Listening to the Multiple Voices in an Intercultural Telecollaborative Multilingual Digital Storytelling Project: A Bakhtinian perspective

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Abstract

Although a growing number of studies have recently been focusing on the affordances of digital storytelling as a multimodal tool, relatively little attention has been given to the collaborative process during digital story construction and how that may affect what the participants gain from the experience. This paper focuses on an intercultural telecollaborative multilingual digital storytelling project between pre-service French as-a-second-language teachers in Canada and university-level EFL students in Taiwan. The researchers lean on Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism and Fairclough’s concepts of assumption/intertextuality to look into how the international partners negotiated to accomplish digital storytelling assignments, how their own voices were expressed during the telecollaborative writing process, and how this affected their completed digital stories. The findings of this study unveil both interpersonal and sociocultural dimensions of negotiation of meaning in technology-mediated collaboration. Based on the findings, the paper discusses pedagogical challenges and prospects of using multilingual digital storytelling as a transformational tool for intercultural learning, creativity, and language development, as well as a space for voicing selves through creative literary articulation.

Keywords
Digital storytelling, telecollaboration, multimodality, Bakhtinian perspectives
1. Introduction

Second/foreign language teachers have reported the merits of digital stories –online stories that require the integration of text, images, and sounds– in improving students’ digital literacy, language competence, and collaborative skills. Research has also shown that digital stories may give power to participants to share knowledge, ideas, and culture in ways that traditional storytelling could not provide (Lee, 2012; Robin, 2008). Nevertheless, while research efforts to date have mostly been focusing on the affordances of digital storytelling as a multimodal tool for language and literacy development, little has been explored as to what users themselves bring to the collaborative process of digital story constructions and how that may affect what they gain from the experience. Our exploratory study is an attempt to fill this chasm in the literature by investigating how participants in a telecollaborative multilingual digital storytelling project engaged in dialoguing and how that might have affected the way in which they collaborated during the creation of their multilingual digital stories and its impact on their finished stories.

This intercultural telecollaborative multilingual digital storytelling project resonates with the new wave of research and teaching practices that emphasize the development of multilingual skills in the field of literacy (De Jong, Harper, & Coady, 2013; Gagnon & Deschoux, 2008; Lucas & Villegas, 2014; Mary & Young, 2010; Pinho & Andrade, 2009). Additionally it leans on the theoretical framework of multiliteracies (Cole & Pullen, 2010; Kalantzis & Cope, 2008) and interdependence of languages (Cummins, 2007, 2009) for the design of telecollaborative digital storytelling and multimodal communications (Baldry, 2000; Yang, 2012). The term “multiliteracies” has evolved in response to concerns about how literacy teaching can equip students for the changing world in which they live (Anstèy & Bull, 2006). As initially stated by the New London Group (1996), in order to provide our students with the necessary skills to communicate through, with, and about the new means in a multilingual society, education in the 21st century should emerge from the transcultural, multilingual, and technical experiences that learners bring into classrooms and aim at further developments of a broad range and new forms of literacies. The New London Group coined the word “multiliteracies” to describe two important phenomena (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). The first was the growing significance of cultural and linguistic diversity. The second was the influence of new communication technologies. In particular, the New London Group
distinguishes between "mere literacy," which centers on language only, and a pedagogy of "multiliteracies" that, in addition to print, takes into account the multimodal resources (visual, audio, hypertext, etc.) afforded by computers and Web 2.0 technologies. They posit that the starting point for the multiliteracies framework is the notion that knowledge and meaning are historically and socially located and produced, that they are "designed" artefacts (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). Leaning on this theoretical perspective, a number of second/foreign language researchers have suggested that giving students the task of creating their own digital stories, either individually or in groups, may provide students with a strong foundation in multiliteracies (e.g., Castañeda, 2013; Elsner, 2014; Hafner & Miller, 2011), also called 21st century literacy (e.g., Oskoz & Elola, 2014).

In this study, pre-service French-as-a-second-language teachers in Canada and university-level EFL students in Taiwan were linked to co-construct multilingual digital stories. The international partners had three months to communicate, make decisions, and complete their stories on topics of their own choosing. The stories were first written in their common language, English, and then translated into the participants’ native languages (notably, French and Chinese). The multilingual stories were posted on the "Wix" platform (http://wix.com), which allowed for manipulations of multimodality. Based on Bakhtin’s (1981) concept of dialogism and Fairclough’s (2003) concepts of assumption/intertextuality, this study investigates (a) how the international partners negotiated to accomplish the digital storytelling assignments, (b) how their own voices were expressed during the collaborative digital storytelling writing process, and (c) how the ways they negotiated might have had an impact on their completed digital stories. The participants’ perceived benefits and difficulties of taking part in the telecollaborative project were probed into for pedagogical implications.

