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Designing Web 2.0-telecollaborations for university students. The eExchange Giessen-Hong Kong

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Reports on telecollaborative projects have frequently warned of problems and tensions that lead to failed objectives. To assess the success of online intercultural collaborations Dooly (2008: 159f) has provided teachers with a comprehensive check list starting with three fundamental questions: "What did we do right?", "What things mattered most in this project?", and "What things surprised us in this project that weren't in our plan?". Keeping these questions in mind the following article will review a Web 2.0-based telecollaboration between the Hong Kong Baptist University and the Justus-Liebig-University Giessen which has been in demand with students for over five years. The article will focus primarily on the perspective of the Hong Kong Baptist University students and attempt to correlate the design of the project and the degree of success achieved for its participants, that is, to answer the question: What did we do right?

1. Introduction

The eExchange Giessen-Hong Kong refers to a Web 2.0-based telecollaborative project between the European Studies Programme (ESP) of the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) and the Department of German as a Foreign & Second Language of the Justus-Liebig-University (JLU) Giessen, FRG. This project is not one but a series of projects planned and executed every year since 2006 (Table 1). Since 1998 the two institutions have collaborated on a similar annually recurring project based on E-Mail exchange (Tamme 2001). The eExchange discussed in this article however differs from the earlier project primarily due to the use of technology not yet available in 1998 when Tamme started her project. New technology (primarily Web 2.0 applications) allowed the present project coordinators, the author and Csilla Puskás of the JLU, to build upon Tamme's design of asynchronous E-Mail communication by progressively including synchronous communication and collaborative tasks. The project designers have also consciously moved away from the concept of trainee teachers and language learners freely creating their own teaching and learning (cf. Würffel 2007) to a task-based and more controlled teaching and learning environment (Chaudhuri & Puskás 2011). The latest project of the eExchange series (October 2010 to February 2011, approximately

14 weeks) consisted of synchronous and asynchronous interaction in which the partners discussed various social issues in Germany on the basis of an interactive blog.[1]

Table 1: Project cycles of the eExchange Giessen-Hong Kong

Project Cycles (Coordinators)	Main Features
1998-1999 (Claudia Tamme)	E-Mail Tutorials: Autonomous learning environment, incidental focus on formal aspects of language and information on target country (Tamme 2001).
2006-2007 (Tushar Chaudhuri)	Forum Posts: Informal exchange between students using the Moodle-Platform. Asynchronous communication.
2007-2008 (Csilla Puskás, Tushar Chaudhuri)	Forum Posts: Task-based exchange between students using the Moodle-Platform on topics arising from the Area Studies courses. Asynchronous communication.
2008-2009 (Csilla Puskás, Tushar Chaudhuri)	eExchange Giessen-Hong Kong I: Task-based exchange on mutually negotiated topics of interest. Asynchronous communication through independent blogs amongst other means. Synchronous communication through Chat and Skype.
2009-2010 / 2010-2011 (Csilla Puskás, Tushar Chaudhuri)	eExchange Giessen-Hong Kong II & III: Task-based exchange based on the online materials of the *Orientierungskursblog*. Asynchronous & synchronous communication.

In the first section of this article major aspects of the design and the question as to why this particular design was chosen will be discussed, that is, I will answer the question: What mattered to us most? The following section will focus on problems and challenges the eExchange faced, i.e. on the question: What surprised us? Finally, I will consider whether the eExchange can be called successful, exploring the question: What did we do right? These questions are discussed from the point of view of the ESP students as evident from feedback data collected in Hong Kong during and after the project. The

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[1] See appendix for all relevant URLs.

technical aspects of the eExchange and the feedback of the GFL students in Germany have been discussed in Puskás & Kamarouskaya (2011).

