure 4 illustrates how a Colombian student presented cultural events as part of the local culture she wanted to share with her Canadian peers.

In the second phase, students gained confidence as users of the target language and of ICT. This confidence encouraged them to participate autonomously in the forum's various activities and, in turn, encouraged the teachers to create challenging spaces for interaction. In addition to the personal blog from the first phase, two more Web pages in the forum were created. One was designed to get students to work in groups to explore two main topics proposed in the forum: music and natural disasters. Students could choose to write about one or both. The second page was a blog used for a weekly debate, which gave students the opportunity to select any topic of interest to them, present their opinions, and discuss different points of view with other students. Figure 5 shows the group blog that students created to discuss music, and Figure 6 is an example of a debate about the influence of current music on people's behaviors.

The pedagogical experience planned and organized by the university

Figure 4. A Colombian Student's Blog on Culture

Posted at Apr 26/2006 09:49PM:
Paula: The last photos are about the 10th Iberoamerican theater festival: In Bogota every two years, we celebrate the theater festival. It is a wonderful carnival, it always starts the first Saturday of April with a beautiful parade. This year I went there and it was fantastic. There were big puppets, musical groups, dance, music, theater, etc. There were foreign performances from: Bolivia, Republica Dominicana, Cuba, USA, etc. Finally there was a concert of Andres Cabas. From 31st March to 15th April at all the theaters of Bogota, parks and at some malls many groups from all the world showed their performances which were successful. At Corferias, a place for expositions, was located "Ciudad Teatro" a big theater, there were: performances, concerts, clowns, puppets, lectures about theater, etc. If you don't want to go to a performance because you don't understand its language, calm down! I, the foreign performances are subtitled or translated simultaneously. It's only a bit of what the theater festival is. It is the most important theater festival of the world. It is very famous in many countries. The festival finished on 16th April with a German performance, fireworks and colorful lights. It was shown at Simon Bolivar park.

Posted at Apr 27/2006 05:25PM:
AmandaSSED: wow! I love the pictures. I have never seen anything like it in Canada. Although when I was in China, they were a lot of show that I believe would create the same type of amazement that this festival does.

teachers and students required thoughtful action from and guidance for students. It differed from a traditional language curriculum focused on learning language structures because it was a participatory curriculum with activities that engaged teachers and learners in challenging learning situations. It

Figure 5. Student Blog About Music

COLOMBIAN MUSIC
 Universidad Distrital: Trainee Teachers

Find

Main Group

- Universidad Distrital: Trainee Teachers
- Universidad Industrial De Santander: University Students
- Universidad De La Salle: University Students
- University of Dundee: Trainee Teachers
- St Thomas University: Spanish Language Students

Changes [17:58]

- COLOMBIAN MUSIC Debate: September 2...
- DerlyPatCCUDDT HOW DO I PERCEIVE L...
- ADRIANA'S LIKES THE MOST MEANINGFUL... AN INTERESTING PLACE More Changes...

INTRODUCTION

DANCE, TRADITIONS, HISTORY, LIFE... THAT'S OUR MUSIC.

- Musica_Colombiana_-_Mapate.mp3
- 06_Choco's_Guajira.mp3
- musica_colombiana_Pasodobles_-_La_feria_de_Manizales.mp3

COLOMBIAN MUSIC IS A MIXTURE OF AFRICAN, NATIVE INDIGENOUS AND EUROPEAN (ESPECIALLY SPANISH) INFLUENCES, AS WELL AS MORE MODERN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN MUSICAL FORMS, SUCH AS TRINIDADIAN, CUBAN AND JAMAICAN. CUMBIA IS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR

STYLES FROM COLOMBIA. IT HAS ELEMENTS OF SPANISH AND AFRICAN MUSIC. WHEN SLAVERY WAS ABOLISHED, IN 19TH CENTURY, AFRICANS AND INDIANS MIXED MORE FULLY. STYLES LIKE BAMBUCO, VALLENATO AND PORRO were INFLUENTIAL. PASILLO IS LIKE A VERSION OF WALTZ.

