OPEN CHANNEL: USING ADOBE CONNECT FOR COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

A Co-eLearning Project between the University of Greenwich and Lille Catholic University (ICL)

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GREENWICH CONNECT: AIMS

The overall objective of Greenwich Connect is to define a technology-enhanced approach of a university education as ‘student-centred connected learning’ aimed at supporting:

• Social interaction and social construction of knowledge
• Student employability and graduate attributes
• Digital literacy
• Interactive, connected and relevant curriculum
• Collaborative learning, teaching and assessment
BACKGROUND TO THE COLLABORATION

2002 - 2014

ICL (Institute Catholique de Lille) has been involved in a number of similar projects, including:

a number of ‘eLegal’ – co-projects with students from the Faculté Libre de Droit (FLD) at Lille and Law students from:

• Kings College London
• LSE
• QMUL
• Westminster
• the University of Queensland
WHAT IS A CO-E LEARNING PROJECT?

-a project that focuses on students from different institutions or countries and who are studying in the same field, learning through collaboration, comparison and creative engagement with tasks using new technologies.
PROJECT BASED LEARNING

‘A systematic teaching method that engages students in learning essential knowledge and life enhancing skills through an extended, student Influenced inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed products and tasks.’

PBLOnline (BuckInstituteforEducation)
BENEFITS

(Internationalisation / subject knowledge)

- Can help develop understanding of sociolinguistic topics; cross-cultural awareness.

Benefits in terms of employability

Can help students to develop the skills that employers are looking for in a global economy:

**The ‘conventional’**

- Analytic skills; working as part of a team; digital literacy skills / being ‘tech-savvy’; good communication skills.

**‘Mind set’**

- Commitment; being accountable (taking responsibility); flexibility.
CHALLENGES

How to attract students to the project and maintain their enthusiasm?

- Intrinsic v extrinsic motivation: what is the primary driver of student engagement?
  Assessment? Social interaction? Enthusiasm for the subject?

-Ensuring compatibility of timetables for Greenwich and Lille students. The challenging of finding additional rooming with the appropriate equipment.
CONTRADICTIONS

Mwanza (2011)
PROCEDURE

• Volunteers were recruited at Greenwich and Lille.

• These were then directed to the project resources in Basecamp so that they could familiarize themselves with the pre-meeting tasks and with both Basecamp and Adobe Connect.

• Participants were encouraged to check that their software was up to date and that they would be available at the times of the meetings.
PROCEDURE

• Three 60 minute online meetings – each one requiring that participants complete a number of preliminary tasks – involving online resources (video; text; forum).

• **First Meeting** (Friday, 20 March) - ‘Getting to know you’.

• **Second Meeting** (Friday, 27 March) – ‘Dialects: Language and Social Stratification’.

• **Third Meeting** (Friday, 10 April) - ‘Age, Gender & Multilingualism’.
PARTICIPANTS

• 3 first year students from the University of Greenwich studying on the level 4 course ‘Language, Communication and Society.

• 6 second year students from Lille Catholic University (ICL) studying English as part of their Law and Political Science Degree.

• 1 postgraduate trainee teacher from Lille.

• Students had very rich linguistic backgrounds.

• No previous experience of collaborative online eLearning.
BASECAMP

• A web-based project management and collaboration tool, used as an alternative to Moodle.
PRE-MEETING TASK (FIRST MEETING)

• What is your name? Where do you come from? Background? Home town/ country? Previous school?

• What languages do you speak? Do you speak your own first language with a particular accent or regional dialect?

• Can you think of a specific (and memorable) example of when you have had to alter the way in which you spoke because of the listeners age, ethnicity, social class or because of your relationship to the listener (perhaps related to differences in your degree of authority or power in the situation)?
PRE-MEETING TASK (2ND MEETING)

Task 1. Go to the following link and read the article in the Independent by Jonathon Brown:

**Negative feelings about accents can undermine Britons' sense of identity, research suggests**

When you have read the article, make notes about your own views about the relationship between individual ways of speaking and identity. To what extent should we be expected to alter the way in which we speak according to the person with whom we are speaking or the context in which the speech event takes place?
FIRST MEETING IN ADOBE CONNECT
CHALLENGES: TECHNOLOGY & MOTIVATION
PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK (3 RESPONDENTS)

Q1 I enjoyed the overall experience of participating in the project: 2 strongly agreed; 1 agreed.

Q5 Prior to the online meetings, it was helpful for me to work individually on tasks related to the topics that would be discussed: 2 strongly agree; 1 agreed.

Q8. Having participated in this project, I now appreciate that collaborative e-learning online is a valid medium for acquiring further knowledge about the subject that I am studying &

Q9. I would be happy to use Adobe Connect again as part of a course on which I was studying. 1 strongly agreed; 2 agreed.
CONCLUSIONS / WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

• Adobe Connect can be an effective tool for online learning, but requires fast broadband and user familiarity.

• Despite difficulties with regard to technology and the difficulty of recruiting volunteers, students were generally enthusiastic about the online meetings.

• The online meetings need to be formally integrated within the assessment regime – within a portfolio of subject-specific tasks.
REFERENCES


• Hockly, N. & Clandfield, L. (2010). Teaching online: tools and techniques, options and opportunities, Peaslake, Delta.


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