Linda Gijsen

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Task engagement
in virtual pedagogical lingua franca communication

Task engagement
bij virtuele pedagogische lingua franca communicatie
(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

Proefschrift

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Acronyms and abbreviations

CALL	Computer-Assisted Language Learning
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CMC	Computer-Mediated Communication
DE	German (student)
E	Exchange
ELF	English as a lingua franca
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a second language
EU	European Union
GMS	Global Motivation Scale
GT	Grounded Theory
ICC	Intercultural communicative competence
L1	First language/mother tongue
L2	Second Language
NL	Dutch (student)
PLF	Pedagogical Lingua Franca
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TBLT	Task-based language learning and teaching
3D	Three-dimensional
TP	Task Performance
VR	Virtual Reality
ZPD	Zone of proximal development

CHAPTER 1

Rationale and research objectives

Teaching English as a foreign language arguably primarily involves preparing students for using the language as a lingua franca in real world communication. Consequently, educating students to become communicatively competent users of English in international and intercultural communicative encounters has implications for the ways in which modern-day language learning activities should be organised and how we want students to engage with tasks in the context of English Language Teaching (ELT). Although many teachers and researchers have taken the premises of task-based language learning and teaching (TBLT) as the starting-point of their endeavours of integrating and studying communicative tasks in the foreign language classroom, so far, only a small number of studies have explored how students engage with communication tasks in intercultural virtual exchanges. Studying the issues involved is essential for better understanding the complex construct of task engagement as an intermediate force between the task and communicative competence development in a contemporary foreign language learning context. In addition, for assessing the effectiveness of modern-day approaches to foreign language learning and teaching, it is important to find out what hinders and facilitates students' engagement with a certain task and what teachers can do to pedagogically mentor their students. As Dörnyei (2019, p. 56) argued "one of the main challenges of applying any language teaching methodology is exactly how to find ways to ensure sufficient student engagement, without which the method cannot succeed".

This chapter presents the rationale and research objectives of my study on theoretical-methodological and empirical issues of English language students' task engagement in the context of intercultural virtual exchanges. In cooperation with the Erasmus+ project TeCoLa (www.tecola.eu), I explored how secondary school students engaged with online intercultural communication tasks that were organised as extensions of regular ELT classroom activities. In the first part of this chapter, my motives for conducting the study and the research rationale are discussed. This is followed by the research objectives and guiding questions that were used to structure the study and the dissertation chapters. Finally, I will briefly touch upon the qualitative multiple case study approach that is taken to realise the research objectives and give an overview of the structure of the dissertation. As it is the preferred terminology in pedagogical literature, the term foreign language is used throughout the dissertation to refer to the language(s) students study in addition to their native language and/or to refer to the language of instruction used in their formal school context.

To meet the communication demands of our highly diversified societies, people need to learn languages in addition to their mother tongue (L1). Foreign language education is crucial when preparing youngsters for being successful in their future professional careers and private endeavours (De Graaff, 2018). Accordingly, most primary and secondary schools in Europe offer opportunities for students to learn one or more languages besides their L1 from an early age onwards, and language learning is high on the agenda of the European commission, which can also be seen on the Council of Europe Language Policy Portal (Council of Europe, n.d.). In 2005, the "New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism" was adopted; and in 2017, the European Council reached an agreement that all young people living in Europe should be able to communicate in at least two other languages besides their L1. Hence, EU citizens are actively encouraged to learn their "mother tongue plus two" (www.obessu.org). Naturally, in practice one of the two foreign languages is English because of its prominent role in international communication.

With approximately 350 million native speakers and over 1,900 million competent speakers, there is no denying of the dominance of the English language. An extensive body of literature and empirical studies (e.g. Schneider, 2020) shows that English is the primary and preferred language used in today's international communication. In the domains of science, technology, international trade, commerce, travel and education, the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) has become the norm. "Just as Latin steamrollered its way across Europe 2,000 years ago, crushing dozens of other languages, English has become the lingua franca of our times" (Morrison, 2002, p. 7). In contrast to languages such as Latin and French that were dominant in previous centuries but mainly limited to a small elite of speakers, English is more widespread and used by a greater and more varied group of speakers (Crystal, 2003). Even people living in the most remote parts of the world have access to a relatively great variety of communication technologies and social media (e.g. mobile phones, Facebook, Google, Netflix) with English as the dominant language. Hence, English is taught as the main compulsory foreign language in secondary education in the majority of countries around the world. Having a good command of English so as to be able to participate successfully in intercultural communicative encounters with people from diverse linguacultural contexts is viewed as offering opportunities for personal growth and professional advancement.

