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Challenging but Rewarding Aspects of Telecollaboration: The Case of Virtual Israeli-Polish (VIP) Project

Abstract

Starting from the premise that implementing telecollaboration can be a challenging enterprise, it is assumed that such virtual exchanges bring positive outcomes. Despite rich body of research on telecollaboration, few studies to date have explored *group dynamics* in the context of online exchange. The current research examined an Israeli-Polish (N = 100) telecollaborative intercultural experience. The Israeli participants were students from a BEd program in informal education and Polish students from a BA program in translation. The main purpose of the telecollaborative project was to develop English linguistic skills and intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997) of the students. However, the present study aimed to investigate how the group dynamics influenced the telecollaboration process and the project outcomes. The students engaged in the exchange of asynchronous video recordings (Vlogs), collaborative synchronous meetings on Zoom, and completed an on-line questionnaire. This paper outlines some of the challenges related to the international telecollaboration, including technological and institutional difficulties, context-specific demands, and some individual differences of the participants. Through "thematic analysis" (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2012) the authors of the paper explored levels of "failed communication" (O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006) and how they impacted the ongoing development of the collaboration both technically and in terms of content and development of interaction skills to uncover certain themes that referred to learners' and instructors' challenges. The study concludes with pedagogical implications for more effective implementation of telecollaboration in higher education.

Keywords: telecollaboration, group dynamics, vlogging, reticence

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, telecollaboration was already lauded as a significant tool for foreign language learning because of its possibility to engage learners in authentic communication and meaningful collaboration across national and cultural boundaries (Godwin-Jones, 2019; O'Dowd, 2016). The COVID world-wide pandemic, however, has further legitimized the use of this tool. And yet, as with all technological tools, the virtues of telecollaboration may be tempered by multiple sources of potential challenge: from technological to contextual relating to content or participant characteristics. The aspects of telecollaboration as a process based on social interactions during a virtual exchange will be developed further in the paper. The importance of conducting the present study assumed that the complex nature of collaboration may be facilitated by online intercultural exchanges. In line with that, the constructivist worldview shall be a starting point for the introduction of communication to classroom settings. It explains the importance of social interactions in language development and encourages the most natural way of learning language through meaningful discourse.

Constructionism and Communicative Language Teaching

The constructivists provided an insightful analysis of social aspects of learning processes connected with ways of acquiring a language which help to understand the importance of social relations in teaching and learning English as a second language. The general assumption of constructivism is based on the idea that people gain knowledge through their beliefs and individual experiences, in this sense, people are active learners, and they explore new concepts for themselves. This perspective advocates provision of opportunities to be actively engaged in exploring new problems, for instance, through social interaction. However, constructivism cannot be interpreted as a unified framework, in fact, three major perspectives can be distinguished: *exogenous*, *endogenous*, and *dialectical* (Schunk, 2012, p. 232). By the *exogenous* perspective we understand that one's knowledge is influenced by the external circumstances, exposure to models and teaching. Contrary, *endogenous* perspective assumes that knowledge reflects one's previous experiences and is not directly linked to external world. The last one exhibited within the constructivism is a *dialectical* view. According to this view, the source of knowledge can be found in interactions between people and their environments.

When in the 1970s language learning faced a paradigm shift, the outlook on language learning was revised and a new method emerged which addressed successful communication in authentic social contexts. Richards and Rodgers

(2014) put forward two main aims of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), namely fostering communicative competence and establishing a set of effective practices for the development of all four language skills. The authors also mention three elements that may serve as principles of CLT. Firstly, to stimulate language learning, it is necessary to introduce tasks that engage learners in authentic communication. Secondly, L2 learning can be enhanced when elements of language are incorporated in meaningful activities. Lastly, language learning can be enhanced when linguistic material is meaningful for learners. According to these principles, meaningful communication is the core of CLT. Therefore, to facilitate interaction between students it is advisable to incorporate topics which learners are familiar with and which they take an interest in. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) explain that communicative interactions, which strongly encourage cooperative interchange, are at the centre of the above-mentioned approach. CLT introduces more authentic ways of using language in the classroom settings, which enable learners to develop fluency especially in oral production. It strives to develop communicative proficiency rather than focus on structural accuracy (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 84). Moreover, Communicative Language Teaching and Learning is a gateway to meaningful language learning as it facilitates collaboration and cooperation between learners. Better understanding of the two concepts, which will be presented in the succeeding part of the paper, will allow us to indicate how communication and interaction can be enhanced in ESL.

Cooperation and Collaboration in EFL

As indicated in Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2020), the ability to communicate and collaborate is important in language education. Cooperation and collaboration are believed to be valuable and desired life skills, mainly as they are prerequisites for successful project work. It is essential to contextualise the two concepts in the context of L2 learning since they can be confused as interchangeable terms. Some researchers use the notions as synonyms, nonetheless, certain differences are present in those two forms of learning.

Following the equivocal definition provided by Johnson and Johnson (2008), *cooperative learning* is described as "students working together to maximise their own and each other's learning" (p. 402). The given explanation is rather general and does not concern the mechanism which is used by the groups working together. A more detailed definition is constructed by Olsen and Kagan (1992), who conceptualise Cooperative Language Learning as "group learning

activity organised so that learning is dependent on the social structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others" (p. 8). This understanding of cooperation suggests that activities implemented within the framework are directly linked to social context of learning and the main purpose is to obtain necessary information and process it to complete a task. Moreover, it implies that participants exhibit a sense of responsibility for the success of a project.

In *collaborative learning*, the authority is given to the group members, which means that they are empowered to achieve their own goals (Rockwood, 1995). As clarified by De Florio (2016), collaborative learning concentrates on an artefact or a product of teamwork, where the group members decide on a joined endeavour such as project or a problem. Rockwood (1995) indicates that collaboration knowledge is viewed as a social construct and consequently learning is interpreted as a social process. Collaboration requires "[1] managing one's role and contributions to group communication, [2] active orientation of teamwork by helping to review key points and consider or define next steps, [3] use of questions and contributions to move the discussion forward in a productive way, [4] use of questions and turn taking to balance contributions from other group members with their own contributions" […] [5] cognitively framing collaborative tasks by deciding on aims, processes and steps, [6] co-constructing ideas, solutions, [7] asking others to explain their thinking and identifying inconsistencies in their thought processes, [8] summarising the discussion and deciding on next steps" (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 109). Beatty (2010) claims that collaboration has numerous advantages in addition to the social comprehension of learners, arguing that it is the solution to urge spontaneous discourse as it enables to absorb learners in the direct communication. Nokes-Malach et al. (2019) recognise two groups of factors, namely cognitive and social, for both benefits and costs. As mentioned by Beatty (2010), peer collaboration is the core of cognitive and cultural development, whereas the category of social factors concerns the nature of interactions among groups members. According to Storch (2002), the most beneficial type of interaction is collaborative, as it allows for equal contribution in a task and mutual engagement in each other's work. The idea of collaborative and cooperative learning may be especially visible by examining group dynamics.

Group Dynamics

The idea of "group dynamics" is an underresearched concept in telecollaboration, despite its significance in L2 learning and teaching. The concept belongs to the field of social science and poses two main objectives (a) members of a group exhibit different behaviours compared to the people not associated with the group, and (b) despite the immense diversity of groups characters, they share universal features (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). Group dynamics, as defined by Forsyth (2019), "are the influential interpersonal processes that occur in and between groups over time" (p. 18). The above-mentioned processes determine how members of the group react, what group's aims are, and what actions they adapt (Forsyth, 2019). Consequently, being more efficient than individuals on their own, group dynamics may influence effectiveness of learning.

One of the first stages of working in groups usually entails their selection. It can be the crucial point in organisation of a project since it determines attitudes of learners and their motivation to contribute. Jolliffe (2007) indicates three methods of assigning learners to groups, namely, "random selection," "pupil selection," and "teacher selection" (p. 50). Random and teacher selections can be conducted in various ways, for instance, by numbering students and assigning them to the respective group. Pupil selection allows students to select partners on their own, which can have positive or negative consequences on group dynamics.

Forming groups might be crucial in successful telecollaboration. Forsyth (2019) identifies different stages of group development (Figure 1). The first stage, called "forming," concerns the initial recognition of group members. Members may be reserved or may prefer to observe others to gain information. In the "storming" stage, communication is rather limited, and participants may be hesitant to share opinions. The next stage, "norming," refers to the phase when group cohesion is established, simultaneously members establish group norms and agree on the disciplined participation. "Performing" is the stage in which roles of members are utilised in a collective decision-making or problem-solving activity. The last stage is referred to as "adjourning" (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977, pp. 1419–1426) in which a post-project summary or key points of the lesson-learned are formulated. At this stage, learners may evaluate their own contribution, feelings and experiences of working with others. It is usually followed by a celebration of group's achievements.

Forsyth (2019) lists the following group dynamics processes: *formative*, *influence*, *performance*, *conflict*, and *contextual processes* (pp. 18–19). *Formative processes* concern the initial relation within the group. Since members do not share personal information, the group is reserved. Later, as members realise the need to participate together, they overcome the inhibitions and foster group

cohesion. The next types of processes are *influence processes*. Being a part of a group requires the participants to follow standards set by their members, fulfil the assigned roles and agree to respect leader's directions. Essentially, all members are affected by the group and simultaneously they also influence the other members. *Performance processes* refer to group's activity towards their goal. Other significant elements of group dynamics are *conflict processes*. Since a group is the collection of people with different opinions and visions, for this reason conflicts are natural to occur. The sources of disagreements may be various, for instance, competition, power struggle, disaccord in terms of decision making or individual antagonisms. As the last component Forsyth (2019) lists *contextual processes*. They address the physical environment of the group and its purpose. These types of processes explain the context of environment and society in group dynamics. Working in a group increases learners' autonomy by providing learners with the opportunity to make their own decisions with whom they want to collaborate. Each group needs to establish its internal rapport and communicate effectively to reach a shared goal of collaboration.