2. Theoretical Framework: Bakhtinian Perspective and Fairclough’s Concepts of Assumption/Intertextuality

To understand how the participants of this study communicated to co-construct their digital stories, the researchers lean on Bakhtin’s (1981) notion of voices in a dialogue as the theoretical underpinning for looking into their online collaboration. According to Bakhtin, all learning is fundamentally social: an individual’s understanding is formed through the
dialogic struggle between competing voices or discourses. It is through the dense self-other interconnection between the intimate and public venues of social practices that the sense of ‘selfness’ and interrelations with the world are formed (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998). Bakhtin’s conceptualization on the dialogical nature of all communication offers a theoretical framework to grasp human behavior through the uses of language and to examine the discourses of collaborative learning exchanges and discussion (Holquist, 1990).

Fairclough (2003) discusses two characteristics of dialogue that are closely related to Bakhtin’s (1981) concept of *dialogicality*: intertextuality and assumption. *Intertextuality* means that a contribution in discourse brings other voices into a text and therefore relates to other people’s discourses, whereas *assumption* reduces the difference by assuming common ground and leaving out such explicit relations to other people’s discourses. Using Bakhtin’s terms, a discourse with a high degree of intertextuality, which is rich in references to other discourses and open to other voices, is more dialogical than a discourse that uses a lot of assumptions. Such a discourse is closed to other voices and therefore dialogicality is diminished. Fairclough postulates that a message which includes connections to other people’s ideas and reflections is likely to come across as open and approachable, whereas undialogized language may be perceived as authoritative and absolute. Fairclough suggests that people using such language are likely to project a confident identity that may take a position of authority in relation to others, while people using more dialogical language may come across as more open and welcoming.

Based on Bakhtin’s (1981) concept of dialogism and Fairclough’s (2003) concepts of assumption/intertextuality, Cheyne and Tarulli (1999) call this genre of dialogue *Magistral dialogue* and suggest that the asymmetry between the interlocutors arises from the third voice, from which knowledge and power flow. In the Magistral dialogue, it is by drawing on the authoritative third voice that the first voice can achieve its own authority and maintain the asymmetry between the first and second voice. Consequently, the Magistral dialogue presupposes that the interlocutors have asymmetries in knowledge and power, which manifest themselves around a deficit or absence on the part of the second voice, which is responded to by the first voice, drawing on the third. In this kind of dialogue, it is the first voice that authoritatively formulates meaning in reaction to the perceived deficit in the second voice. The Magistral dialogue genre also presupposes that the first voice presumes to know where the dialogue is heading, i.e. to a consensus between the voices in the final
stages of the dialogue, where the second voice comes together with the first in total agreement.

Cheyne and Tarulli (1999) proposed a second genre of dialogue, the Socratic dialogue, which is more open-ended and where the first voice isn’t trying to steer the dialogue in a predetermined way. Different from Magistral dialogues, this kind of dialogue is suspicious of consensus. Instead of being easily silenced by the first voice, the second voice is allowed to question the first, and the first voice may in turn become confused and lose its path by this questioning. Most importantly, the relationships between the participants engaging in the Socratic dialogue are not set up asymmetrically; rather, they are based on more equal identities agreeing only on what questions are relevant to answer, not on what those answers are.

An online collaborative setting is complex and involves diverse dynamics: participants engage in social-cultural processes where dialogues and language are means for them to present themselves, establish social relations, and construct realities. In a Bakhtinian sense, to understand how interlocutors relate to one another and co-construct knowledge within a collaborative learning setting, we should pay attention to the voices by which the interlocutors use to create norms and values that are regarded as acceptable within the social and cultural context in which they are situated. Gustafson, Hodgson and Tickner (2004) explain that by using different styles of language in collaborative dialogue in networked learning environments, individuals reveal their perceptions of the world and how they see themselves fitting in that world. Depending on the degree of dialogicality in their messages, as well as other characteristics of dialogue, people acquire a sense of their own and others’ online identities through the ways they express themselves in writing. So they point out that it is crucial to establish a social context in which the learning can occur and where the learners can engage in both social interaction and task-oriented interaction.
3. Literature Review

3.1. Telecollaboration

Despite varying approaches that have been taken to describe telecollaboration, it is generally agreed upon as the Internet-based exchange between people of different cultural/national backgrounds in geographically distant locations to develop and enhance their language and intercultural competence via collaborative tasks (Dooly, 2008; Helm, 2013; O’Dowd, 2011). Traditionally, telecollaboration in language teaching involves using text-based online communication tools, such as email, threaded forum discussions, and other Web 1.0 capabilities, for language learners in different countries to learn the others’ language and culture (O’Dowd, 2011). More recently, along with the occurrences of Web 2.0 technologies, the means of communication has been shifted to more interactive means, such as synchronous chat, wikis, blogs, social networking and 3D virtual worlds (Dooly & O’Dowd, 2012; Guth & Helm, 2010).