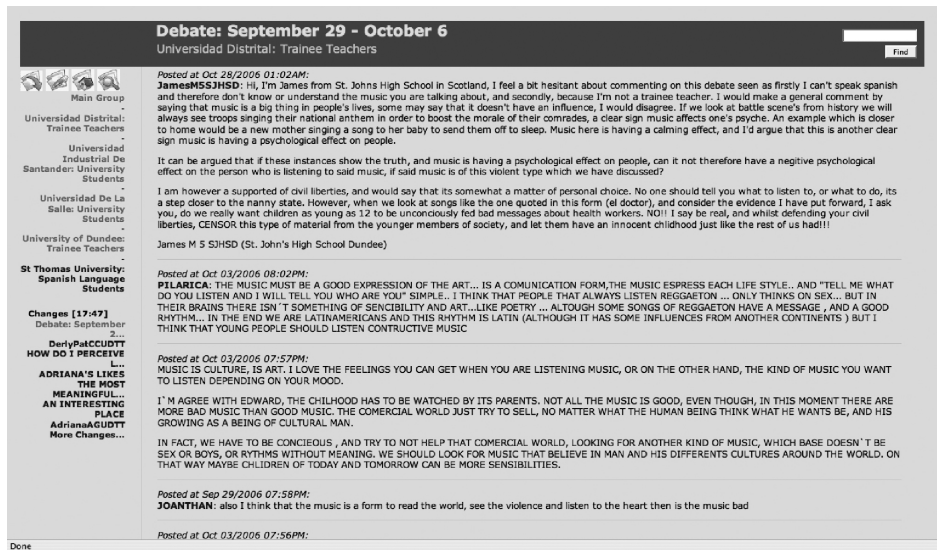
SOMETHING ABOUT...

CUMBIA YOU KNOW CUMBIA AROSE IN ON COLOMBIA'S ATLANTIC COAST. HOWEVER, THERE ARE DIFFERENT IDEAS ABOUT ITS ORIGIN. FOR EXAMPLE, SOME PEOPLE SAY THAT CUMBIA DANCE IS A DEPICTION OF AN AFRICAN MAN COURTING A NATIVE WOMAN.

OTHERS JUST THINK IT'S THE SHUFFLING FOOTWORK AS A SURVIVAL FROM AFRICAN SLAVES ATTEMPTING TO DANCE WITH IRON CHAINS AROUND THE ANKLE. CUMBIA CIENAGUERA IS WELL KNOWN AS A SONG WHICH REFLECTS A UNIQUELY COLOMBIAN FEEL KNOWN AS "SABOR" AND "AMBIENTE".

- aniceto_molina_-_la_pollera_colora_cumbia.mp3

Figure 6. Students' Debate Blog



promoted language development and learning to use ICT to communicate with international peers.

Students themselves confirmed the value of this project's approach because it forced them to go beyond the language skills that they had been taught in order to seek vocabulary and language constructs so that they could more fully express their ideas and opinions.

Discoveries and Successes

In the process of implementing this pedagogical innovation, we discovered key issues to consider in future pedagogical projects that involve the use of ICT in classrooms. We learned that learning communities do not just happen; they need leadership and energy to keep them alive. Students do not need to be encouraged to socialize, but they do need to be encouraged to socialize in ways that allow them to learn from their peers in other places and situations. In general, students need to be mentored. At the same time, however, teachers need to be encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by a facility such as the forum because forum activities are different from conventional classroom activities, and they have different goals and learning outcomes.

We realized that students and teachers who want to participate in the forum need some guidance to understand the pedagogical objective and value of this virtual space. This required providing students and teachers with a set of guidelines to better understand the dynamics of the forum and

their responsibilities as participants. Thus, it was important for students to understand that the forum could be used to explore topics of personal interest, to learn about people from other cultures, and to practice the target language by using it for real purposes. It was also crucial for teachers to consider the forum as a tool that allowed them to move from traditional ways of teaching toward a more participatory one in which students and all members of the community can learn from one another. Teachers also needed to understand that the forum was not an additional element to their classes, but should be integral to the development of their lessons in order to enrich students' learning experiences.

Although the functional capacity supported by this project has been available for a decade, the advent of broadband connections to not only schools, but also public places (e.g., Internet cafés, public libraries) and even private homes has prompted a fundamental change in the role of ICT in the classroom. It is no longer an optional teaching tool. Education authorities around the world are exploring institutional issues associated with wider deployment of these types of tools, with the expectation that they will become an integral part of the learning experience of all children.