2. The eExchange Giessen-Hong Kong: What mattered most?

The partners of the eExchange Giessen-Hong Kong are students of the ESP who are preparing for a year-long study-cum-work stay in the German-speaking parts of Europe (Year 3 of the ESP) and participants of a German as a Foreign Language (GFL) seminar at the JLU which aims to familiarize aspiring teachers of GFL with using Web-applications for pedagogical purposes and is designed as a hands-on training seminar (cf. Rösler & Würffel 2010; Würffel 2007). Typically the ESP students are at the level A2-B1 of the CEFR at the start of the project. Since 2008 the GFL seminar has concentrated on practical aspects of teaching and learning with Web 2.0-applications, which is where the ESP students also fit in as potential target learners. Whereas the Hong Kong students are Chinese, participants of the GFL seminar are not all German but a multicultural mix of Europeans, Americans and Asians. This raises some issues for the design of the project which will be discussed later under the rubric of problems and challenges. Another point of difference is that whereas the ESP students all share a common major, the GFL students have a diverse set of major subjects. This difference in degrees of homogeneity amongst the partners has not changed in the years since Tamme's project (Tamme 2001: 15). The number of participants has also remained constant. Both sides have 15 to 17 participants each year. The constellation of participants has thus remained the same for each of the projects but with a different set of students on both sides each year.

2.1 Intended Learning Outcomes

The ESP follows a succinct set of Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for the programme, which also serves as the basic parameter for the eExchange project.

- To enable students to grasp the significance of Europe to world history, politics and economics and to train them to become skilled and knowledgeable communicators between Hong Kong/mainland China and Europe;
- To assist students in acquiring high, professionally relevant proficiency in one major European language (other than English);
- To provide orientation and intellectual stimulus for students to understand and appreciate their own and other cultures/societies in an increasingly multi-polar and multi-cultural world; and

- In these ways to contribute to Hong Kong's role as a major international commercial and cultural crossroads.[2]

In other words ESP students are, on the one hand, required to acquire very high levels of language and intercultural skills, as well as knowledge of European social and economic issues, in a very short period of time. On the other hand, in the four semesters available before the year abroad there is little opportunity for them to synthesize the diverse set of knowledge, attitudes and skills being taught across different courses. Therefore the ESP's interest in the project as a teaching and learning activity arises not only from the potential for students to experience the authentic use of a foreign language in everyday contexts but also from the need to engage them in a dialogue in the foreign language with students in Europe about topics relevant to their major field of study. At the very least it should offer them the opportunity to present themselves to an authentic audience (and not only to their teachers or classmates in simulated class presentations) and in the process force them to reflect on themselves as language learners and intercultural communicators and on issues relevant to Hong Kong and China. To this end the project utilizes the medium of the internet and the modes of communication made possible by Web 2.0 to change one-way classroom input (learning about Europe in Hong Kong) to a two-way exchange between Hong Kong and Europe.

In terms of the ESP ILOs the above aims of the eExchange could be summed up as follows:

- Students should be able to discuss and comment on contemporary social issues in Germany;
- Students should be able to participate in and sustain a dialogue with target language speakers using Web 2.0 tools;
- Students should be able to critically reflect on contemporary social issues in Hong Kong or China and comment on the relevance of the European experience for Hong Kong and China;
- Students should be able to identify the outcomes they have achieved through the project.

2.2 Organization and tools

The project is organized into four broad phases, which are designed to allow maximum interaction within the time available (Table 2). Due to a misalignment of academic

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[2] Source: http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~gis02/programme2.html [12.05.2011].

calendars there is actually a very small window for interaction between the two groups. In practice there are only six weeks in which both groups meet regularly in parallel as a class in their respective courses. Consequently these six weeks are also the most intensive phase of the project and must be utilized to wrap up the main task (see section 2.3). Just before the beginning of the semester in Giessen, the ESP students create a blog to introduce themselves. The first task for the GFL students is to comment on these blogs and in turn to introduce themselves to their partners in Hong Kong. Just as this asynchronous phase of initial introductions begins to show signs of sagging motivation levels, mostly observable through the diminishing number of blog posts, a synchronous video-meeting on Skype is arranged for a face-to-face interaction. The personal interaction is then continued on a more informal basis without the intervention or even knowledge of the coordinators. In the four weeks of November the groups interact using diverse Web applications (Table 2) with the aim of executing the project tasks. In this phase each participant engages in a chat with his or her partner(s) at least twice on a theme related to their tasks. At the end of these four weeks there is a joint feedback session on the Adobe Acrobat Connect platform. All in all a total of four hours of synchronous interaction takes place in the six weeks of Phases 1, 2 and 3. The project ends in early February with a presentation session of approximately one hour.