Since their existence from nearly 20 years ago, telecollaborative projects for facilitating learning of both linguistic and intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in higher education courses have been implemented in different educational contexts in the U.S., Europe, and Asia (see Chun, 2014 for an extensive review). Quite a few studies have looked into the effectiveness of telecollaborative projects for language and culture learning through institutional efforts. In many telecollaborative projects, teachers plan and organize communication tasks and provide support for learners in hope of maximizing the benefits of these endeavors. However, as Web 2.0 tools provide flexible affordances and a wide variety of tools for socialization and dialogic interaction, researchers are finding that learners may prefer greater control over interaction and choices of communication modes. For instance, the Beyond These Walls project conducted by Liaw and English (2013) linked university students in Taiwan and France to study English through intercultural learning via a sequence of joint tasks. Their study found that students opted for communication means through which they could have had more choices of multimodalities and privacy (i.e., Facebook) and quantitative and qualitative analyses of the participants' communications via the different
modes suggested that changes in mediation tools also resulted in shifting of communication styles as well as socialization practices.

Telecollaboration for teacher education is setting up virtual collaborative activities that are designed for knowledge sharing and enhancement of instructional competence of participating teachers. The studies on telecollaboration for language teacher education are quite recent works. Nevertheless, the limited number of published works reveals positive results in teacher social and cognitive presence, as well as intercultural understanding. For example, Arnold and Ducate (2006) incorporated the use of online bulletin board discussions with topics and assessment guidelines set by teachers in two foreign language education courses in their respective universities. The results indicate that students engaged in a high degree of interactivity as well as all types of social and cognitive presence: the participating students not only progressed in their cognitive understanding of the pedagogical topics, but also employed social presence to aid their discussions. The telecollaborative intercultural project conducted by Keranen and Bayyurt (2006) paired up Spanish-speaking in-service teachers and Turkish-speaking pre-service teachers in which English was used as a lingua franca. The findings indicate that the approach encouraged the participating teachers from different cultural backgrounds to develop and further their understanding of other cultures via such exchanges.

In addition to linking language teachers for intercultural discussions, some telecollaborative projects have been implemented for the purpose of enhancing teacher pedagogical competence. For example, the project “Innovating Teacher Education through ICT-Based Interaction” employed telecollaboration to provide language teachers training in Spain and in the U.S. to shift from “knowledge consumers” to collaborative “knowledge producers” (Dooly, 2011). The researcher analyzed the specific features of the pre-service teachers’ development of ICT and language teaching competence using the community-of-practice framework (Garrison, et. al, 2001). The study found, in addition to their previous knowledge, acceptance, experience and willingness to adapt to the different available communication channels, the participants’ interactions with their partners in the other country varied according to the available communication modes as they constructed “membership identities” in the virtual interactions. Along the same line of research, Dooly and Sadler (2013) conducted a two-year telecollaborative project in teacher education adopting an integrated approach to teaching about and through technological resources in
order to introduce student teachers to innovative methods for communicative-based language learning through CMC. The multimodal data analysis results indicate that the online collaboration enhanced teacher development through opportunities not available in more traditional teacher education classrooms and enabled pre-service teachers to better make connections between theory and practice.

As telecollaboration becomes more commonplace in the language classroom and teacher education programs, researchers and educators call for more investigation into praxis in telecollaborative projects, not only regarding how the modes of communication create a “third space” for intercultural contacts but also multicultural dialoguing (Dooly, 2011).

3.2. Digital Storytelling in Second/Foreign Language Teaching

Digital storytelling is the practice of combining multimodal technologies, such as photographs, text, music, audio narration, and video clips to produce a compelling and in-depth story (Castañeda, 2013). Most studies propose digital storytelling projects that take the form of personal digital narratives or documentaries capturing a defining moment in a person’s life, accomplishment stories, memories honoring a special person, historical events, and community concerns (e.g., Castañeda, 2013; Oskoz & Elola, 2014). For instance, Oskoz and Elola (2014) report the results of a case study in which learners of Spanish in an advanced writing course created a digital story over the course of a 16-week semester. From an Activity Theory perspective, the researchers investigated the linguistic and writing structural differences between traditional forms of writing and digital stories, how learners presented the content in written and oral modalities, and the learners’ perceived benefits and drawbacks of the digital storytelling assignment. Analyses from online journals, a questionnaire, reflection pieces, and the final digital story showed that most of the students found that the project helped them to become better second language writers. Moreover, the authors note that, because of the multimodality of digital stories, learners were able to move beyond presentational modes of communication.