Telecollaboration in Language Learning

As noticed by Boss and Krauss (2007), technology has become an integral instrument used by learners in a language classroom to explore online resources, collaborate, and communicate (p. 12). Although online collaboration was broadly discussed in CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020), telecollaboration is "a relatively recent teaching tool" (Pfingsthorn, Kramer, Czura, & Stefl, 2019, p. 160). Therefore, there is a need to explain what the term entails in more detail and what its main characteristics can refer to in the context of language learning. O'Dowd (2018) proposes the following definition of telecollaboration, "the engagement of groups of learners in online intercultural interactions and collaboration projects with partners from the other cultural context or geographical locations as an integrated part of their educational programmes" (p. 1). Telecollaborative learning involves group or pair work and largely depends on group interactions. Ware (2018) notices that the term can denote a myriad of activities and may refer to any combination of text-based, multimodal-enhanced, asynchronous, synchronous, monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual collaboration. Dooly (2017) defines the term as "the process of communicating and working together with other people or groups from different locations through online or digital communication tools (e.g., computers, tablets, cell phones) to co-produce a desired work output" (p. 169). Both definitions point out to the communication between learners coming from distant geographical

locations and representing various cultural backgrounds. An alternative definition was provided by Guth and Helm (2012), who refer to telecollaboration as "Internet-based cultural exchange between people of different cultural/national backgrounds, set up in an institutional context with the aim of developing both language skills and intercultural communicative competence" (p. 14).

Success in telecollaboration depends on proactive attitudes and digital competences as well as organisational and pedagogical skills (O'Dowd, 2015). Telecollaborative projects provide numerous opportunities to improve language skills in meaningful settings. O'Dowd (2018) notices that virtual exchanges can introduce cross disciplinary perspective on language learning. As a result, participants of such exchanges are provided with an opportunity to utilise their language skills in meaningful interactions with their non-native partners. Moreover, online exchanges open learners to explore new cultures as learning takes place in a contextualised way. Also, the ability to work in a team is currently a vital asset for employees. It is also believed that features of telecollaborative work can contribute to reduction of stress that is present in more traditional methods of learning (Taskiran, 2019).

A substantial body of literature exists concerning the benefits and challenges of telecollaboration (Table 1). Among the main advantages of telecollaboration for *language learning* researchers list vocabulary and grammar improvement (Chen & Eslami, 2011), building fluency in pronunciation (Kabata & Edasawa, 2011), increased quality of production (Jin, 2013), as well as instant linguistic feedback (Kötter, 2003). Additionally, participation in the multilingual social context can lead to better cultural knowledge and sensitivity (Canto et al., 2013). Through intercultural meetings with "the other" participants may begin to question previously held beliefs (O'Dowd, 2003). Researchers have examined telecollaboration across a variety of contexts using several methodological approaches that cluster around three main areas of inquiry: (a) language development, (b) intercultural communication, and (c) identity (Pfingsthorn et al., 2019).

Table 1

Benefits and Challenges of Telecollaboration for Language Learning (TlcLL)

Benefits *also referred to as claims of success*	Challenges *also referred to as tensions, failure, difficulties, pitfalls*
cultural awareness raising (Muller-Hartmann, 2000)	mismatches between individual learning outcomes and collaborative online activities (Greenfield, 2003)
'communication' skills development (Egert 2000; Lee, 2004)	institutional and professional misalignments (Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2003; O'Dowd, 2005)

linguistic and social linguistic advances (Kötter, 2003)	workload (Rösler, 2004) task design (Dooly, 2010)
questioning previously held beliefs (O'Dowd, 2003)	age differences (Lee, 2005)
personal and cultural benefits (Itakura, 2004; Jin & Erben, 2007)	practical constraints (e.g., different time zones, semester dates, assessment arrangements) (Ware, 2005)
teacher professional development (Arnold & Ducate, 2006; Lund, 2006)	differences in interactional styles (regarding communication and negotiation) (Ware, 2005; Ware & Kramsch, 2005)
vocabulary / grammar (Chen & Eslami, 2011)	incompatibilities in world views (Ware & Kramsch, 2005) or cultural diversity (Weller & Conole, 2008).
pronunciation fluency (Kabata & Edasawa, 2011)	psychological pressures due to synchronicity (mainly being recorded, video) (O'Dowd, 2006)
cultural knowledge and sensitivity (Canto et al., 2013)	linguistic challenges (Lee, 2006) negative grammatical-pragmatic transfer (Blake & Zyzik, 2003)
quality of productive skills (Jin, 2013) improve the speaking skills (Mandasari & Aminatun, 2020)	technological challenges (Helm, 2015)

Note: The compilation of challenges was based on Lamy & Goodfellow (2010, pp. 109–110).

As presented in Table 1, a highly respectable compilation of challenges (also referred to as *tensions*, *failure*, *difficulties*, *pitfalls*) of telecommunication was identified by Lamy and Goodfellow (2010). Kohn & Hoffstaedter (2017) recognized challenges of telecollaboration related to "sustainable pedagogical implementation" (p. 14), including learner preparation, individual learning flexibility at home (not as regular class time), technological infrastructure, IT support, and lingua franca pedagogy. Some obstacles can be the result of age or interactional styles differences, which can hinder learners' engagement in such online exchange. As pointed by Lamy and Goodfellow (2010), some behaviours can be interpreted as face threatening for the other culture. In fact, O'Dowd and Ritter's (2006) recognised that instances of "failed communication" can occur on various levels, namely: *the individual* (learners' intercultural knowledge, motivation, stereotypes, expectations), *classroom* (task design, teacher-to-teacher relationship, group dynamics, matching of the participants), *socio-institutional* (course organisation, workload and time constraints, assessment), and *interaction* levels (cultural differences, learners' engagement). From the perspective of a teacher one can notice a challenge in managing institutional and technological aspects of online exchanges. Not only must the teacher navigate multiple

tools, but also reassure students' progression through a task design (Dooly, 2010). O'Dowd and Eberbach (2004) list tasks that teachers, who embark on a telecollaboration project, are required to complete. These include rising awareness among learners, teaching how to contribute to a project, or establishing partnerships with teaching facilities. Oftentimes, teachers may be overwhelmed with the duties connected with designing and conducting telecollaboration.

Rationale for the Study

In this part of the paper, the rationale of the telecollaboration is outlined, followed by an explanation of the methodology and research design. The main aim of the telecollaborative project was, on the one hand, to develop the English linguistic skills and intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997) of the students, and on the other, to explore the challenges of the telecollaboration by examining group dynamics. Even though there have been many research projects which highlighted the challenges of telecollaboration (Table 1), not much has been written about what role group dynamics plays in influencing the process.

The main rationale for this study is to discuss challenges and benefits of telecollaboration seen from the perspective of the participants and instructors. This study aims to obtain data concerning group work in telecollaboration as it seeks to investigate what role group dynamics might specifically play in the process. Dooly (2017) advocates "a need for more research into political and social implications of telecollaboration" (p. 177). O'Dowd (2015) claims that "the literature and tools related to teacher training and CALL have not paid great attention to the challenges of establishing and running telecollaborative exchange projects" (p. 64). The potential challenges may range from technological to contextual relating to content or participant characteristics. The examined literature suggests that project work and group work activities are effective methods in fostering collaboration among learners; however, Le, Janssen, and Wubbels (2018) claim that collaboration at university may be hindered by "students' lack of collaborative skills, free-riding, competence status and friendship" (p. 1).

As the main framework to study instructors' challenges, we adopted "experiential modelling approach" (Guichon & Hauck, 2011, p. 195; O'Dowd, 2017, p. 38), which entails having a hands-on experience and gaining experience in telecollaborating oneself. By studying learners' behaviours and attitudes (group dynamics) while participating in the project, we observed the impact of the online environment to distinguish the aspects that may be challenging

and beneficial for learners. We aimed to examine the main challenges of telecollaborative learning for instructors and explore pedagogical implications, which can be applied in tertiary education. To develop intercultural competence, we used the *Cultura* model[1] developed by Furstenberg, Levet, English, and Maillet (2001), in which a learner language is viewed not as the end goal for instruction, but rather as a means by which intercultural understanding can be developed. We also adopted Byram's model (1997) of intercultural competences as the framework for the study which refer to dialectical aspect mentioned by Schunk (2012).

Methodology and Research Questions

We used "convergent mixed methods" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 51) which indicate that both quantitative and qualitative data support the research. As defined by Leavy (2017) "convergent or concurrent designs involve collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, analysing both datasets, and then integrating the two sets of analyses in order to cross-validate or compare the findings" (p. 175). The study included several sources of data, in which qualitative instruments were Vlogs posted via online platform Flipgrid, accompanied with students' comments posted under the videos and a quantitative instrument was a questionnaire. Additionally, two synchronous online meetings on Zoom were observed and analysed to determine the way the Polish and Israeli students managed their work in real time during online telecollaboration. The abovementioned instruments allowed for the triangulation of data sources which assured the findings to be reliable and accurately applicable in the context of the study. With the use of Vlog recordings as well as comments posted by the students on Flipgrid, observation of Zoom meetings and the questionnaire, the researchers aimed to obtain information necessary to answer the following research questions.

RQ 1. What behaviours do Polish and Israeli students exhibit while interacting asynchronously via Vlogs?

RQ 2. What group dynamics can be observed when Israeli and Polish students meet synchronously online?

RQ 3. What are the benefits and challenges of the Israeli-Polish telecollaboration?

[1] The *Cultura* model aims to develop better understanding between the students coming from the Muslim and Western worlds. Retrieved from: http://cultura.mit.edu.

The first research question aimed at observing behaviours of Polish and Israeli students during asynchronous interaction on Flipgrid. To successfully break down students' participation in the activity, a "thematic analysis" approach (Braun & Clarke, 2012) of video logs content was conducted. The Vlogs analysed in this part of the research provided information about group dynamics exhibited by the students. The second question sought to investigate how students managed to work in cross-national groups and what difficulties they encountered in the online environment. To answer this question, the researchers decided to observe an online synchronous meeting on Zoom and analyse group dynamics and interaction patterns between students in groups. This question aimed to explore participants' problems they encountered when fulfilling the given tasks. Language used by the participants and their reactions towards the events encountered would serve as hints to formulate an explanation to their problems. Lastly, the third research question focused on students' opinions of group work, as well as their perceptions of the challenges faced during the telecollaboration they participated in. It was possible to identify participants opinions through the questionnaire, which aimed to identify learners' preferences concerning various aspects of group work to unveil possible restraints and identify the differences that Polish and Israeli students exhibited. It was expected to determine the challenges and benefits the participants noticed when working telecollaboratively. This objection aimed to explore the aspects that were the most difficult to deal with from students' perspective, as well as verify if students recognised positive features of telecollaboration.