Table 2: Organization and Tools of the eExchange

Project Phase	Web applications	Time available
1. Introductions	Blogs, Skype-Video-Chat	October-November (approx. two-three weeks)
2. Negotiations (on tasks) & 3. Execution (of tasks)	Blogs, Wikis, Mind-mapping tools, Chat-room	November (approx. four weeks)
4. Presentation	Adobe Acrobat Connect	February (one synchronous meeting)

In the last two projects (2009-2010, 2010-2011) a special feature was introduced to utilize the Christmas holidays on both sides. In January shortly after the Christmas break the ESP students sit the Zertifikat Deutsch examination at the local Goethe-Institute. Classes, however, already end at the beginning of December. The GFL students, who are still attending the seminar in Giessen, prepare online materials for their partners in Hong Kong during this period and simulate the oral examination acting

as examiners. This enables the GFL students, on the one hand, to gain an insight into one of the first international exams that every foreign learner has to face. The ESP students, on the other hand, have the opportunity to utilize the holidays, usually a time when they have no active contact with the German language, to prepare for the exam. Over a period of three weeks a total of 11 simulation hours (22 meetings of half an hour's duration each) are offered.

2.3 The Tasks

In the summer semester of 2009 the GFL students in Giessen created an interactive blog which is meant to be an open online learning blog for people interested in attending a German orientation course, an initiative of the German government to promote integration. As this *Orientierungskursblog* (OK-Blog) addressed some of the topics which were also being discussed in the language and area studies courses of the ESP (Table 3), it was decided to adopt it as the basis for the tasks for the following project cycles (2009-2010 & 2010-2011). As many of the creators of the blog participated in the eExchange 2009-2010, it was an added motivation for them to observe the reaction of the ESP students first hand.

Table 3: Topics of the OK-Blog

Erziehung und Bildung in Deutschland: Bewerbung und Schlüsselqualifikationen
Gleichberechtigung
Sozialstaat Deutschland: Arbeit und soziale Sicherung
Politik in der Demokratie: Die deutschen Bundesländer, Verfassungsorgane, Parteien und Staatssymbole
Erinnerung an deutsch-deutsche Geschichte(n)

The task for the ESP students was to work through the material using the interactive exercises provided. The task for the GFL students was to monitor the comments and activities of the ESP students and in turn to comment on or discuss issues or questions they raised . An example of the kind of interaction this produced can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Excerpt from the Comment function of the OK-Blog

In view of the large volume of material included within the OK-Blog, the ESP students were asked to form interest groups: i.e. students interested in similar topics formed one group. This group was then expected to work only on the online material relating to their topic. Additionally the GFL students offered each group two dedicated chat sessions based on the topic they had chosen. In view of the fact that all of the topics of the OK-Blog were very relevant to the ESP ILOs, the eExchange 2010-2011 was modified slightly from the 2009-2010 project to include an offline in-class presentation of the OK-Blog topics by the interest groups. This enabled the whole class to share and reflect on the knowledge acquired by a specific interest group. These presentations were also required to include the results of the interest groups' chat sessions with their partners in Giessen. As the contents of the OK-Blog and the knowledge it contained were not taught in class, it was vital for the students to maintain the dialogue with their partners in Giessen in order to present the topics successfully. Finally in Phase 4 the ESP students had to prepare a presentation again based on the topics of the OK-Blog but this time in relation to the context of Hong Kong and with the GFL students as audience (Table 4). This feature of design enabled the ESP students to reflect critically on some

of their own socio-political issues in light of the knowledge gained and assimilated through the dialogue on German issues.