Successful intercultural communication draws on the communicative competence people already possess and use in their everyday communication in their first and foreign language(s). However, when I attend my English language student-teachers' lessons in my function as teacher educator at a Dutch university of applied sciences, I notice that in most secondary school classrooms, students are not exposed to this ordinary type of communication. Rather, mainstream ELT mainly focuses on covering aspects of a rather limited functional

communicative competence. This type of competence concerns the development of students' linguistic knowledge (e.g. grammar, lexic and pronunciation) and skills to use this knowledge in specific situations (e.g. reading, writing, listening and speaking); also see Fasoglio et al. (2015). The majority of the students practice their productive skills in more or less non-authentic settings in which they are asked to apply and learn communication-oriented language structures that are often taken from native speaker repertoire.

Although in theory an intercultural communicative orientation is anchored in many foreign language curricula, in practice, it is striking that most classroom-based communication is primarily based on the respective target language culture and evolves around native-speaker language expressions. Accordingly, the way in which the foreign language is used by non-native speakers of the language is not taken into account. Hence, taking a functional approach to language learning and teaching does not enable students to further develop their communicative competence in terms of expanding on the social and sociocultural knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable them to participate successfully in intercultural communication with native and non-native speakers of their targeted language. Against this background, there is an increasing need for students of English to develop their intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in an ELT context.

To raise students who are capable of participating successfully in real-life intercultural communicative encounters in English, ELT should aim at engaging students in the kind of authentic activities that have the potential to contribute to intercultural awareness and ICC development. In real intercultural encounters, students can experience what it is like to use English as a mediating language and create a third culture or 'symbolic place' (Kramsch, 2009). Together with peers from different linguacultural backgrounds, they can learn how to display attitudes such as flexibility and empathy, and a willingness to learn more about others and their cultures. For this purpose, focus in the ELT classroom should be on stimulating conditions that foster learner autonomy, communicative collaboration and authenticity. However, while it is difficult to address these three key principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the physical foreign language classroom, technology offers solutions for overcoming the limitations of classroom-based pedagogy. In this connection, intercultural virtual exchanges in English have the potential of creating favourable conditions for ICC development and fit in well in pedagogically mentored authentic blended language learning environments in which students collaboratively carry out intercultural communicative tasks with peers from different linguacultural backgrounds.

Yet, for any kind of learning to take place, students need to engage with the tasks and activities they are assigned. The belief that foreign language development requires students' active involvement is thoroughly embedded in communication-oriented approaches such as

TBLT that view active participation in interaction as key for language learning. In this context, Dörnyei (2019, p. 60) emphasizes that the notion of task engagement "highlights meaningful learning accompanied by active participation in school life at a time when modern educational theories increasingly stipulate such active student involvement in the learning process to be a prerequisite for any instructional success". In line with this, Adams and Newton (2009), argue that engagement with tasks opens up "opportunities for communication and noticing form/meaning/function relationships [that] provide the conditions under which communicative competence in a second language can most effectively be developed" (p. 4). However, up until now, there is only little information available on how students engage with language learning tasks and the underlying factors shaping the construct of task engagement. Despite the efforts of Philp and Duchesne (2016) and Oga-Baldwin (2019) to push the research agenda, the field has not yet managed to sufficiently conceptualise and empirically validate task engagement in the foreign language classroom, let alone in a technology-mediated foreign language learning and teaching context.

Although engagement is described in the literature as "the holy grail" (Sinatra et al., 2015, p. 1) and "the major force" (Ellis, 2019, p. 48) of learning, task engagement has remained a largely under-researched phenomenon. Most of what we know about task engagement is based on research from educational psychology research that focuses on student engagement in general, particularly, in studies on learning motivation and dropout rates. By and large, research in the field of foreign language learning and teaching has primarily focused on how students engage with the target language and how different task types direct students' attention to specific linguistic elements (e.g. Svalberg, 2009; Maad, 2012). Even though we know from these and other studies that engagement is a dynamic, context-dependent and multidimensional construct that refers to how actively involved students are in learning activities, there is still no consensus regarding its specific dimensions; for an overview and a 'state of the field' account see Fredricks et al. (2019). As Hiver et al. (2021), the editors of a recently published book on student engagement in the language classroom, state in their introductory chapter: "Carefully specifying what engagement is, what it looks like, and what it does can help increase our fundamental understanding of how learners get involved in opportunities for language learning and use" (p. 2).