Context and Participants

Implementing the Polish-Israeli project required the cooperation of two instructors, one from Israel and another from Poland, as well as one Pedagogical University student, who at the time of the telecollaboration was conducting her master's degree based on the project. The Israeli instructor sent an invitation to the telecollaboration to the Polish University which specified the aims of the virtual exchange. The total number of participants was 100, including 40 Polish and 60 Israeli students (Table 2). The Polish group ages ranged from 18 to 25; whereas the majority of Israeli group ranged from 25 to 35 years old. The Polish participants were second year students of undergraduate programme studying translation in English philology department. Two groups of Polish students (each consisting of ca. 20 students) were randomly selected by the Polish teacher. At the time of the research, the students were enrolled in Discussion course as part of their Bachelor of Arts degree in applied lin-

guistics programme at the Polish university.[2] The students from Israel came from different professional backgrounds and they enrolled to an English course. They were a more diverse group consisting of people from various professions. The proficiency level of English represented by the participants was estimated by the instructors between B1–C1 (CEFR). The Israeli participants exhibited mix-ability level of English proficiency, ranging from B1–C1. The groups of Polish students were more linguistically homogenous (B2/C1). English was the language of instruction in the project.

Table 2

The Israeli and Polish Participants of the Telecollaborative Project

Nationality	Number of students	Age	Field of study	English language proficiency	Learner characteristics
Israeli	60	25–35	Informal education with a teaching certificate in History	CEFR B1–B2/C1	Youth movement working, studying, and living together
Polish	40	18–25	Translation studies conducted in English	CEFR B2/C1	English studies (translation)

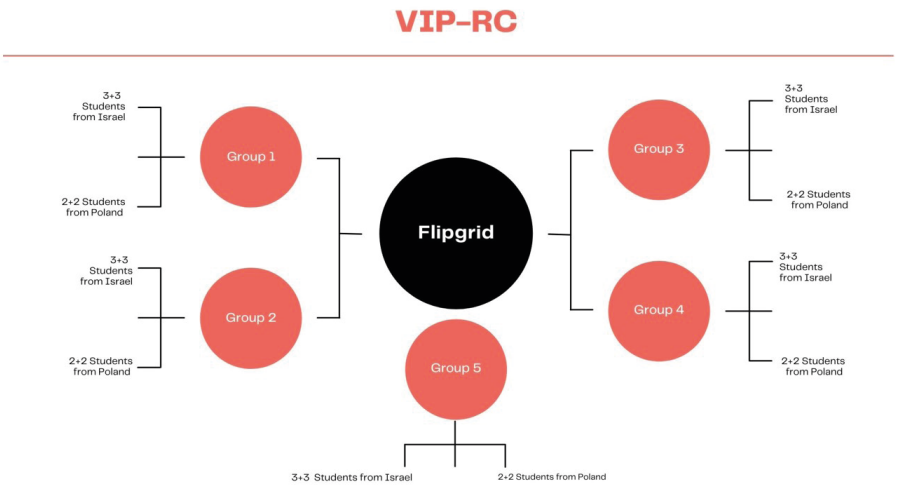
Note: N = 100 (total numwber of students in the study).

Mapping of the groups (Figure 1), which was prepared by the instructors for the participants, entailed pairing the Israeli and Polish students. The random assignment of the students was aimed to increase the generalizability of the results. However, the participants opted for "pupil selection" (Jolliffe, 2007) and chose their national partners on their own. The students (N = 100) assigned themselves into 18 available groups, each consisting of four to eight students. The groups were first formed by the Israeli students themselves and Excel file with their names was then shared with the Polish students, who added their names to the already formed groups. As there were more students from Israel, they outnumbered the Polish participants in each of the groups.

[2] The structure of the program can be found here: https://anglistyka.up.krakow.pl/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2022/06/BACHELORS-DEGREE-PROGRAMME-2022-2023.pdf.

Figure 1

Mapping of the Groups (Numbers 1–5).



For the purpose of the research, every group received a coded name, for example, Gr18IS, in which the last element indicated either Polish or Israeli origins. Each student was given their individual code based on the following pattern S12P (Student number 12 from Poland) or S22I (Student number 22 from Israel).

Procedure

Data for this study were collected during three stages (Table 3). Stage 1 related to students' behaviours of a vlogging task. Stage 2 addressed classroom dynamics and interaction of students who participated in an online synchronous meeting. Stage 3 aimed to examine participants' and instructors' challenges of the telecollaboration. To categorise the data obtained through Vlogs and comments, tables comprising of the main lists of categories and themes selected in the study were utilised. A qualitative analysis was adapted to investigate participation of the Polish and Israeli students in the online synchronous meeting. Similarly, to the vlogging task, tables enabled to systematise the data. To collect the data, the researchers obtained "informed consent" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 147) from the participants (Appendix 1).

Table 3

Stages of the Data Collection in the study including research instruments, techniques, and corresponding research questions

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Vlogs	Synchronous meeting on Zoom	Questionnaire
Content analysis	Observation	Questionnaire: part I – group work, part II – telecollaboration
RQ1: What behaviours do Polish and Israeli students exhibit while interacting with non-native group of students via Vlogs?	RQ2: What group dynamics can be observed when Israeli and Polish students meet synchronously online?	RQ3: What are the benefits and challenges of the Israeli-Polish telecollaboration?

Stage 1: Vlogs

In stage 1 of the project, students were asked to present a series of three Vlogs to all group members. However, to save time of the participants, they were requested to watch and leave comments only under the Vlogs recorded by the non-native partners they were paired with (Figure 2). This part of the vlogging project was set to establish the partnership within the national and cross-national groups. The content was shared via platform Flipgrid, which is a tool supported by Microsoft that was approved by both universities participating in the telecollaboration. The access to the recordings was possible only after login in with the university e-mail address. Introducing this platform ensured security and guaranteed that the shared video material was visible only to the participants of the project. Students were asked to prepare 3–4 minutes long Vlogs on the topics provided by the teachers. Following Helm (2015), we purposely omitted too difficult (political issues) or too easy themes (music, sport, travel) and urged the participants to reflect on the following themes outlined in Table 4. The scope of the questions was broad enough for the participants to elaborate on the meaning they wanted to convey.

The participants were working with their native group while recording the three Vlogs. After publication of the video material on the Flipgrid platform, the non-native groups were to watch the Vlogs and leave a comment underneath. The platform enabled the students to comment on the shared material. Contrary to the Israeli students, who were obligated to provide written feedback (comments) for their non-native partners, the Polish students were only encouraged to do so. The main reason for the difference in the written feedback students

were to provide stemmed from the course requirements. The Israeli instructor planned the participation of the telecollaborative project as an obligatory assignment for her students. The Polish students, who were invited to participate in the project, were not assessed for the outcomes of the project.

Table 4

The Instructions for the Vlogs

Vlog 1	Vlog 2	Vlog 3
The aim is to get to know each other better both personally and as part of the group. Where do you live? What are your lives like? What do you do? Tell something more about your teaching practice/study. What are your informal education activities like?	How would you like to influence the world? What is important to you, related or unrelated to what you study or do in life? Why did you choose your field of study? What is special about your studies? What is it like to be young in Europe now in general and also regarding the political and economic and covert situation? Expand on what you said in the first blog regarding your work. Provide examples of what you do and how you do it. Tell us more about your work by giving examples of what you do.	Looking ahead at your future and your continued professional development (You and the future) What would you like to do in the future? Describe how you see your professional self in 5–10 years from now. What would you say to your future self?

The video material and the written comments were the main sources of data for this stage. We used "thematic analysis" (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2012) to identify lists of categories (Appendix 2) which gave "insights into patterns of meaning (themes)" (p. 57) in the data. The decision to use TA in the study was justified by the fact that we were not interested in "quantitizing" the data (Kawulich, 2005) by looking for frequencies in the lists of codes and themes, but we wanted to focus on the observed data of the verbatim conversation to explore the group dynamic processes. By distinguishing the main themes that were addressed by the students, we were able to describe the discourse of the students performing the asynchronous online task. The comments were coded similarly by distinguishing the main patterns of behaviours.

Stage 2: Online Synchronous Meeting on Zoom

Stage 2 of the project involved two online synchronous meetings via platform Zoom. The participants were divided into two teams according to the groups they belonged to (Team 1: groups 1–9, Team 2: groups 10–18). After the introductory part, each group was delegated to a separate breakout room. The researchers could freely visit every room during the process of completing the

task. To facilitate more effective communication, each group received a link to their individual Padlet board on which three assignments were displayed, which were to help guide group discussions. (1) **Discuss:** What are the similarities and differences that you have discovered between yourselves through this project? (2) **Explain:** What is the key takeaway of the telecollaborative project? (3) **Evaluate:** Summarise the outcomes and celebrate the end of the project. Use filters to express your emotions. The last part of the meeting was devoted to conclusions and "the celebration part," during which the students and the teachers could use filters as a way of expressing their emotions after the meeting.

Some selected groups were randomly observed to distinguish how students managed group work in the virtual meeting. Unstructured observation was used as it could provide the researchers with "rich contextual information" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018, p. 542). It was conducted with the premise that some patterns of group interaction in the online environment could be detected. The aim was to reveal learners' behaviours, making it possible to form conclusions on the challenges learners faced. The observation, recorded in field notes (Appendix 2), aimed to establish the appropriate categories and themes. It was done mainly on a "descriptive level" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018, p. 552) by focusing on "reconstructions of conversations" (p. 553). It was believed that the researchers would be able to gather *in situ* data. The "reflective part" of the field notes was filled with the instances of "failed communication" and the instructors' comments.

Stage 3: Questionnaire

A quantitative approach was employed as the method which allowed for summative analysis of students' perception of telecollaboration. It was expected that the questionnaire would provide insights into students' reservations and perceived benefits of the project. In total, there were 27 questions in the survey developed by the M.A. student-researcher, for which a Google Form was used. The design of the questionnaire (Appendix 3) was based on Cantwell and Andrews' (2002) research instrument used in their study investigating factors underlying students' feelings towards group work. Apart from that, Helm's (2015) survey on students' beliefs about values of telecollaboration was exploited. Twelve questions, adapted from Helm (2015), assessed students' perception of the telecollaboration. The researchers highlighted the anonymity of the students and voluntary participation in the survey.