Table 4: Topics of the ESP presentations.

2009-2010	2010-2011
Geschichte des Handovers 1997	Die Geschichte von Hong Kong. Vom Kolonialzeitalter bis heute
Sozialstaat Hong Kong	Soziale Unterstützung. The Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme
Frauen in Hong Kong – früher und heute	Gleichberechtigung: The Equal Opportunities Commission
Politik und Demokratie in Hong Kong	Hong Kong Politik
Sich bewerben in China	

3. Problems and Challenges: What surprised us most?

A number of problems with which telecollaborative projects have to deal have been identified in the literature on this topic. O'Dowd & Ritter (2006: 1) provide a summary of these problems, pointing out that "intended pedagogic and linguistic aims are repeatedly missed and projects may end in low levels of participation, indifference, tension between participants, or a negative evaluation of the partner group or their culture". The eExchange Giessen-Hong Kong has been conscious of these problems and has been successful in reducing to them to the extent that they have no longer played a significant role in the telecollaboration (see also section 4). The awareness of common problems in telecollaboration and the desire to minimize them has, however, led to the need to confront challenges which were much more fundamental in nature.

3.1 Finding the right tasks

Finding the right tasks to achieve the ILOs discussed in section 2.1 has been the most difficult challenge for the eExchange. The German partners are part of a seminar which trains them to teach language using Internet-based applications. In other words, it is in their interest to engage in an exchange where they can focus on formal aspects of the language. However, as the ESP objective is to synthesize language and content, i.e. to encourage dialogue in the foreign language, an explicit focus on such formal aspects is

inappropriate. Given that ESP students are given intensive language instruction 12 hours a week by a well-qualified and experienced team of GFL teachers, there is also very little need for a focus on formal dimensions of the language by trainee teachers.

The literature on intercultural telecollaborations, based mainly on Byram's (1997) work on intercultural communicative competence (ICC), makes a compelling case for the content in such telecollaborations to focus on among other things intracultural learning; that is, learning about one's own culture(s) and developing the ability to reflect on the origin of one's own beliefs and behaviours (Guth & Helm 2010: 18). Various reports on telecollaboration suggest that this seems frequently to have translated in practice into discussions of cultural rich points (for an examples see García & Crapotta 2007: 62-84; Belz 2007: 139-152) which end up arriving at some kind of cultural relativism (Belz 2007: 154, 155).

In other words the role of telecollaborative tasks has been widely understood as facilitating cross-cultural mediation. Guth & Helm (2010: 20) argue however that, "in particular Web 2.0 is not merely a tool for mediation but a significant social phenomenon which has generated a multiplicity of new contexts in which people interact". They argue further that:

> the open, collaborative and relational mindset of Web 2.0 and the multimodal, social, Internet-based 2.0 environments and tools place the emphasis on collaboration and participation in Telecollaboration 2.0. As well as increasing the different modes in which learners can communicate, exchange, compare and contrast information, 2.0 tools facilitate the collaborative construction of knowledge in the form of what can be seen as new cultural practices or artifacts such as blogs, wikis and virtual worlds, to name just a few. (ibid.: 22)

In many ways the role of Web 2.0 in telecollaboration as defined by Guth & Helm seems to echo Kramsch's vision of

> a critical foreign language pedagogy focused on the social process of enunciation [which] has the potential both of revealing the codes under which speakers in cross-cultural encounters operate, and of constructing something different and hybrid from these cross-cultural encounters. Bhabha calls this "a third space, that does not simply revise or invert the dualities, but revalues the ideological bases of division and difference" (Bhabha, 1992: 58). Rather than seek to bridge differences and aim for the universal, it seeks to create a dialogic context in which the vital necessity to continue the dialogue ensures a mutual base to explore the sometimes irreducible differences between people's values and attitudes. (Kramsch 1996: 7)