We learned that developing a common curriculum suitable for this type of online collaborative learning required a dialogue between teachers. Such a dialogue was vital in understanding differences in educational contexts and making curricular decisions together. For example, the topic of natural disasters was part of the Chilean curriculum, so the Chilean teachers proposed it as a topic of interest for the forum. The various teachers in the other countries discussed this idea and agreed to incorporate it. This agreement covered not only the topic, but also the degree to which the various schools would dedicate time and resources to this activity. Establishing the evaluation criteria was left to each teacher in each local context because the topic was not always part of the formal curriculum in each school, and the teaching goals, objectives, and outcomes were different in each case. Curricular decisions therefore involved establishing priorities for student learning, maintaining interaction among participants on the forum, and ensuring that local curriculum goals could still be fulfilled.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this pedagogical innovation has to do with accessibility to technological programs and tools that in some instances made it difficult to use the online forum. The university students did not have any Internet connection for the first 4 months of their participation in the project. They had to work from Internet cafés to interact with their peers and post work on their blogs. Access to cameras and computers, which

students need so that they can create multimedia content, is not guaranteed, but it is an essential element of the information exchange.

The elementary schoolchildren encountered problems when they attempted to participate in the second videoconference. The audio was affected most significantly, which prevented the children from enjoying and understanding the activity as fully as they had in the previous videoconference. Such unpredictable technical problems are particularly difficult for teachers because they are left with a room full of bored students who have been expecting an interesting event. Teachers quickly lose faith in technology if it does not perform as expected, due in no small part to the fact that they do not want to look incompetent in front of students.

Conclusion

The forum works as a platform for building language learning communities and exchanging insights into knowledge about and culture related to the target language. These learning communities are essential to promoting collaborative language learning and democratic participation. In this way, the community of learners finds a purpose and learning is promoted.

The participative agenda related to curriculum exploration encouraged students to find their own voice and persuade other participants in the forum to decide upon curricular activities. It supports Beyer and Apple's (1998) claim that when individuals participate in decisions that directly affect them, they develop confidence about what they can achieve and the desire to participate in even broader public activities in and out of school.

Student-teacher participation required a change in the teacher's role in planning instruction around use of the forum and creating learning spaces in which the communities would interact. This change resulted in fostering dialogue rather than controlling it and encouraging instead of controlling the learning process. Engaging in a participatory dialogue with students allowed teachers to not only critically examine their previous experiences so as to investigate topics that mattered to them but also to transform their views of themselves as learners and teachers (Wolfe-Quintero, 2000).

Acknowledgment

We are grateful to Nancy Ortega Leguizamon for describing how she implemented the project in her fourth-grade classroom and providing examples that illustrated the interaction between her students and the Canadian and Chilean students.

Appendix A: Evolution of the International Storytelling Forum

	2005												2006												2007																	
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun												
Innovation Phases	Forum Establishment												Preparing the Ground, Connecting Worlds												Building Communities of Practice												Ongoing Collaborations					
Elementary Schools													San Agustín School (Colombia)												Agustiniano Ciudad Salitre (Colombia), Geary Elementary School (Canada), and Escuela Parricio Lynch (Chile)																	
Middle Schools																																										
High Schools													Universidad Distrital Trainee Teachers (Colombia) and New Brunswick Distance Education Class (Canada)												Universidad Distrital Trainee Teachers (Colombia) and St John's RC High School (Scotland)																	
Universities																																										
Practice	San Agustín School (Colombia) joined the forum and began interacting with Rothersey Elementary School (Canada) and the New Brunswick Distance Education Class (Canada). This interaction formed the foundation for the forum.												Schools were matched across the countries and teachers trained in the use of the forum.												The subgroup of elementary schools cooperated through social blogs and videoconferences (topics: Halloween and food) and through the curriculum blogs (topics: natural disasters and food). The Universidad Distrital Trainee Teachers (Colombia) and New Brunswick Distance Education Class (Canada) cooperated through the personal blogs and in videoconferences (topics: national culture) in the first half of 2006. In the later part of the year, St. John's RC High School (Scotland) joined in the debates that took place between the university students and the high school students.																	
General	12 Institutions joined the Forum Elementary Schools (Canada: +1; Spain: +1) Middle Schools (Canada: +2; Chile: +1; Colombia: +1; Scotland: +2) High Schools (Canada: +3; Colombia: +1)												10 Institutions joined and 4 Left the Forum Elementary Schools (Canada: +2; Colombia: +1; Spain: -1) Middle Schools (Canada: +1, -1; Colombia: +1, -1) High Schools (Canada: +1; Colombia: +2, -1) Universities (Colombia: +2)												4 Institutions joined and 1 Left the Forum Elementary Schools (Canada: -1; Bolivia: +1) Middle Schools (Scotland: +1) High Schools (Scotland: +1) Universities (Colombia: +1)																	

Appendix B: Sample Lesson

LESSON 2: BOGOTÁ'S CULTURAL AND REPRESENTATIVE PLACES

What do you know about Bogotá?