Another study by Castañeda (2013) examined students’ experiences regarding the inclusion of digital storytelling in their high school fourth-year Spanish class. Data analyses showed that the digital storytelling premiere was the students’ favorite activity. Findings also
revealed that the project helped the students to develop audience awareness. The author concludes that the data demonstrate an epistemological shift whereby students are initially concerned with technology and grammar, but move beyond this focus and are able to create a compelling, emotional, and in-depth story in their foreign language.

More recently, Hwang et al. (2014) reported a digital storytelling project introduced in an EFL classroom in Taiwan that aimed to develop students’ speaking skills. This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of applying storytelling (individually and in collaboration) on speaking skills by evaluating the differences in prior knowledge (pre-test) and learning achievement (post-test) of the control and experimental group. The results showed that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group on the post-test and that asking students to create a digital story increased their motivation, facilitated their imagination and creativity, and gave them more opportunities to practice speaking skills.

Elsner (2014) reports an exploratory research study involving 69 mono- and bilingual fourth grade pupils from four primary schools in Germany and in Turkey. In her study, pupils’ code-switching and problem solving behaviors while working with digitalized, multilingual talking books in class were observed. Selected pupils were then interviewed to understand the pupils’ experiences with and overall perception of the program, and their reasons for choosing and switching languages. The results seem to suggest that the multilingual and multimodal experiences enabled by the software exert a fascination for language learners. Analyses from the observations also showed that the dominant language (spoken in school) for bilingual children was used as the major reference language. It served as a reassurance to check if passages, sentences, or words were understood correctly.

The aforementioned studies suggest that digital storytelling is beneficial for language learning and a good teaching practice for international collaboration. However, most of them have only included the use of the students’ L2, while very few (e.g., Elsner, 2014) have explored the use of multiple languages. Moreover, although a growing number of studies reflect interest in the integration of digital storytelling projects in the second/foreign language classroom, little is known about what participants themselves bring to the collaborative process of digital stories’ construction and how that may affect what they gain from the experience. Therefore, leaning on Bakhtin’s (1981) concept of dialogism and
Fairclough’s (2003) concepts of assumption/intertextuality, this study tries to answer the following questions:

1. How are the students’ voices expressed during the intercultural telecollaborative multilingual digital storytelling project?

2. How are the students’ voices integrated in their co-created digital stories?

4. Method

4.1. Context and Participants

The telecollaborative digital storytelling project reported on here involved students from two universities. One group of participants were students taking Second Language Literacy Development as a part of the requirement for obtaining a degree in Teaching French as a Second Language in Quebec, Canada. This course examines current theories of second language literacy development and their implications for teaching, including the use of digital storytelling as a tool for second language learning. The class was composed of sixteen francophone students, five Spanish-speaking students who have been living in Quebec for several years, and one English-speaking exchange student. The inclusion of this telecollaborative digital storytelling project in this class had four main objectives: 1) To make teaching literacy as a second language pertinent for the future FSL teachers, to broaden their intercultural perspectives, and to participate in an intercultural and plurilingual environment; 2) To initiate the future teachers into the creation of digital multilingual stories (French-English-Chinese); 3) To develop their metalinguistic competencies for the creation and the inclusion of activities pertaining to language awareness; 4) To evoke difficulties which their own students will experience in the classroom on a daily basis, and to sensitize them to these needs.

The second group was freshman students taking Freshman English for English Majors at a university in Taichung, Taiwan. This course is designed to strengthen the overall English language proficiency as well as critical thinking skills and intercultural competence of the
students majoring in English. Since digital literacy is an important competence for successful global communication, one important element of the course is infusing the practice of digital literacy alongside the development of English language proficiency. The students are guided to use selected digital storytelling tools to collaborate with peers in and out of classes for creative writing. All of the fifty-four students in this class participated in the telecollaborative project for the purpose of cultivating their communication proficiency and intercultural competence.