So Web 2.0 based telecollaboration in the context of foreign language pedagogy must first and foremost provide as many channels of communication as possible. It should be

based on a diverse set of tasks within one collaboration so as to "increase the different modes in which learners can communicate, exchange, compare and contrast information" (Guth & Helm 2010: 20). In one of the earlier versions of the project series (2008-2009) the responsibility for creating the "dialogic content" was given to the participants themselves (cf. Hess & Chaudhuri 2010: 27f; Chaudhuri & Puskás 2011: 8f). After the initial phase of introductions, the partners negotiated about what topics would be interesting for them to talk about and on which they would do a joint presentation. This was in many ways the logical next step after Tamme's 2001 project where the topics of the E-Mail exchange arose out of the exchange itself but did not culminate in a collaborative task. Though the 2008-2009 exchange used a variety of modes of communication and led to some very interesting and creative use of Web 2.0 for example blog story boards, YouTube videos or joint online presentations via Acrobat, there were signs of communication avoidance strategies (cf. Ware 2005: 66), for example a strict division of labour for the joint presentation and the research related to it. By choosing topics such as *Deutsche und chinesische Tischsitten* or *Studentenleben Hong Kong vs. Deutschland*, which have a 'Germany vs. Hong Kong/China' bias, the dependence on the partner for the progress of the project could be reduced. Evidently there was little "vital necessity to continue a dialogue" (Kramsch 1996: 7) even if a definite task (negotiation of topics and joint presentation of the topic discussed, cf. Chaudhuri & Puskás 2011: 6) had been set.

In view of the observations above there was general consensus among the coordinators of the 2009/2010 project that there needed to be a more direct relation to the ESP ILOs as well as the objectives of the seminar in Giessen and that the OK-Blog would be the ideal solution since the activities designed around it allowed the participants to use diverse channels to deal with the topic they had chosen. Using facilities ranging from basic tools such as online dictionaries and multimedia inputs for e.g. texts, film-clips and games to more complex collaborative online mind-mapping tools and collaborative writing in wikis (cf. Chaudhuri & Puskas 2011: 6), the OK-Blog was a didactically structured platform enabling students to prepare for the dialogue on the topics it introduced. The audio-commentaries and the chat-tool as well as the presentations were intended to initiate this dialogue and encourage further discussion. In other words, the OK-Blog as task addressed almost all the issues raised about Web 2.0-based telecollaborative exchanges.

But surprisingly the ESP students did not utilize the tools of the OK-Blog to work through the topics but relied instead on their German partners to explain these issues to them. To prepare for their in-class presentation they used their own net-research unknown to the teacher.

> Ich brauche die Webseite einfach nicht. Es ist zu schwer zu verstehen. Ich möchte lieber einfacher Auskunft selbst suchen. Wir können das Thema besser kennen, wann die Präsentation gemacht. Aber die Giessener sind nicht mehr über die präsentation mir geholfen. (Excerpt 1)[3]

> Ich habe die Bearbeitung der Unterrichtspräsentationen selbst gemacht. Die Informationen auf der Webseite waren manchmal zu schwierig zu verstehen. (Excerpt 2)

This points to the mindset of students in Hong Kong who regard the internet as an efficient, fast and effective way to reduce workload (see also: Hess & Chaudhuri 2010: 24). As the first excerpt points out, they are quite capable of filtering relevant factual information themselves with little or no help from experts. That they did so was therefore not much of a surprise. The surprise was rather that even an online learning environment like the OK-Blog which is "open", "collaborative" and "relational" (Guth & Helm 2010: 22) in its approach, thereby leading to the surmise that it corresponds to "the Web 2.0 mindset" (ibid.), could not motivate students enough to use it as a tool for either knowledge or skills improvement.