Apart from the introduction, in which the purpose of data collection and its use had been stated, the questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part was an introductory section in which students provided their bio data. In the second section, participants were requested to indicate their preferences towards

group work. This part consisted of 12 questions, which were grouped by the factor they investigated. There were three factors that were studied (1) Preference for group learning, (2) Discomfort in group learning, and (3) Preference for individual learning. Students were asked to rank the given statements using the Likert scale (where 1 meant "not at all true of me" and 5 was described as "very true of me"). The third section addressed students' perception of the telecollaboration. Specifically, students were asked about challenges and benefits of this form of learning, areas of language learning that improved in the telecollaboration, and their views on the ICT tools utilised in the project. The questionnaire was shared with the students after the synchronous meetings on Zoom via chat box. Additionally, the link was also sent via e-mail to the Polish and Israeli participants. All answers submitted were fully anonymous.

Findings

As mentioned previously, the study considered three data sources gathered in the project process between November and February 2022. The researchers investigated the Polish Israeli telecollaboration in the context of higher education. Firstly, the results of the video recordings on Flipgrid are presented. Secondly, observations of the group dynamics during an online meeting on Zoom supported by Padlet are summarised. As the last stage the study outlines the results of the questionnaire.

Stage 1: Thematic Analysis of Vlogs on Flipgrid. Focus on levels of 'Failed Communication'

By means of "thematic analysis" (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2012), the decision was made to identify lists of categories and develop themes which corresponded to instances of "failed communication" (O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006). We were interested in whether or how the participants managed to overcome their communicative barriers in the virtual exchange. As displayed in Table 5, Vlogs #1 generated significantly more views and comments, which was probably due to the novelty of the online task and increased interest in knowing about the foreigners. The following Vlogs #2 and #3, spawned less online interchange of ideas. The overall time of the video material was also longer than in the next two Vlogs, which might have been caused by providing the students with a longer period for interaction than two other Vlogs. After the publication of the Vlogs, students communicated their feedback through comments.

Table 5

A Summary of the Vlogging Activity on Flipgrid

	Vlog #1	Vlog #2	Vlog #3
Hours of discussion	73.3	51.2	28.6
Number of views	2299	935	519
Number of comments	111	90	45
Number of responses	43	43	44

Note: The statistics were automatically generated by the Flipgrid platform.

The first, *individual*, level of failed communication was noticed in Vlogs #2. The first theme that emerged here concerned misunderstandings caused due to lack of intercultural knowledge. In the vlogging task, the students indicated the differences and similarities of living in the two cultures. As far as the differences were concerned, they were related to the Israeli community and movement. One Polish participant explained: "your lifestyle isn't something we're familiar with (actually, the first time we've come across it), but the idea of equality and socialism seems fun.[3]" This comment sparked a short conversation, in which an Israeli student sent a link to the Wikipedia page (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hashomer_Hatzair) that provided general information about the youth movement. Another student (S29P) added: "I would love to know more about these communities you live in—I don't think such a thing is available or popular in Poland and it sounds really interesting." On the other side, the Israeli group found it difficult to understand the reasons for studying English. Some Israeli students expressed their confusion with the specific course of study chosen by Polish students (S13IS): "hey guys, I don't understand why you don't want to be teachers? and what would you like to do with tourists?." Further, another Israeli student commented (S16IS): "it sounds like you chose your studies not by passion but by default, please correct me if I'm wrong." In their responses, the Polish students were not that sure why they chose English. Some mentioned the fact that they study English because they "have always liked the language," others that they were "good at it" or got "good grades," some mentioned the fact that they did "not know what to do in their future."

Another level of failed communication occurred at *classroom level*. It indicated how matching of the participants influenced group dynamics. The Israeli participants more frequently decided to record their Vlogs #1 as a whole group, while the Polish participants preferred to record the clips separately and combine them into one video material. The fact that most of the Vlogs were presented in the latter form could be ascribed not only to the social distancing

[3] Respondents' remarks are quoted in the original.

restrictions introduced in both countries because of COVID-19 pandemic, but also to the participants' preferences for group work. For the similar reason, many Polish students recorded their clips indoors individually, unlike some of the Israeli participants who chose to work outside. To provide insights into the level of failed communication between the students, two most commented vlog entries were chosen to report on the behaviours appearing in the interactions. In the Polish group (Gr6PL), consisting of four students, each person recorded the videos separately to combine the three clips in 1 minute 34 seconds long Vlog. The students mentioned their specialisations and described their interests. They were mainly mentioning literature, music, cinematography, and pets. As far as comments were concerned, the students received several questions from their non-native partners: "Why did you choose to study languages?," "What do you like about your studying?," "What are your dreams after you finish studying?," "Did you guys always knew you would study in the university after finishing high school?," To these questions the Polish students answered in the comments section three days after the feedback had been posted. The themes that emerged in the Vlogs #1 were related to norms and ideas implicitly conveyed within both groups, which were not understood by the opposite nation. Conversely, in case of the Israeli's (Gr4IS) most commented Vlog, the group recorded the video altogether sitting outdoors and listening to each other's utterances. This Vlog was significantly longer, lasting 4 minutes and 30 seconds. The Israeli students first described their free time activities (rock climbing, doing various sports, learning science, philosophy, cooking, watching movies, listening to music). Then the students explained that their current activities related to "the movement" they belong to. Some questions from the Polish students were added, however, no answers were provided by the Israeli group: "You sound passionate about the movement :D Are there any frustrating setbacks along the way that you have to overcome?".

The third level of failed communication signified workload and denoted challenges at the *socio-institutional* level. Contrary to the Israeli students, who commented sections in all groups, the Polish students tended to leave comments only under the group they were assigned to. In Vlogs #1, 54% of the Polish students wrote a comment under the Vlog of their Israeli group members, whereas 94% of the Israeli students commented under the Polish students' Vlog, excluding responses to the comments. In Vlogs #2, on average, 87% of the Israeli students left a comment under the Polish videos, while 73% of the participants from Poland posted feedback for the Israeli groups. The last Vlogs #3 generated only 45 comments, including 22 comments from the Polish students, 20 Israeli posts and three comments from the coordinators. This means that almost 48% of the Polish students posted a comment under their non-native group Vlog, while almost 31% of the students from Israel provided written feedback. Comments often referred to the content of the Vlogs. There were

usually requests for further elaboration on their hobbies (music, movies), the studies (English), professional life (the Israeli community, youth organisations, non-formal education), or the world-wide situation (the pandemic restrictions). Most of the questions concerned asking for more details and finding the things that the participants had in common. The Polish students especially, preferred to provide a written reply to those questions, whereas the Israeli often recorded their answers.

The fourth, *interaction* level, referred to hidden messages that could have been understood only when the participants were acquainted with the cultural differences or socio-political situation in Israel. The Polish students could not understand what is meant by living in the Kibbutz community. The Israeli discourse itself was unclear as it was not supported by examples or justification of the Israeli students' utterances. A few illustrative examples are given below:

> S22IS: we do it together because we think that when we do something together it makes you feel better, and you feel that you have a lot of power

> S63IS: we are very serious about it

> S51IS: we are trying to pass on these things that we established here as the movement

For the reasons, the Polish students started commenting or asking additional questions (S04P): "[w]e have never heard of a community like yours, it sounds very interesting. The idea behind informal education seems intriguing as well. Looking forward to getting to know more about you and your culture!," Another Israeli student (S06IS): commented on different characteristics of their countries and juxtaposed travelling opportunities, stating: "I'm a little bit jealous of the easiness you can cross borders in the EU. In our country it is more complicated but last year I've been in Sinai dessert, and it was great, but I don't think it's similar to your travelling options." The utterance was not supported by any example or justification of what makes travelling "complicated." Unless the Polish students had known about the unstable political situation in Tel Aviv, they would not have understood what was meant by the message.

Stage 2. Observation of Online Synchronous Meetings via Zoom and Tasks on Padlet

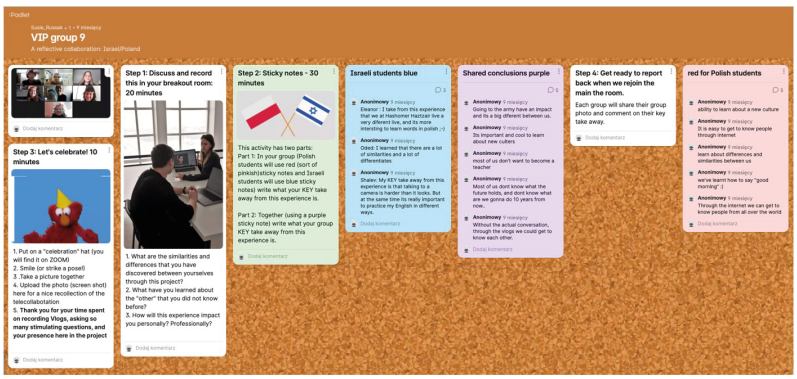
The second data source concerned online synchronous meetings, which provided information on challenging aspects of the online environment concerning students' behaviours while communicating directly in real time. The observations presented below indicate different challenges each of the groups faced.

Observation 1 concerned reticence which generally refers to not revealing one's thoughts or feelings readily (willingly without difficulty). During the synchronous online meeting, there were a few participants who appeared to be confident speakers while others preferred to refrain themselves from talking in the forum of the group. Being asked about the specialisation of their studies, the Polish students in group 8 were reluctant to elaborate on the topic. Similarly, one of the participants from Poland evaded a question about their hometown with a short response: "there's nothing much to talk about our town" to which Israeli student answered that "our towns are even smaller." In group 12, one Israeli student highlighted the problem of expressing oneself in the foreign language: "I was surprised by how hard it is to explain my thoughts in English. I think I have good English and I thought it would be easy but it's really hard to do the Vlogs to explain myself. I'm not sure if I had said the things I really wanted to say." The Polish student responded that they "do not face similar challenges" and the conversation was finished after the statement. Interestingly, some of the observed groups felt the need for introducing small talk during the online meeting via Zoom. They conducted an icebreaking game which allowed them to build team bonds. The activity that reappeared in the discussions functioned as a way of establishing relaxed atmosphere. On the other hand, the groups who immediately began to complete the tasks in Padlet seemed to feel unsure how to proceed with tasks and were rather apprehensive about expressing one's opinion.