4.2. Design of the Intercultural Telecollaborative Multilingual Digital Storytelling Project

Students from both classes worked in teams of seven to nine students. Each team was composed of five to seven students from Taiwan and two or three students from Quebec. The students from the two classes established first contacts by e-mail and then communicated with each other by email, Facebook or via the discussion forum on their Wix website (http://wix.com), which allowed for manipulations of multimodality. Before the project commenced, the professors from both classes showed their students how to create digital stories and to work together on the project website. As part of their EFL class, previous to the Quebec-Taiwan collaborative project, the students from Taiwan had already created three digital stories. Having had experience with the project website, they were in charge of creating the Wix accounts. The international partners had three months to communicate, make decisions, and complete their stories on topics of their own choosing. English was the language of communication among team members. The stories were first written in English and then translated into the students’ native languages (notably, French and Chinese). The multilingual stories were posted on the Wix platform. The Wix creations included four sections: one for the list of group members, one for the discussions, one for the story, and one for the comments. In their respective classes, the students presented their completed digital stories and online peer responses were invited. Finally, authors were invited to respond to readers’ comments.
4.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers collected the records of their correspondences, including discussion forum and Facebook postings, as well as the finished multilingual digital stories, for analysis. Interviews and surveys were also conducted for deeper understandings. Data from the discussion forum and Facebook postings were coded using a taxonomy adapted from Cheyne and Tarulli (1999) and Gustafson, Hodgson and Tickner’s (2004) categories of genres of dialogue which are based on Bakhtin’s (1981) concept of dialogism and Fairclough’s (2003) concepts of assumption/intertextuality. Thus, the students’ voices in the process of writing their stories were identified on the continuum scale as leaning toward either the Magistral or Socratic stance. While the magistral dialogue presupposes that the interlocutors have asymmetries in knowledge and power, the Socratic dialogue is a more open-ended kind of dialogue, where the first voice isn’t trying to steer the dialogue in a predetermined way. In addition, students’ dialogue was categorized as being task-oriented or interpersonal. These data were then compared to their completed multilingual digital stories in order to analyse how the students’ voices were integrated in their co-created digital stories. Finally, group interviews were transcribed verbatim and read multiple times to identify the reactions and experiences of the participants in terms of what they have gained from the project as well as the difficulties they have encountered during the telecollaborative writing processes. Table 1 presents a summary of the two research questions, the instruments of data collection, and data analysis procedures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Data collection</th>
<th>Data analysis</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. How are the students’ voices expressed during the intercultural telecollaborative multilingual digital storytelling project?</td>
<td>Records of correspondences (discussion forum and Facebook postings)</td>
<td>(a) Coding scheme adapted from Cheyne and Tarulli (1999) and Gustafson, Hodgson and Tickner’s (2004) categories of genres of dialogue which are based on Bakhtin’s (1981) concept of dialogism and Fairclough’s (2003) concepts of assumption/intertextuality: The students’ voices in the process of writing their stories were</td>
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identified on the continuum scale as leaning toward either the Magistral or Socratic stance. 
(b) Task-oriented vs. interpersonal-oriented.

### 2. How are the students' voices integrated in their co-created digital stories?

| 1. Records of correspondences (discussion forum and Facebook postings) |
| 2. Finished multilingual digital stories |
| 3. Interviews |

(a) Data from discussion forum and Facebook postings were compared to their completed multilingual digital stories. 
(b) Interviews were transcribed. The interview transcripts were coded for themes relevant to the research question.

### 5. Findings

#### 5.1. Research Question One

The first research question looked at the international partners’ correspondences (discussion forum and Facebook postings) with the purpose of analysing how the students' voices were expressed during the intercultural telecollaborative multilingual digital storytelling project. The students’ correspondences were coded using a taxonomy adapted from Cheyne and Tarulli (1999) and Gustafson, Hodgson and Tickner’s (2004) categories of genres of dialogue which are based on Bakhtin’s (1981) concept of dialogism and Fairclough’s (2003) concepts of assumption/intertextuality. Thus, the students’ voices in the process of writing their stories were identified on the continuum scale as leaning toward either the Magistral or Socratic stance. Students’ dialogue was also categorized as being task-oriented or interpersonal. In order to illustrate how the students’ voices were expressed during the co-construction process of their digital stories, a representative example of each type of dialogue is presented in the appendix.

We found that out of the ten groups, the dialogue among members of two groups (groups 2 and 3) was mostly of a Magistral type. Ninety per cent of the dialogue among members of group 3 and 70 per cent of the exchanges in group 2 fell into this category. In contrast, there were four groups (groups 4, 5, 6, and 7) in which the dialogue among international members was of a Socratic type. The totality of the exchanges in group 7 and almost all (98 per cent) the correspondences among members in group 4 were of a Socratic type. As for groups 5 and 6, seventy-eight and seventy-two per cent of their respective exchanges were identified
as Socratic. Finally, four out of ten teams (groups 1, 8, 9, and 10) showed both types of dialogue almost in equal proportion. Findings also showed that in all the groups, most of the students’ exchanges were task-oriented. See Table 2 for the numbers and percentages of different types of voices used by the group members.