3.2 The 'Tutor' and 'Tutee' Constellation

Closely related to the challenge of finding the right task is the challenge of defining the roles of the participants. When the telecollaboration between the ESP and the GFL students began with Tamme's 1998 project it was conceived as an 'E-Mail Tutorium' (Tamme 2001) with two basic assumptions: 1) The 'tutee' would engage in authentic communication with a native speaker (the tutor), and consult him or her on language learning issues outside of the classroom; and 2) this would enable the 'tutee' to ask the tutor questions about the everyday life of the target country, leading him or her to access the target culture through the personal eyes of the tutor (cf. Tamme 2001: 12). The eExchange subsequently sought to merge the two assumptions and used tasks to direct communication towards specific topics relevant to the ESP students. This was intended to retain the feature of personal access to the target culture but at the same time reduce

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[3] All excerpts are from the post-project questionnaire 2010-2011.

the distance between the tutor and the tutee by introducing collaborative tasks which would make the participants equal partners.

The surprise was how the task was understood which in turn affected the way some ESP students saw their partners. While during the introductions phase the nationality of the partner did not seem to bother the ESP-Students at all, it was the clear and present need to understand the German social system from an insider's perspective which raised the issue of the effectiveness of the constellation.

> Ich glaube, dass mit den Studierenden über deutsche Themen chatten ist nicht so sinnvoll. Weil die meisten keine Deutsche sind. Sie kennen die Themen nicht so gut. (Excerpt 3)

So while the design saw the role of the GFL students as partners in dialogue who would comment and give insider views on the topics being discussed, the ESP students saw in their partners 'tutors' who would answer questions and remove doubts which would enable them to produce a coherent and critical presentation of facts for their peers. This led to very high expectations:

> Mein Vorschlag ist, dass die Tutorin (als sie selbst heißen) mehr für die Termin vorbereiten. Manchmal finde ich, wir die ganze Sprächzeit nicht so gut benutzen, weil wir nicht immer gut mit den Themen kennen. Sie sollen ein Outline/Plan für die Stunde plannen. Zu frei diskutieren ist...(nicht gut?) (Excerpt 4).

What this points to is that, when the discussion is task-based, both partners have to undertake a high level of preparation. For the ESP students this should have taken the form of the online exercises of the OK-Blog which would have enabled them to approach the topics in a structured manner and would have given the GFL students the opportunity to anticipate the questions of their 'tutees'. This would have enabled them to structure and 'plan' their chat sessions and also to do the necessary background reading. Maybe in this way the very facile conclusion of the ESP student in excerpt 3 – namely, non-German = non-expert = not effective for the task at hand – could have been avoided. Nevertheless the design element of dedicated chats elicited positive feedback in general, indicating the recognition given to the importance of the dialogue itself rather than to its preparation:

> Ich finde das Chat sehr sinnvoll, weil ich die Situation der Wahrheit bekommen. Ich habe auch viel Spaß gehabt, wenn wir gechattet haben. (Excerpt 5)

> Wenn wir die Giessener fragen, erzählen sie uns viel Information. Es ist besser als nur in net sehen. (Excerpt 6)

That a high level of preparation can lead to a very effective task-based chat is borne out by the reaction to the component of preparing for the Zertifikat Deutsch (ZD) examination which elicited the most positive responses from the ESP students:

> sehr sehr sehr nützlich, Material gut, sehr viel (Excerpt 7).

> Die Chat und Feedback von der ZD-Prüfung waren sehr toll, dass es sehr nützlich ist. Einige von den Gießenern hatten mir sehr nützliche Feedback gegeben (Excerpt 8).

It might be useful to recall here that this extra component of the synchronous communication was a structured, didactically well-prepared communication (Puskás & Kamarouskaya 2011) aimed at achieving an immediate and specific goal namely success in a public examination:

> Die Vorbereitung auf die ZD-Prüfung mit den Gießener finde ich sehr nützlich. Das Material sind nicht zu schwer und interessant. Das Chat finde ich auch gut, weil ich mündliche Teile üben konnte. Die Gießener waren sehr nett und sie haben mir viele Feedback gegeben. Dann wusste ich welche Teile ich gut gemacht oder nicht gut gemacht habe (Excerpt 9).

It is therefore possible to conclude that the problem here might not really be the tutor-tutee constellation but the compatibility of the task to the constellation as well as how the task was understood on the part of the participants.