Writing Task 2: Cultural and representative places in Bogotá



Level: second-semester university students

Class time: 2 hours; students decide how much extra class time they need to visit the place, make photographs, and find information about the place they would like to visit

Resources: a camera or a video camera, pictures and a computer with access to Internet

Objective: to write short blog entries based on cultural and historic places from Bogotá

Step 1: Prewriting

Group discussion

- Think of the place from your city that you enjoy visiting the most. Where is it? Is it a park, a museum, a restaurant, a disco? Why do you like it? Do you know the history of that place? Who do you usually go with?
- Describe the place to your classmates, and give all the details about the place for them to try to guess what the place is.
- Discuss which, in your opinion, are the most representative places in your city.

Useful language: Describing places

When we describe a place, we can use a variety of adjectives to make our description more interesting.



- a. Complete the table with synonyms from the list as in the example.
 - Charming
 - Awful
 - Fantastic
 - Tiny
 - Large
 - Terrible
 - Huge
 - Enormous
 - Beautiful
 - Wonderful
 - Horrible
 - Magnificent
 - Little
 - Elegant

Big	large,
Small	
Good	
Nice	

- b. When you talk about a place, you should include information such as:

Location: is situated/is located . . . in (the) north/south/east/west . . . / in the center/heart/middle of . . .

Attractions: fantastic, funfair, ancient temples, luxurious cathedrals, busy streets, medieval church, colorful walls, romantic scenarios, peaceful passages, magnificent view

Shops: modern shopping center, lovely antique shops, charming

Nightlife: dance clubs, fashionable/popular restaurants, trendy cafés/theaters

Choosing and visiting a place

- Choose one place that you would like to visit and write about. You can choose a park, a library, a restaurant, a museum, a disco, or any place you want.
- Visit the place you chose, and take photographs of the most representative aspects you want to show and write about. The photographs should be meaningful so that they match your writing purposes.

Step 2: Writing and Drafting

- You are going to write a first draft about the place you visited. You can include information such as history, activities people can do there, location, description, and your personal opinion about it.
- You are going to peer-review this first draft. You are going to focus on content rather than on grammar and mechanics. You should judge how clearly your ideas have been communicated. The guidelines below will help you review your draft.

A. Purpose

1. Who are the real or imaginary people you are writing for? Is your style appropriate (e.g., informal, polite, persuasive)?
2. What is your purpose for writing it? Is it clear? Do you think you have achieved your purpose? Why or why not?

B. Content

3. What is the main idea that you want to express, and where will the reader find it?
4. What do you think the reader already knows about this topic? Have you taken this into account? Do you want to give more explanations or examples?
5. Is it easy to follow the development of ideas or information throughout the writing?
6. Is the first paragraph appealing or attractive to the reader? Will the reader be motivated to continue reading?

C. Organization

7. Are the ideas and information in a sensible sequence? Do you need to change the sequence in any way?
8. Are the links between ideas clear? Underline all the connective words you have used. Can you improve any of them? Which ones? Why?

- Rewrite your composition according to the changes or adjustments you made based on your draft. Hand it in to your teacher.
- Your teacher will give you feedback on this draft in terms of content, organization, grammar, and mechanics. You will receive a detailed description of the aspects you need to improve and some help to organize your writing.
- Keep a record of the problems you had in writing in this format so that you have it at the end of the unit.

Step 3: Editing

- Type the last version of your text, keeping in mind the teacher's comments and suggestions. Try to organize the photographs so that they match the text description.

Step 4: Publishing

- Visit the creative storytelling forum, and post your writing on your blog. Do not forget to read the comments and feedback that your Canadian buddies have written to you. Answer the questions they have posed, and give any further explanation or information they may ask you for. You can also visit your classmates' blogs and write comments on what they have done.