THE PEDAGOGY OF COLLABORATION IN LANGUAGE TEACHING WITHIN AN EVOLVING TECHNOLOGY LANDSCAPE AS A NEW EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK

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As technologies evolve, our communication styles, information needs and learning patterns are changing as well. Yet, this is an exciting time, allowing us to utilize our own creativity as we innovate our teaching in response to our changing environments. This article makes an attempt to outline a framework that guides language teachers in using technologies in pedagogically sound ways that meet students' communicative competence and digital literacy needs within an increasingly connected world.

The current educational and technological landscape in global contexts is one that increasingly demands English employability skills for collaboration and authentic communication such as job interviews and international projects. Coupled with increased internet connectivity, there is a growing awareness of the need for students to become more digitally literate. Teachers can move from being one-way transmitters of information into educational facilitators and guides, and students can now become more self-directed and active in their own learning processes [1, p. 140]. The current educational landscape is thus one that needs to permit self-expression and questioning; be motivating and challenging; build students' self-confidence; allow for independent thinking; encourage learners to seek information; and allow for teacher flexibility. These realities lead to the need for a new educational framework.

The pedagogy of collaboration within an evolving technology landscape is one framework that can provide the guidance teachers and students need to maximize learning potential.

The greatest potential to meet current educational opportunities is found in the intersection between student collaboration, new student and teacher roles, and

interactive technologies. The framework consists of ten guiding principles, which will be outlined below.

Guideline 1: allow your teaching to evolve as technology evolves.

The collaborative autonomous language learner should be in the centre of any learning experience. These learners are autonomous in that they are self-directed, goal-oriented and monitor their learning. They are able to use language to independently contribute personal meanings as a collaborative member of a group, to use appropriate strategies for communicating as a collaborative member of a group, have the willingness to demonstrate these abilities within the group [2, p. 53].

Guideline 2: have students collaborate in a variety of ways using different technologies.

Efficient learners are able to choose an effective technology tool from many options that meet the needs of the learning task. Making these choices effectively requires practice using a variety of types of technologies and for different types of collaborative projects.

Guideline 3: harness the powers of technologies that encourage communication and increase learner motivation and reflection.

Technologies that allow students to create their own identity and express themselves not only with words but also with rich media content such as images, music, artwork, or even varying colour schemes/templates can be very motivating. Blogging tools *(e.g., blogger.com)* or online graphic novel tools *(e.g., comiclife.com)* are user-friendly and can be easily monitored by the teacher, while they also offer many options for users, including using images/movies or linking to other pertinent sites.

Guideline 4: elicit student input in working with new technologies.

Using in-class discussions, anonymous paper surveys, or online surveys, teachers can solicit feedback about students' technology use, including what devices they use most frequently, what frustrations they have and how you as the

teacher can help, what they do with technology, and what their favourite features are.

Guideline 5: train learners to use new technologies effectively.

While many young people may be experienced with using technologies and software for social networking or entertainment purposes, they may not be as successful with using technology for learning. Training thus often needs to be provided for the following:

- Troubleshooting – what to do if the technology does not work, having backup plans not involving technology.

- Privacy & security – not sharing private information, not opening unknown links, blocking uncaring individuals, informing trustworthy adults of suspicious behaviour.

- New technologies/activities – not grading assignments using new technologies, allowing students to experiment with new technologies, moving from known to new activities, engaging in a cyclical approach to training with technologies [3].

Guideline 6: guide students on how to work autonomously within a collaborative environment.

Teachers can help students become more autonomous with their language learning by supporting their effective use of online tools and resources, such as dictionaries *(e.g., Merriam Webster, m-w.com)*, thesauri *(e.g., wordsmyth.net)*, collocation dictionaries *(e.g., ozdic.com)*, general internet search engines *(e.g., google.com)*, or academic internet search engines *(e.g., scholar.google.com)*.

Guideline 7: develop real-world projects that require collaboration and encourage shared learning.

Real-world projects allow the students and teacher to work on a project for a client, such as a local small business, non-government organization or community group. After the teacher communicates with the client to establish a project goal, the client can communicate with the class in-person or via technology on project specifics. Student groups then engage in tasks to meet the project goal, such as

finding and evaluating online information, sharing information via technology, and communicating with each other via technology.

Guideline 8: provide clear expectations while maintaining flexibility with technology use.

Student groups can be chosen by the students themselves, but it is often useful for the teacher to choose. Groups can be made that include students strong in key areas depending on the task. Informing students of their strength and encouraging them to use it for the group's benefit is helpful in developing students' collaborative skills.

Guideline 9: vary assessments of collaborative experiences.

Moving beyond written tests, collaborative projects can be assessed, for example, using e-portfolios. Students can choose pieces to include based on how the work shows their development as language learners. Student-generated work includes audio and video recordings of readings, oral presentations or skits; collaborative writing samples; art work; or collaborative tests and quizzes.

Guideline 10: prepare students to become life-long learners of digital literacies currently unknown.

Digital literacies (a term first coined by Gilster 1997) move beyond functional literacies of reading and writing a language. Depending on the context, skills such as collaboration, cultural and social understanding, critical thinking, finding and selecting information, technical skills, sociological skills and e-safety are added. Increased critical thinking, flexibility and a variety of experiences prepare students for new technologies and new uses of old technologies.

In conclusion it is worth saying that the collaboration within an evolving technology landscape framework guides teachers and students as they strive to use technology for collaboration and navigate the potentially conflicting role of autonomous collaborative learning. It highlights the importance of students contributing personal meanings and using appropriate communication strategies as they work together using interactive technologies in innovative ways. These ten

guidelines remain relevant as pedagogy continues to evolve and can include various technology landscapes, including online as well as face-to-face contexts.

References

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