4. What did we do right?

The challenges discussed above notwithstanding, if one agrees with Ware's general criterion of the success of online communication as being that "students sustain their engagement in an intercultural interaction across at least several weeks or longer" (2005: 66), then the eExchange has been a success since its inception. The eExchange in its present form has been able to keep the students in contact with each other over the 14 week period of the exchange including holidays and examinations by offering them diverse communication tools and making them aware of why this contact needs to take place by outlining specific aims for each interaction. It has thereby led them to achieve the goals set for them at the very beginning of the exchange. At the level of the ILOs discussed in section 2.1 above it has achieved the goal of synthesizing language and content in a dialogue meaningful to both sides.

This has been made possible by

- keeping the aims of the project close to the aims of the study programmes of both institutions;

- making these aims transparent to students by setting specific tasks;

- a high level of cooperation between the coordinators;

- continuous evaluation of each phase by the coordinators in terms of whether the short-term aims of the particular phase are being achieved or not; and

- giving the participants themselves enough opportunity to provide feedback and using this feedback to fine tune the on-going as well as the next project-cycle.

Moreover, by consistently blending Web 2.0 tools with inter- and intracultural content relevant to the needs of their educational context it has offered its participants a value addition in terms of synthesis of knowledge, skills and attitudes. So having started in 2006 as an extra-curricular casual conversation between two diverse sets of people connected only through the Internet and by their genuine desire to get to know each other, the eExchange Giessen-Hong Kong has become a part of the curriculum of the ESP.

Based on the experiences of the eExchange project up till now and taking into account the feedback on the eExchange 2010-2011, we can begin to define further criteria for identifying the success or failure of a Web 2.0-based telecollaboration beyond the universal aims of successful intercultural learning. It can be assumed that a successful Web 2.0-based telecollaboration must be able to incorporate in its design:

- A 'multimodal' forum for participants to 'exchange, compare and contrast information', to create a 'third space';

- The complexity of the Web 2.0 'mindset' of participants which is 'open' and 'collaborative' but at the same time critical of inefficient or non-useful collaboration and geared towards fast and effective results;

- A 'vital necessity to continue the dialogue', that is, to set tasks and goals with tangible and achievable outcomes; tangible through alignment to specific curricular learning outcomes and achievable chiefly through dialogue and collaboration; and

- The chance to explore intracultural issues (as opposed to only intercultural rich points) embedded within the course curriculum.

But above all one call a project successful when the participants themselves are able to identify exactly where the project fitted in their university study programme, why they participated in it and whether there is scope for improvement.

> Das Projekt finde ich nutzlich und sinnvoll, weil wir viel lernen, besonders etwas über Deutschland. Die Bereiche wie Politik und Sozialgesellschaft sind für European Studies

wesentlich. Und mit der ZD-Übung konnten wir auch Deutsch in den Ferien üben. Allgemein ist das Projekt sehr gut (Excerpt 9).

Das Projekt ist sinnvoll, weil man mit die Ausländer reden kann. Die Thema ist manchmal schwer, aber es ist wichtig für uns. Jeder hat zuerst Angst, aber am Ende ist jeder zufrieden mit deine/seine Projekt (Excerpt 10).

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Appendix: List of relevant URLs

Orientierungskursblog: http://www.uni-giessen.de/dafblog/orientierungskurs/?page_id=2921.

Project Home 2008-2009: http://gepblog.wordpress.com/

Project Home 2009-2010: http://germanstream.wordpress.com/

Project Home 2010-2011: http://projekthkbu.wordpress.com/

Online-Presentations HKBU-JLU 2008-2009: http://connect1.hrz.uni-giessen.de/p55895081/

Online-Presentations HKBU 2009-2010: http://connect1.hrz.uni-giessen.de/p87618719/

Online-Presentations HKBU 2010-2011: http://connect1.hrz.uni-giessen.de/p62862909/

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Key words

Web 2.0 – Intercultural Communicative Competence – Telecollaboration – Outcome Based Education – Blog – Task-based communication