Observation 2 referred to the lack of ICT skills. During the meeting on Zoom certain unanticipated problems appeared that influenced students' participation in the online meeting. The first concerned the use of Padlet. The fact that some students were not familiar with the virtual board, impeded the completion of the task. In group 8, to manage workflow in Padlet (Figure 2), one student in the group edited the posts and administered the board in the application. However, the group started to write their answers to the tasks in the Padlet intended for a different group. Another major obstacle concerned the use of a particular feature that Zoom offers, namely the use of filters. Many students could not use this embedded feature. Only after the help of other group members and the administrating teachers, some students managed to understand the filters option. The lack of basic ICT skills hindered the group activities.

Figure 2

An Exemplary Padlet of the VIP Project



The following examples show how technology can mediate for worse participation in the group. During the meeting in group 9, certain technical difficulties occurred. Firstly, due to poor Internet connection some students faced problems with connecting to Zoom and switching their cameras on. It influenced the group discussion as the students were not able to see each other's reactions during the task. Another technical problem that hindered the communication and the participation process related to the quality of the Internet connection in group 12. Poor Internet stopped group work when the video recording of the meeting ended midway. One of the Israeli students could not fully participate in the meeting as the sound was interrupted by external voices, consequently, his microphone was muted, and the camera was disconnected.

Observation 3 concerned participant responsibilities within the groups and their levels of engagement. Disconnected cameras caused problems in group 17 and group 18. It was especially visible in the case of the latter group, in which one of the Israeli students did not turn the camera on and did not participate actively in the meeting, leaving only one Israeli student to contribute. The visible awkwardness in the interaction between the students was emphasised by long pauses (e.g., no volunteer to initiate the discussion) and nervous laughter of participants. What is more, the group finished the discussion tasks relatively quickly compared to the rest of the groups. The work on Padlet also generated other challenges, for example, one student who appeared to be a leader commented that he would have preferred all the members to contribute to the posts on Padlet instead of him individually writing the answers. However, the most important observation was noticed thanks to the minutes of the meeting in Group 8 (Appendix 2). Even though the students were willing to communicate, for some reasons the discussion was devoid of effective language functions, mainly *justifying*, *explaining*, and *exemplifying*.

Challenges of the Telecollaboration from the Students' and Instructors' Point of View

Although the telecollaborative project was successful, challenges at various levels remained to cause problems both to the participants and the instructors. Table 6 presents the challenges of the online virtual exchange that were collected from the questionnaire and observed throughout the telecollaboration process. The data were collected by means of *direct observation* which was based on the criteria of (1) introducing non-intrusive observation, (2) providing transparent information to the participants, (3) including subjective and objective information, (4) monitoring the online environment to increase ecological validity, (5) conducting observation over an extended period of time. To fully exploit *field notes* (Appendix 2) taken during the telecollaboration process, coding categories and themes that emerged during the first stage of the project where juxtaposed and then compared with descriptive and reflective notes. The observers' comments in the reflective notes section usually concerned questions like "What are the challenges students can find in everything," "What are the expectations of life?," which were directing the researchers' attention to a low quality of the spoken discourse. It was evident that lack of well-developed communicative skills, mainly language functions, prevented the participants from effective interaction and mediation of meaning (Council of Europe, 2020).

Table 6

Challenges of the Telecollaboration from the Students' and Instructors' Point of View

Learners' challenges	Instructors' challenges
Personal differences PL/I (age difference, sense of community, different studies, language level differences B1/B2 vs B2/C2).	Technological and institutional restraints (MS Teams—no chat for visitors, obtaining permission to use Zoom, Padlet—the Polish instructor had access to only 3 virtual boards, Zoom—no filters for guests).
Extra work (Antoniadou, 2011) – time constraints; – other commitments (children, jobs); – group responsibility.	Partner matching (the instructors could have matched students studying similar subjects, having similar interests, similar age groups/proficiency levels, 6–8 students in one group).
The tasks (Vlogs, Comments, Task no. 3 "Me and the future," Padlet). The choice of adequate comment/questions.	Size of the population (difficult to manage a group of 100 participants, e.g., Zoom breakout rooms).

Inability to learn from work-related experience Lack of activation of reflective skills.	The choice of tasks (when you do not know the participants well, e.g., what their interests are, future work plans).
Disengagement or various levels of engagement (Yang, 2020) Shyness (Buss, 1985) Reticence (King, 2013) Lack of self-confidence.	Time constraints — Differences in time zones for synchronous meetings; — Challenges with scheduling meetings; (too close to the exam session for the Polish students); — Making efforts to adjust time frames (assigning tasks to keep the students occupied); — Amount of time preparing the telecollaboration (from the learning outcomes to the specific tasks).
A need for f2f, personal contact, live communication rather than Vlogs.	ICT support (not possible to find one universal platform, which would include the Zoom, Padlet and Flipgrid functionalities).
The need to identify self-initiated topics (Kohn & Hoffstaedter, 2017).	Monitoring students' on-task behaviour (Gillies & Boyle, 2010).
Lack of deep reflective skills; Ineffective use of academic language functions or perfunctory interactions.	Engaging students in "diversity surfing" (Kramsch, 2014, p. 98).
Psychological tension connected with recording oneself (O'Dowd, 2006).	Establishing teamwork beliefs and behaviours (Gillies & Boyle, 2010).
No individual learning flexibility (Kohn & Hoffstaedter, 2017).	Establishing group norms (Ruys, Van Keer, & Aelterman, 2012) (the Zoom etiquette).

Learners' Challenges

When looking at the content of Table 6, it seems that most of the challenges the students faced related to their needs to feel safe and comfortable while participating in the virtual exchange. The first troubling issue emerged when recording the video logs on Flipgrid. The Polish participants felt tension and voiced their concerns with the fact that "there will be other people who will see them [the videos]." The learners often found it difficult to follow instructions for clarity. As it was in the case of vlogs #1 and #2, some participants hurried in answering the questions from the next task instead of recording them under the vlogs provided. This might have been because they were stressed due to video recording (O'Dowd, 2006), could not elaborate on their utterances

because of lack of linguistic competences, had nothing to say, or were not able to control the cognitive demands of the discourse. All students opted for more personal and face-to-face communication and wanted to discuss other topics than the ones chosen by their instructors. Other problems usually concerned extra work (Antoniadou, 2011) and various levels of engagement (Yang, 2020). As noted by Belz (2002), the differences in university schedules and other academic activities not related to the project could have limited students' contribution to telecollaborative tasks which resulted in frustration of some group members.

Another challenge concerns stepping out of the comfort zone. Some students avoided or did not elaborate on real-life world problems connected with political, ethical, and social dilemma, even though some of the topics appeared in the online discussion (human rights, gender roles, environmental sustainability, climate change). Some students questioned the rightfulness of the tasks prepared by the instructors, claiming that they should be allowed to talk about trivial matters, instead of their future or profession. Written reflections also appeared to be of a questionable depth and quality, especially when the Polish students rightfully protested "[h]ow to reflect on experience if we do not have one." The lack of work-related activities in the academia prevented the students from elaborating on their "professional self." Some students might have felt threatened by being asked to talk about experience not yet known. However, the missing aspect of experiential learning in the higher education context might be an important constraint of the university programme objectives.

The Polish students often admired high confidence of the Israeli students. The re-occurring statement, "I admire your confidence in speaking English" may be linked to their feeling of lack of self-confidence when speaking English that may have its roots in shyness or reticence. This finding is not consistent with that of Kohn and Hoffstaedter (2017) who studied "speaker identity," "including a growing sense of speaker satisfaction and trust in one's own creativity and strategic resourcefulness" (p. 1). Focusing extensively on one's shyness in the context of the telecollaboration might have produced inaccurate perception of the intercultural encounter that accounted for limited understanding of the others.

Instructors' Challenges

Both instructors encountered considerable difficulties in the telecollaborative process. First, *scheduling* seemed to play an important role. The instructors started planning in the summer 2021, however, they did not manage to coordinate the class schedules. Even though it did not impact the Vlog stage,

it did impact the synchronous meeting. Timing during the semester (too close to exams for the Polish students) decreased the quality of interaction in Vlog #3. On the other hand, time differences for the synchronous meetings were causing many problems for the Israeli students, who at the time of the meetings, were busy engaged in other obligations. Second, *institutional* (mainly administrative) *challenges*, which resulted from the Polish university policies in getting permission from its authorities to use Zoom. The Polish University uses MS Teams platform on which guests are denied access to the chat discussion. The inability to fully integrate guests from the outside of the Pedagogical University caused organisational burden. Third, *technological restraints* prevented the instructors from providing the participants with good quality virtual exchange. Apart from such obvious problems of echo, frame-freeze, muted microphones in the online synchronous meetings (Helm, 2015), there were those connected with functional disability of using certain ICT features on (disabled MS Team's chat and no filters on Zoom for guests). Finally, all *organisational* problems, often unanticipated, made the telecollaboration even more perplexing. They related to managing the course and the syllabus, choosing tasks that would be engaging and cognitively challenging for the participants, or establishing group norms online, including the Zoom etiquette.