Table 2
Analysis of students' voices during the intercultural telecollaborative multilingual digital storytelling project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUPS</th>
<th>TASK/INTERPERSONAL</th>
<th>MAGISTRAL/ SOCRATIC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Task (1)</td>
<td>Interpersonal (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>40 (63.5%)</td>
<td>15 (23.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>180 (86.5%)</td>
<td>28 (13.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>94 (88.7%)</td>
<td>11 (10.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>195 (67.5%)</td>
<td>69 (23.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>110 (76.9%)</td>
<td>26 (18.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>199 (58.2%)</td>
<td>95 (27.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>281 (87%)</td>
<td>40 (12.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>200 (94.3%)</td>
<td>12 (5.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>65 (55.1%)</td>
<td>41 (34.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>222 (78.2%)</td>
<td>53 (18.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2. Research Question Two

The objective of the second research question was to investigate how the students’ voices were integrated in their co-created digital stories. To do so, we looked at the following elements in the discussion forums and Facebook postings and in their completed multilingual digital stories: theme, title, storyline, characters, dialogue, moral of the story, music and/or sound effects, and images. This comparison allowed us to categorize the groups as resulting in either successful or unsuccessful collaboration. Groups showing a successful collaboration were those whose completed stories contained ideas from both
Due to space limitations, in this paper we only focus on one team which showed collaboration among team members (group 7) and on one group in which Magistral dialogue among international partners resulted first, in lack of consensus on the theme and storyline, and in the end, in two distinct digital stories (group 3).

**Successful collaboration**

The analysis of the Facebook postings from members of group 7 showed that the Canadian students opened the conversation with their Taiwanese partners in a very enthusiastic way: “We are very happy to inform you that we are going to be the other members of the team for the collaborative project of multilingual stories. We are very excited to work with all of you. We believe that it is going to be very rewarding.” After introducing themselves, they checked with their partners if they had the same task requirements in both groups: “We are curious to know what field of study you are studying in. And as part as what course you have to participate to that project. Just to make sure we all received the same instructions. We’ll share with the one we have got from our teacher until now (…)”. This combination of interpersonal and task-oriented dialogue seemed to have set the tone for the collaboration between the international partners. Indeed, the Taiwanese partners replied following the Canadian students’ lead. They showed their excitement on the telecollaborative project (“It's really exciting to work with you as a team”), introduced themselves, answered their partners’ questions regarding their field of study and the course in which this project was introduced, and confirmed that they had received the same instructions and that they were familiar with Wix (“We got the same instructions and we have worked with Wix before”).

In their following exchanges, the Canadian students shared their suggestion of topic (“Our idea was to mix the theme of intercultural relations and travelling”) and storyline with their Taiwanese partners. Then, they explained that “To construct the story, we would need to find cultural differences between countries”, and suggested some cultural differences of ten different countries (“For example, those are examples of cultural differences that could be used in the story for the events (…)”). Despite taking the lead role at this point of the writing process, they made sure to incorporate their Taiwanese partners in the decisions by asking, “What do you think of this idea?”. This invitation seemed to have been well received by the
Taiwanese students who after having enthusiastically replied “The scheme of the story is great!”, gave suggestions to improve the storyline: “But we feel that people can know the cultural difference by putting on glasses is a little bit strange. We think that we should give more details about the features of the glasses. We have two ideas: (...)”. They chose five of the ten countries (“We choose five examples below”) and suggested another one (Thailand). Finally, they also added ideas of cultural elements to be compared in the story: “After reading your e-mail, we also find some other cultural differences (...)”.

The analysis of their completed story showed the presence of suggestions given by the two groups. For example, the story respects the original storyline suggested by the Canadian students. However, the Taiwanese students’ ideas of a magical pair of glasses (“the pair of glasses is just like magic”) and that the “moral of the glasses is explained in the end of the story” were also incorporated. The characters were suggested by the Canadians but the main characters’ names were chosen by the Taiwanese students (“Hello, we need to tell you that we want to give some characters in our story a name. The main character the boy is Sam and the experienced traveller is Lisa. How do you think of our idea?”) with the immediate agreement of their Canadian partners who enthusiastically replied “That's great!” The main character visits the six countries chosen by the two groups of students. The cultural elements found in the complete story are also those which had been negotiated and agreed by the two groups.