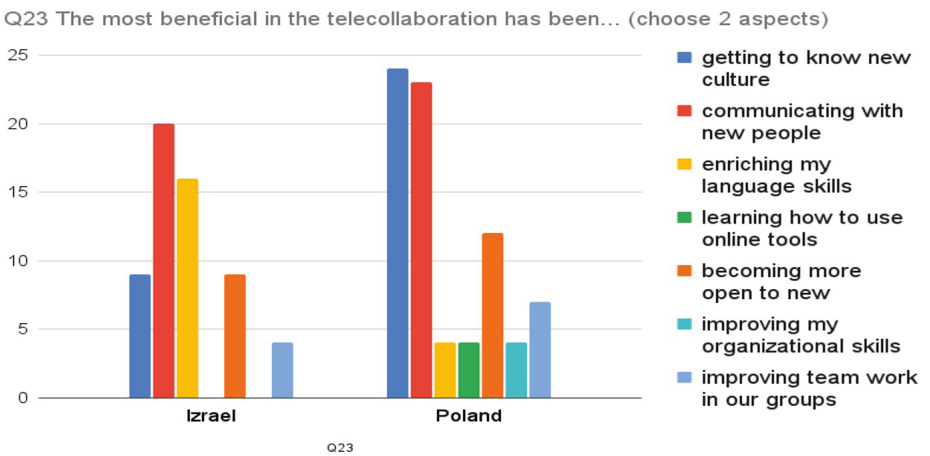
Stage 3. Questionnaire Answers Concerning Benefits and Challenges of Telecollaboration

The researchers obtained $N = 63$ responses from the questionnaire. $N = 34$ belonged to the Polish students and $N = 29$ to the Israeli participants. In the following paper, we decided to show the data that referred only to research question three. The complete summary of the study findings can be found in the final report of the project (Rążewska, 2022).

As regards the benefits of telecollaboration (Figure 3), both Israeli and Polish students recognised that communicating with new people was an asset. This component was mentioned by 67.6% responses of the Polish and 68.9% of the Israeli students. For 70.5% of the Polish students, the advantage of telecollaboration was getting to know new culture, whereas for the Israeli students this answer was voiced by 67% of the respondents. Over 55% of the Israeli students, who filled in the questionnaire, suggested that telecollaboration was beneficial because it enriched their language skills. Conversely, this advantage was indicated by only 11.8% among the Polish group.

Figure 3

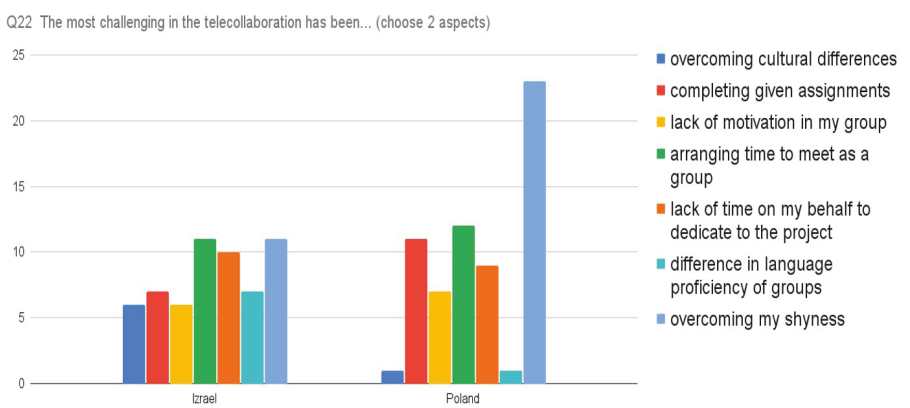
Perceived Benefits of Telecollaboration (Question no. 23)



In addition to the indicated benefits, the students recognised skills that had improved after the telecollaboration. A common response among both Israeli and Polish students was that speaking advanced during the telecollaboration. Over 50% of all the answers mentioned this language competence. Similarly, students from both countries observed improvement in listening skills, as almost 40% indicated the skill to be improved. In the next question, number 24, there were some students (n = 12) who saw "no significant changes" in their language development.

Figure 4

Challenges of Telecollaboration (Question no. 22)



On the other spectrum, Figure 4 illustrates the most challenging elements in the telecollaborative project. Over 53% of the students who filled in the questionnaire indicated that the most difficult aspect of the telecollaboration was to overcome their shyness. What is interesting about the data in Figure 4 is that over 67% of the Polish students, who voiced their opinion in the questionnaire, mentioned overcoming shyness as the most challenging factor in the telecollaboration. The second obstacle, expressed in the answers by 36% of students, was their difficulty in arranging time to meet as a group. Overcoming cultural differences appeared to be a challenge for the least number of participants, representing 11% of all the answers.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that there were challenging but rewarding aspects of the telecollaboration. With respect to the first research question certain levels of "failed communication" (O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006) were distinguished. The video material allowed the researchers to formulate conclusions about students' group dynamics in telecollaboration and how they managed group work in the online environment. As suggested by the previously mentioned research conducted by Jauregi and Bañados (2010) *Get to Know Each Other* (known as GTKY activities) should not be omitted in the opening part of telecollaboration. Based on the examples of the project, the importance of this step was confirmed by students' engagement in Vlogs #1 which was fully devoted to personal introductions. In fact, throughout the course of the whole project, students tended to insert some questions that were related to the personal lives of non-native partners. Additionally, the number of views for the GTKY task was the highest compared to the subsequent materials. It was observed that students naturally led to the conversations concerning hobbies, free time activities, favourite movies, books, and pets. On the other hand, the last task (Vlog #3), concerning plans for the future, posed a visible difficulty to mainly Polish and a few Israeli students who frequently mentioned that they had never contemplated on their future before. The length of the videos posted also reflected the struggle with the task. Especially the Polish students tended to limit their answers to expressions of uncertainty.

Comments posted under the Vlogs concerned the first direct interaction between the Israeli and Polish students. Most of the students posted their questions or their thoughts regarding the content of Vlogs #1. The Polish students left fewer comments under the Israeli Vlogs in the first round of the Vlogs; however, they provided elaborated written answers for the questions posted

under the Vlogs. Another noticeable difference was that the Israeli students preferred to provide their feedback in the video format. It may indicate that the Polish students preferred written communication; conversely, the Israeli students favoured oral communication. This difference could also be related to the *socio-institutional* level (workload or time constraints), differences in proficiency levels or students' individual preferences for using spoken or written discourse. This may be further discussed in the light of the fact that the Polish group was composed of people whose main intention was studying English whereas the Israeli students were enrolled for different courses.

It was found that looking for similarities and differences strengthened a sense of belonging to the groups as the comments developed a form of information exchange. Moreover, discovering shared roots may have destigmatized "the others." However, the most visible difference between the Polish and Israeli students appeared in the "willingness to communicate" (WTC) (MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clement, & Noels, 1998) and their self-confidence (Altunel, 2021). The finding confirmed previous studies that level of engagement (Yang, 2020) observed among the participants was hindered by individual students' shyness or reticence (King, 2013; Shea, 2017), which might have had an impact on the collaborative learning. It may imply that the Poles felt less comfortable than the Israeli in voicing their ideas and communicating within the established groups. One unanticipated finding was that the instances of "failed communication" may have been caused by inability to use language more effectively due to lack of academic language functions or rhetorical devices. For these reasons some of the participants may have been more reserved than responsive during the telecollaboration.

The second phase of the study sought to answer research question two which addressed the group dynamics of the Polish and Israeli students. The part of the study referred to online telecollaboration during the synchronous Zoom meeting and focused on actions, reactions, and obstacles encountered by the students. Meeting synchronously and collaborating in the online environment required structured and open tasks, but above all the icebreaking activity. The importance of *Get to Know Each Other* (or GTKY) was highlighted by Jauregi and Bañados (2010) as this type of task introduces students to the online environment of collaboration. Furthermore, this finding is consistent with that of Helm and Guth (2010) who address this stage as Information Exchange, which allows for building connection between participants.

As indicated by Helm (2015), *technology* creates unprecedented opportunities for success or failure of telecollaboration. From the observation it was implied that possessing a good command of ICT skills was crucial in the successful telecollaboration development. Both participants and administrating teachers were required to employ their knowledge of Flipgrid, Zoom, and Padlet. It appeared that some students were not familiar with the virtual board

and were not used to using some features on Zoom. Similarly, past research on the topic indicated that the complexity of telecollaboration often discouraged students from contributing (Fuchs, 2016; Turula & Raith, 2015). Consequently, the use of three different platforms (Flipgrid, Zoom, Padlet) may have had a detrimental effect on the participants' feelings of comfort and online safety.

One of the key aspects influencing telecollaboration in the online environment could be linked to the students' level of engagement (Yang, 2020) within the groups online. It appeared that participants' digital presence in the meeting was crucial in the successful communication within a group. There were students whose cameras were not connected, and these students tended to be withdrawn from the discussion. Therefore, it can be assumed that being visible in front of the camera during the synchronous telecollaborative meeting allowed for a more effective communication between group members. However, when the number of students from Israel and Poland was equal or comparable (as it was in the case of groups 18, 8, 6), the groups tended to be visibly more active in the written discussion. These cross-national groups usually consisted of six to eight members. The same groups had no problems with participating in the online discussion on Zoom or performing the tasks on Padlet. This may signify that the most optimal number of group members is six to eight, provided that there is equal or similar number of representatives of two nationalities. This finding is consistent with that of Harmer (2015) who claimed that the most optimal number of learners in a group is five to eight. However, in the current study equal number of cross-national students allowed for stronger contributions from the participants and simultaneously introduced a variety of opinions.

With the reference to the previously mentioned research, on collaboration (De Florio, 2016; Olsen & Kagan, 1992) it appeared that some students when dividing the work within the groups depended on a single leader-like member who usually was in charge of sharing the screen and editing posts on Padlet. This, as reported by Greenfield (2003), may have shown mismatches between collaborative online activity and individual outcomes. Following Forsyth's (2019, p. 267) comment on leadership, groups nominate a leader in four situations: (a) when group members realise that success of group task is reachable, (b) the success of the task is considered gratifying, (c) for the assignment to be completed group endeavour is necessary instead of individual effort, (d) one group member is experienced in terms of being a leader. It needs to be stressed that the Israeli students came to the project with a sense of group well established, yet the majority experienced difficulties to share duties in the group. In case of the Zoom meeting, some Israeli students became leaders who tried to coordinate the work by suggesting ways of navigating the platform. This unequal division of labour hindered group work. Burdening one team member with the responsibility of writing all answers instead of collaboratively editing the posts may have negatively influenced group dynamics. This finding is consistent with

that of Forsyth (2019) who observed that the group members who sensed that they contributed to the group more than they received from other participants may have begun to limit their engagement. This might have been the case in the present study that the students preferred to delegate all the responsibilities to one participant and limit their contribution to only voicing their opinions.

With the reference to the research question three, it was discovered that the most challenging aspect of the telecollaboration indicated by the students was overcoming their shyness. Both Polish and Israeli students mentioned this difficulty explicitly; however, significantly more Poles chose shyness as the biggest obstacle which points out to the difference between these two learners' groups. According to Buss (1985), shyness is defined as a feeling of uneasiness, restraint, and clumsiness in communicative situations with unfamiliar people. This phenomenon was observed in the case of two groups during the online meeting on Zoom where the Polish students seemed to feel uncomfortable expressing their thoughts in the group discussion and often struggling to recall the suitable vocabulary items. Although it was assumed that their English proficiency level was higher than the majority of the Israeli students, some Poles did seem to struggle in face-to-face interactions frequently, answering with a single word only or in very short sentences. The Israeli respondents also indicated that overcoming one's shyness posed a difficulty, but not nearly unanimously as the Poles. This finding, which is in line with studies conducted by Crozier (1997), revealed that shy learners avoided participation in groups as well as tended to underperform compared to less shy learners in the use of vocabulary and fluency assignments.

From the results obtained in the questionnaire, one of the biggest assets of the telecollaboration was the opportunity to communicate with new people. This is an important insight mentioned by Helm (2015) who claimed that communication was the core aim of telecollaborative projects. In the same study it was established that one positive aspect of telecollaboration was the improvement of intercultural communication skills and online communication skills (Helm, 2015). As far as our study is concerned, when asked to define the area of improvement, the students differed in their answers significantly. It was found that the Israeli students enriched their vocabulary, whereas the Polish students benefited in self-monitoring skills. This outcome is contrary to that of Tsakiran (2019) who found that the participants improved vocabulary, as well as writing and reading skills via telecollaboration. Our study does not confirm the findings. Similarly to the study by Hartwell and Zou (2013), video recording on Flipgrid allowed the students to compare their language performance with peers. Therefore, it may be assumed that vlogging helped improve the speaking skills of learners, as it was indicated in research findings of Mandasari and Aminatun (2020). In our study, self-monitoring skills of one's performance was the main benefit for the Polish participants. It may be assumed that the

students who operated on lower proficiency levels benefited in basic language skills such as speaking, listening, and vocabulary. For students of higher proficiency levels, the improvement concerning self-monitoring skills (e.g., error correction) seemed more relevant.

For the Israeli students the component concerning "getting to know new culture" seemed less important compared to the more linguistic aspect of "enriching one's language skills." For the Polish students, the improvement in linguistic aspect was not so significant. The discrepancy between the two nationalities can be attributed to the differences in English proficiency levels. In case of the Israeli group vocabulary range and grammatical structures were in accordance with standard of B1–B2/C1 whereas the proficiency level of Polish students was estimated to be at B2–C1. This gap could be the cause of less perceivable improvement in language skills of the Polish students since they were exposed to less challenging language structures and vocabulary. As suggested by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), maintaining optimal degree of challenge is one of the components of motivation in language learning.

Limitations to the Telecollaborative Project

There are certain limitations to the telecollaborative project that need to be addressed. The first limitation concerns peer feedback to Vlogs. Students, who came from different environments, both educational and professional, may not have been ready or willing to engage in the spoken and written discourse. The participants were asked to give feedback for Vlogs in a form of comments; however, commenting was not an obligatory part of the project for the Polish group, as opposed to the Israeli. As stated in the Procedure section of the paper, the differences in the course requirements between the two universities may have had an impact on the validity of eventual outcomes concerning the agency of the students, which was either internal or external. We may speculate whether we made the right decision to confront and compare groups which were not comparable or confrontable because their members came from different educational and professional environments. However, according to Mezirow (2012), "'finding one's voice' becomes a prerequisite for free full participation" (p. 78)—irrespective of communicative events—and it is dependent on one's inclusion in the discussion. We agree with other researchers who claimed that without such willingness to communicate (MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clement, &

Noels, 1998; Altunel, 2021), no "communicative learning"[4] (Hubermans, 1984) can take place. However, we do agree that matching learners with comparable linguistic competences may have improved the quality of the telecollaboration. The second limitation refers to the term 'group' used in the questionnaire which did not indicate the influence of collaboration in native or non-native group. For this reason, the students voiced their confusion with the reference to unclear terminology. Future studies may explain or specify which notions are examined. Another major limitation of this study was linked to the synchronous online meeting. It was acknowledged that the virtual board Padlet used during the online encounter might not have been fully introduced to the participants before launching of the task. Following the study by Turula and Raith (2015), when students are provided with more elaborate introduction and assistance in the use of Internet Communication Tools, their participation becomes more meaningful. In retrospect, had we included more specific instruction, additional data could have been revealed. Future studies may conduct a preliminary study to evaluate learners' digital competences through the examination of their ICT tools. The Internet tools used in the project ought to have been explicitly explained in terms of their utility in each task. Even though the study at hand had its limitations, it provided an overview of the recent findings concerning observable patterns of group dynamics in a specific context of telecollaboration. Among the many variables of the research, different levels of language proficiency, different reasons for studying the language as well as computer literacy, had an impact on the study and its results.

Implications for More Effective Telecommunication

Based on the literature review and in reference to the limitations of the conducted study, the following implications of telecollaboration can be formulated. They may serve as guidelines to establish patterns that represent effective practices in telecollaboration. The first implication refers to telecollaboration to be conducted "in order to support social interaction, dialogue, debate, and intercultural exchange" (Belz, 2002, p. 3) which may be realised by introducing content-specific learning objectives and offering the participants opportunities for negotiation of meaning. The second implication refers to the promotion of positive educational outcomes of such online projects in which partici-

[4] Hubermans (1984) distinguishes two domains of learning. The first one is *instrumental learning*. It is the kind of learning to control and manipulate the environment or other people. In contrast, *communicative learning* entails learning to learn what others mean when they communicate with us. This type of learning involves values, moral issues, feelings, and intentions.

pants feel safe and supported within their "Zone of Proximal Development" (Vygotsky, 1978). Third, effective task design of telecollaboration (Hauck & Warnecke, 2013) is crucial, which shall include elements of peer-negotiated tasks to provide participants with a heightened sense of their autonomy and agency. Instead of forming the groups and developing teacher-generated questions, it may be suggested to allow students more autonomy in deciding on group members as well as fulfilling the need to identify self-initiated topics (Kohn & Hoffstaedter, 2017). By allowing the participants to decide on the topics they would like to discuss and choose the groups they would like to work in, not to mention the choice of the media, the participants will feel more empowered (Rockwood, 1995). Fourth, within the scope of any projects, students should be provided with instructions on how to use ICT tools which will support them with challenging aspects of technology. Before introducing technology in the telecollaborative project, the teacher shall consider the functionality and privacy settings of ICT tools. Online apps allow for more authentic exposure, but on the other hand, the teacher shall recognise whether limited privacy settings would be a more suitable option (Guth & Thomas, 2010).

As it was in the case of our telecollaboration, successful or challenging virtual exchange may depend on the following:

(1) introducing icebreaking activities and finding similarities and differences between the cross-national groups (task in Vlog #2; Zoom meeting);

(2) inducing change in attitudes of curiosity and openness by dealing with problems explicitly (questions and comments to Vlogs);

(3) discovering the complexity of the online interaction (the use of various platforms and their functionalities);

(4) training in the effective use of academic language functions (*justifying*, *explaining*, *exemplifying*, *persuading*, *classifying*, *inferring*);

(5) raising critical and cultural awareness connected with the current situation in the world (COVID-19, the Israeli youth movement);

(6) raising self-confidence of the participants to help them overcome their shyness.

As far as political and social implications of the telecollaboration are concerned, the virtual experience proved in line with Byram's model (1997) of ICC as the project allowed for the development of knowledge of "the other" social group as well as skills of interpreting misconceptions between the participants related to various aspects of life.

Conclusions

The purpose of the current study was to determine challenges of the Israeli-Polish telecollaborative project. The data confirmed that communication barriers occurred at various levels, namely individual, classroom, socio-institutional, and interaction. The study contributes to our understanding of the group dynamics by discovering specific instances of "failed communication." These findings suggest that in general English proficiency levels determine the area of improvement. This observation, however, sparks a further question of how a more effective use of BICS and CALP[5] (Cummins, 1979) fosters collaborative learning among different proficiency levels and age of participants. Especially, more attention could be given to training in an effective application of language functions used by the learners. Further studies are needed to estimate to what extent development of oratory skills through training in BICS and CALP may improve the quality of such online interactions and to conclude the quality of effective communication in telecollaborative projects.

The research has shown that for the Polish students overcoming their shyness was the most challenging aspect of the telecollaboration. Although various studies conducted so far discussed reticence in ESL in relation to affective variables like anxiety (Lee & Lee, 2020) or learners' actual or perceived proficiency (Amengual-Pizarro, 2018), there were no findings concerning ways of overcoming shyness and reticence in online environment. This result suggests that further research on shyness and reticence as factors influencing group work in telecollaboration is required. To the best of the authors' knowledge, there have been no studies to date on reticence of Polish students in an ESL classroom (Zarrinabadi & Pawlak, 2021). As advocated by Crozier (2005), such studies could "explore methods of helping students overcome their lack of self-confidence" (p. 33) as it is likely that connections exist between shyness, reticence or self-confidence of the students.

Through the observation of the online meetings, it appeared that students enjoyed synchronous work in groups more than video recordings. Consequently, teachers need to consider implementing the ICT tools that allow for synchronous communication. Giving students more confidence through face-to-face contacts instead of Vlogging may reduce the psychological pressures caused due to both a/synchronicity (mainly being recorded, shared videos). Furthermore, all tools introduced during telecollaboration ought to be explicitly explained before the beginning of the task. Also, monitoring group activities and reacting immediately to learners' struggles is crucial in the process.

[5] BICS refers to *basic interpersonal communication skills*, whereas CALP to *cognitive academic language proficiency.*

The study contributed to our understanding of effective ways of raising intercultural awareness between the nations, as it was in the case of the Israeli-Polish project. Our study confirmed the importance of *Get to Know Each Other* element. It was noticed that to establish rapport between group members, it was essential to initiate the group task with such an icebreaking activity. The results of the study indicate that the encounters with the "other" culture allowed the learners—to a certain extent—discuss plans for the future (VLOG #3 "Me and the future"). It is assumed that the recorded Vlogs may have led to a retrospective process of self-reflection, provided that the participants had some previous work-related experience. It is, however, unclear whether and to what extent the misconceptions that were addressed during the intercultural encounter were in fact dispelled. A further study could assess the long-term effects of telecollaboration, especially in relation to breaking down stereotypes about socio-cultural learning environment. These results could add to the rapidly expanding field of mediation in language learning (Council of Europe, 2020).