The international partners also succeeded in sharing the other tasks related to the creation of the digital story. For example, the Wix site and the template were created and chosen by the Taiwanese partners (“I've started to make our wix site for our story and I don't know if you like this template”). As for the Canadian students, they suggested to add music and the sound of an airplane taking off, and although the Taiwanese students found this task hard (“By the way, about the sound effects that you want to add to the story, it seems difficult for us to add them on”), they engaged in finding out how to post the audio recording on each of the pages on Wix (“We can find out how to make it. Just need more time”) when one of the Canadian students explained that “I don't understand how to modify or add something on our Wix.” In their completed story, these two elements were present. As for the illustrations, one of the Canadian students, being a talented designer, did the drawings but found a way to incorporate the pictures their Taiwanese partners had selected to illustrate the story: (“I believe it would be a wonderful combination”).
In sum, in the Socratic dialogue that the members of this group engaged in, their mutual respect of the guidelines and deadlines had a positive impact on their completed stories in which voices of the two groups can be found, and in their perception of their collaboration, as this remark made by the Canadian students illustrates: “It is a pleasure to work with you!”

**Unsuccessful collaboration**

The analysis of the discussion forum exchanges among the international partners in group 3 showed that the team members of both classes tried to impose their voices, and consequently, had great difficulty in arriving at a consensus on the type of digital story they were to create together. The Canadian students initiated the discussion by suggesting to write a story describing the lantern festival (“**BTW, what if we write a story describing the celebration, the lantern festival, and the meaning it has for you?**”). This idea was immediately refuted by one of the Taiwanese students, who replied with a categorical assertion, “**My opinion is that Lantern Festival is not a popular to write.**” Another Taiwanese student then suggested that they could compare Valentine’s day in both countries (“**we can write two different countries Valentine’s day**”) and although his Taiwanese teammates supported his idea, the students in Canada seemed to ignore them and came up with a new topic: “urban stories” (“**or what do you think about urban stories**”). This suggestion was not well received by one of the students in Taiwan, who replied “**How many stories should we compose?**” and added an emoticon (;/) to show his disapproval. Some turns afterwards, the Canadian students let their partners know that they had finished writing a love story based on a Chinese legend (“**We’ve worked on it this morning -the whole thing-so I’ll send it to you guys tomorrow. It is a love story. It is inspired on a chinese legend**”). In return, the Taiwanese students respond that they had already written half of their story and “**not to worry about the story, because it is their midterm exam and they are very busy.**” The students in each class then submitted a different story to their respective teachers. Figure 1 shows the main page of the two digital stories created separately by the Taiwanese and the Canadian members in this group.
The interview with two of the Taiwanese members of group 3 confirmed that the reason why their communication had not been successful had been the lack of acceptance of each other’s ideas:

“This is my first time to collaborate with people from different cultures. Therefore it is fresh that students from different countries work together to do something. Even though sometimes we wait for their reply for several days and these several weeks we are disappointed that... because we leave the message, and they reply us maybe four days or five days later they didn’t catch the key points we want to say, so we start the story by ourselves, we almost finish the story but they didn’t do something. It is harder to communicate with foreigner by writing than speaking face to face.”

“I think we have some gap between communications with them, for when we talk about a and they think b. At first we said we want to write a love story between different cultures, and they said they want more urban story. And I think they are not very active in this work. Sometimes we will feel disappointed, for that they didn’t answer our message.”

6. Discussion

Literature on digital storytelling has posited that digital stories may provide a social context or learning environment within which learners are able to interact with one another as well
as experiment with a range of digital video technology in order to create personally meaningful multimodal artifacts (e.g., Castañeda, 2013; Elsner, 2014; Hafner & Miller, 2011; Hwang et al., 2014; Oskoz & Elola, 2014). However, the focus of study has been put on the affordances of digital storytelling as a multimodal tool. Findings from the present study point to the importance of putting students’ dialogue in focus, as it clearly influences the collaborative writing process in telecollaborative digital storytelling environments.

In particular, it was found that groups in the Socratic dialogue stance were allowed to question each other’s ideas and suggestions on equal terms. This kind of dialogue allowed students to perceive their telecollaboration as being based on trust, and consequently, to be in a better position to disagree, and to experience different opinions as a positive and productive experience. On the contrary, groups where both international partners engaged in Magistral dialogue by taking the role of authority, left little room for discussion and this proved not to be a useful kind of dialogue in telecollaborative projects. The comparison of the students’ correspondences and their completed stories showed that the kind of dialogue students engage in during the digital story creative process is a crucial factor in explaining why the telecollaboration among members of certain groups is perceived to be more successful than others.