This present study provided a deeper insight into the complex notion of group dynamics within telecollaboration in the context of learners' and instructors' challenges. It has shown that when language learning is accompanied with immersion in a new intercultural experience, stepping outside of one's comfort zone can be empowering, provided that the participants are not inhibited by individual constraints, such as shyness or reticence, as it was in the case of the Polish students. Telecollaboration does not only develop the vast array of skills but to be successfully implemented, it requires trusted and reliable partners, institutional and ICT support, positive attitudes, and above all reflective approach to learning about oneself and from others.

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Appendix 1

Informed consent for participation in the research

Dear Student,

You are currently participating in an international collaboration between students at the Pedagogical University KEN in Krakow, Poland, and students from Beit Berl College in Israel. In the framework of this collaborative course students exchange vlogs, participate in a synchronous online meeting, and write reflections. We would like to ask for your permission to use the contents of the communications for research purposes. Within that framework, we will not share any identifying information about students. All references to students will remain anonymous. Participation is on a voluntary basis. You may withdraw your permission for your data to be used at any time.

If you agree to participate, please fill in the following consent form.
Thank you

Consent of students to participate in the study

Surname and first name of the student ……..…..
Specialty / year of study ……..…..

I agree to participate in an international project and research on teaching English under the title "Vlogs between students in Israel-Poland: A Reflective Collaboration" (VIP-RC).

I consent to the use of:

1. Recorded Vlogs.
2. Reflections written by me.
3. The answers to the questions (in the form of a questionnaire and/or interview).
4. Entries on the university MS Teams platform.
5. Online video recording of the meeting (MS Teams).

I certify that I have been informed about:

1. the purpose of the research of a purely scientific nature.
2. the course and form of the study.
3. keeping my personal data confidential and encoding all my works.
4. the possibility of withdrawing from participation in the research project at any time.

At the same time, I acknowledge that this material will be used only for scientific purposes, and any data that could allow the identification of the respondents will not be made available to third parties, nor will they appear in the final study (report).

Student's signature Date:

…….. ……

Thank you very much for participating in the study!

Appendix 2

Sample of Telecollaboration Observation Field Notes

Platform: ZOOM + Padlet

Meeting focus: *Similarities and differences*

Number of Students present: $N = 6$ ($n = 5$ female: $n = 3$ Polish & $n = 2$ Israeli; $n = 1$ male Israeli)

Role of the researchers: Observers

Date: 25 January 2022

Length of the breakout room session: 49'13''

FLIPGRID		ZOOM/Padlet		
Coding categories	Themes	Descriptive Notes (Reconstructions of conversation)		Reflective Notes
		SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES	Levels of "failed communication" (O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006)
University life	exams, enjoyment, hardship, English, Hebrew, language,	"Our willingness to learn about another culture." "Although from different cultures, some similarities shine through like our expectations of the future and what we want from life." "We all want to learn." "Just like in your language, there are words in Hebrew that don't have a replacement in English." "We are all students." "We try to speak English." "Having a shared language allows us to communicate with people who are different from us." "We all are willing to cooperate." "We can understand each other even with our differences." "We can find a challenge in everything even the smallest activities." "The way we arrange our time." "We are not ready to deal with the world."	"Unlike you, I do not want to be a teacher." "Going to the army have an impact and it's a big difference between us." "Our educational systems are very different." "Your country/what you study is completely different." "We learn differently." "Israeli students are more confident than we are." "…but I will never be a Vlogger I guess." "We treat students in youth movement differently that in our traditional schools."	**The individual level**: – learners' intercultural knowledge, – stereotypes, – expectations (What are the expectations of life/family? *no examples given). **The classroom level**: – teacher-to-teacher relationship, – group dynamics, – matching of the participants (*no justification as to how the educational systems are different). **The socio-institutional level:** – course organisation, – workload and time constraints (*Why are Vlogs so problematic?; How do students arrange their time?), – assessment. **The interaction level** – cultural differences (Where do the Israeli Ss confidence vs Polish Ss resentment, shyness come from?), – learners' engagement (Ss mentioned disengagement in ref. to university life).
Personal life	movies, books, (extreme) sport, hobbies			
Professional development	teacher profession, translators and interpreters, youth movement, military			
Participation	social life, school milieu, (youth) movement(s),			
Behaviour	conflict resolution, positive attention, disengagement,			
Family and friends	spouse, friends, pets (dogs, cats)			
Miscellaneous	shyness, trust, connection, distance, protest, weather			

Appendix 3

Questionnaire in Google Forms

Telecollaboration in higher education

Hello! My name is Aleksandra. I am a second-year student of MA studies, majoring in English Studies. Thank you for your contribution to this project I am conducting research on developing collaborative collaboration through telecollaboration (connecting two distant classrooms with the help of Internet communication tools, projects, collaborative tasks and group work). Through this Google Form, I would like to learn about your experience with collaboration in this project I would like to ask you to fill in this form and answer according to your thoughts. The form is fully anonymous and any personal information will not be published or shared with a third party. Thank you.

Where are you from?
Poland Israel
How old are you?
18–25 25–35 35–40 40+
What is your gender?
Male Female I prefer not to say
1. I can usually understand other group members' ideas.
Not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 Very true of me
2. It is best when each person helps each other within a group.
Not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 Very true of me
3. Sometimes I feel nervous when I have to give my ideas or communicate within a group.
Not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 Very true of me
**The following questions refer to your experience your experience of group work*

4. I often find it difficult to understand what the group task is.
Not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 Very true of me
5. I like to work alone even when placed in a group.
Not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 Very true of me
6. It is important that other group members take responsibility for the outcomes of my learning.

Not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 Very true of me

7. I usually make a strong personal contribution to group work.

Not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 Very true of me

8. I often think the work becomes too confusing when done in a group rather than individually.

Not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 Very true of me

9. I am often afraid to ask for help within my group.

Not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 Very true of me

10. I like group work more when we can make up our own groups.

Not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 Very true of me

11. Even when groups are well organised, I believe there are more effective ways of using class time.

Not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 Very true of me

12. I sometimes feel let down by other group members.

Not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 Very true of me

**The following questions aim to understand your perception of this telecollaboration in your learning*

13. Based on your experience with your peer natives how would you describe the telecollaboration?

14. Based on your experience with non-native participants how would you describe the telecollaboration?

15. Taking part in a telecollaboration project was a positive experience for me.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

16. I enjoyed using the internet communication tool (Flipgrid).

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

17. I enjoyed meeting online via Zoom.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

18. I learned how to communicate better with people of other cultures by taking part in online exchanges.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

19. What have you learnt about the other culture?

20. I improved my foreign language skills by taking part in the telecollaboration.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

21. In the telecollaboration I developed skills which will make me more employable.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

22. The most challenging in the telecollaboration has been... (choose 2 aspects).

- overcoming cultural differences,
- completing given assignments,
- lack of motivation in my group,
- arranging time to meet as a group,
- lack of time on my behalf to dedicate to the project,

- difference in language proficiency of groups,
- overcoming my shyness.

23. The most beneficial in the telecollaboration has been... (choose 2 aspects).
- getting to know new culture,
- communicating with new people,
- enriching my language skills,
- learning how to use online tools,
- becoming more open to new challenges,
- improving my organizational skills,
- improving teamwork in our groups.

24. What aspects of your language learning have improved after the telecollaboration?
- speaking and communicating,
- listening,
- vocabulary,
- self-monitoring (error correction skills),
- no significant changes in any of the aspects.

Sabina Nowak, Aleksandra Rążewska

Herausfordernde, aber lohnende Aspekte der Telekollaboration: Das virtuelle israelisch-polnische Projekt (VIP)

Zusammenfassung

Ausgehend von der Prämisse, dass die Telekollaboration ein anspruchsvolles Unterfangen sein kann, ist anzunehmen, dass ein solcher virtueller Austausch positive Ergebnisse bringen sollte. Trotz umfangreicher Forschungsarbeiten zur Telekollaboration haben bisher nur wenige Studien die Gruppendynamik im Kontext des Online-Austauschs untersucht. In der aktuellen Studie wurde der Fall einer israelisch-polnischen (N = 100) interkulturellen Telekollaboration analysiert. Bei den israelischen Teilnehmern handelte es sich um Studierende eines BEd-Studiengangs im Rahmen informeller Bildung und bei den polnischen um Studierende eines BA-Studiengangs in Übersetzung. Das Hauptziel des Telekollaborationsprojekts bestand darin, die englischen Sprachkenntnisse und die interkulturelle kommunikative Kompetenz (Byram, 1997) der Studierenden zu entwickeln. In der vorliegenden Studie sollte allerdings recherchiert werden, wie die Gruppendynamik den Telekollaborationsprozess und die Projektergebnisse beeinflusste. Die Studierenden tauschten asynchrone Videoaufnahmen (Vlogs) und synchrone Sitzungen über Zoom und füllten einen Online-Fragebogen aus. In dem vorliegenden Beitrag werden einige der Herausforderungen im Zusammenhang mit der internationalen Telekollaboration dargestellt, darunter technologische und institutionelle Schwierigkeiten, kontextspezifische Anforderungen und einige individuelle Unterschiede zwischen den Teilnehmern. Mittels „thematischer Analyse“ (Braun & Clarke, 2012) untersuchten die Autorinnen Ursachen der „misslungenen Kommunikation“ (O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006) und wie sie sich auf den Verlauf der Zusammenarbeit auswirkten, sowohl technisch als auch in Bezug auf den Inhalt

und die Entwicklung der Interaktionsfähigkeiten, um bestimmte Themen aufzudecken, die mit Herausforderungen der Lernenden und Lehrenden verbunden sind. Die Studie schließt mit pädagogischen Implikationen für eine effektivere Umsetzung von Telekollaboration in der Hochschulbildung.

Schlüsselwörter: Telekollaboration, Gruppendynamik, Vlogging, Zurückhaltung