Our results resonate with Gustafson, Hodgson & Tickner’s (2004) contention that the way individuals present and position themselves towards other participants in telecollaborative projects has to do with how they express themselves in their dialogue with others. In turn, this impacts on the group dynamics, especially when it comes to the experience of social presence, i.e., people’s perception of intimacy and immediacy.

7. Conclusion

This article has outlined a telecollaborative digital storytelling project that aimed to contribute to the existing literature on telecollaboration and digital storytelling by investigating how the participating students’ voices were expressed in their online exchanges, how their multiple voices were integrated in their co-created digital stories, and how this intercultural telecollaborative multilingual digital storytelling project was
perceived by the participants in terms of benefits and difficulties. We have concluded that to understand how intercultural partners relate to one another and co-construct a digital story within a telecollaborative setting, teachers and researchers should pay attention to the way the students engage in dialogue and how the different types of voices used by the students may influence the success of the completed stories in terms of the missed opportunities to fully benefit from the collaboration with their international partners. From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this study allow us to contend that a closer examination of how students engage in dialogue in telecollaborative projects can give greater insights into the way students negotiate meaning in networked learning environments, into how these different kinds of dialogue affect the telecollaborative experience and in the end, into how they may potentially influence the learning conditions in those environments. Finally, from a pedagogical perspective, our findings support the claims on the usefulness of integrating digital storytelling projects both in L2 teacher education and in second or foreign language classrooms. In the long term, it would be desirable to normalize the use of digital storytelling projects into both the L2 teacher education curriculum, and second/foreign language programs.

References


Liaw, M-L., & English, K. (2013). “On-line and off-site: Student-driven development of the Taiwan-France telecollaborative project Beyond These Walls”. In M.-N. Lamy & K.


### Appendix

Representative examples of each type of dialogue found in the students’ exchanges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Magistra</td>
<td>It is the first voice that authoritatively formulates meaning in reaction to the second voice.</td>
<td>A (Canada): Hello Everyone, Best wishes for the year of the horse. BTW, what if we write a story describing the celebration, the lantern festival, and the meaning it has for you? B (Taiwan): hi, I’m Bean, and it’s good to meet u guys too～～～～～～ How about Valentine’s day C (Taiwan): : My opinion is that Lantern Festival is not a popular to write. B (Taiwan): we can write two different countries Valentine’s day C (Taiwan): I cannot agree it anymore B (Taiwan): one is Chinese Valentine’s, the other is 2/14 D (Taiwan): But is it too hard for you to feel the feeling of the festival? B (Taiwan): so how about Valentine’s day it has many different stories between Chinese and western right C (Taiwan): We can compare Chinese and Western. B (Taiwan): Estelle, Mylène, what do u think this idea～～～～ A (Canada): For me it will be interesting to compare Chinese and western stories C (Taiwan): Which stories do you mean? D (Taiwan): this is good, Valentine’s day and Chinese Valentine’s day. There are two stories and both are quite good stories, and maybe we can have a discuss on both story! A (Canada): or what do you think about urban stories D (Taiwan): How many stories should we compose? :/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socratic</td>
<td>It is a more open-ended kind of dialogue, where the first voice isn’t</td>
<td>A (Canada): First of all, it would be great to do a brainstorming so we can find an idea of a subject that would be interesting to develop for a storybook meant to be read by teenagers. We are open to all your ideas so don't be shy to give us some feedback and ideas. It can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task-oriented</td>
<td>Students’ dialogue focuses on the task: the co-creation of a multilingual digital story.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A (Taiwan)</td>
<td>Hi, I think the story is difficult to expand. I want to change the storyline. Can you accept?&gt;=? I upload my draft.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (Taiwan)</td>
<td>Maybe we can mix the two storylines to create a new story.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C (Canada)</td>
<td>We could mix it, but we have to have in mind. That is has to stay simple, because we don't have much pages to describe a lot. If you manage to make a new story mix. Just make a draft and we'll see how it goes.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<th>Interpersonal</th>
<th>Students engage in social interaction.</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>A (Canada)</td>
<td>I read on wikipedia that Taiwan was said to be the Republic of China. But I see too that it is a big island, making Taiwan a very definite land by itself. I am quite curious about it though! It is funny because here in Quebec. We have a VERY strong tendency to say we are Quebecker, and not Canadian. Even if legally part of it. We really want to claim independence. Is that the same for Taiwan towards China??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (Taiwan)</td>
<td>It's hard to explain. We are not the same as Quebec towards Canada haha. We have our own government and we also have a president. However, China always says that we are a part of them. It relates to our history. That part is very complicated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| | Taiwan is marginalized by the world because of China's mighty.  
| | To sum up, Taiwan is not a part of China!  
| | Is clear to understand? Haha |