For research and pedagogy to move forward, it is necessary to conceptualise task engagement in a contemporary foreign language learning and teaching context and study in what way(s), if any, students engage with their tasks. Uncovering the complex construct of task engagement, identifying which task aspects students engage with and what hinders and facilitates engagement can help teachers to strengthen their students' task engagement and make foreign language learning more enjoyable, interesting and effective. Studying task

engagement with regard to certain task aspects makes it possible to develop pedagogical measures that help students to focus on meaningful task activities with their minds, hearts and hands in their efforts to become interculturally communicatively competent users of the language they are learning.

Against this backdrop, this research project aims at studying secondary school students' task engagement in pedagogical lingua franca (PLF) communication during virtual intercultural exchanges and what teachers can do to keep their students engaged. The overall research objective addresses concerns that have been raised in the research literature regarding a lack of knowledge on the phenomenon of task engagement. As such, the study's main focus is on understanding task engagement and its manifestations in virtual PLF communication. This involves exploring the factors that cause students to engage with a task in a certain way and what teachers can do to facilitate pedagogically desirable patterns of task engagement. For this purpose, the following specific research objectives will be addressed in a chronological order.

- The first objective is to look at what the research literature tells us about task engagement and bring together its essential elements in a coherent overview. Guiding questions include, in particular, 'How is engagement with tasks in a language learning context defined?' and 'How has engagement with tasks been studied in foreign language learning and teaching research?'.
- The second objective is to develop a conceptualisation of task engagement, in particular, for the specific context of virtual PLF communication. For this purpose, I develop a three-dimensional conceptual model of task engagement that is informed by an inwardly oriented social constructivist perspective on language learning (Kohn, 2018a, 2020a). According to this understanding which will be explained in more detail in Chapter 2, language students are the principal agents in charge of making the language they are learning their own through both individual and collaborative processes of creative construction. When carrying out a task the same creativity is activated depending on students' requirements of task success and the extent to which they are allowed and enabled to access their creativity. Guiding questions include 'What are relevant indicators to identify behavioural, cognitive and attitudinal qualities of task engagement in an intercultural virtual context?' and 'How can these indicators be used to measure task engagement?'.
- Since students' task engagement always concerns certain aspects of a given task (Hiver et al., 2021), the third objective is to design a model of task performance (TP) parameters specifying task aspects that are deemed relevant for carrying out tasks in an online intercultural language learning context. To collect data on what students do, what they think

and how they feel during task realisation, a two-layered approach is designed combining the three-dimensional model of task engagement and the model of TP parameters. Guiding questions include 'What instruments can be used to study the three constitutive qualities of task engagement?' and 'What approach is needed to study task engagement in all its complexity?'.

- The fourth objective concerns the actual analysis and discussion of the empirical evidence. This includes analyses and discussions of the participating students' task engagement (a) by exchange across all TP parameters to identify possible patterns of task engagement and ownership, and (b) by TP parameter across all exchanges to gain insights for pedagogical interventions. Guiding questions include 'How does each student pair engage behaviourally, cognitively and attitudinally with the task across all TP parameters?', 'How do the student pairs engage behaviourally, cognitively and attitudinally with each TP parameter?', 'How do the three qualities of task engagement interact? and 'Which patterns of task engagement and ownership are particularly beneficial for intercultural language learning?'.
- And finally, the fifth objective concerns the pedagogical implications of the study. Focus is on promoting intercultural communicative language learning by showing teachers what is possible when students engage with communicative tasks under PLF conditions during intercultural virtual exchanges. This concerns, in particular, providing teachers with insights that help them to pedagogically mentor their students towards successful task engagement. Felicitous and non-felicitous manifestations of task engagement are discussed and suggestions for pedagogical mentoring moves are made, suitable for initiating and supporting felicitous and preventing non-felicitous manifestations. Guiding questions include 'How can teachers pedagogically mentor their students towards successful task engagement?' and 'What is necessary for certain patterns of task engagement and ownership to take place?'.

All in all, these research objectives help to develop a thorough understanding of theoretical-methodological and empirical issues of task engagement, and study in what ways factors like topic familiarity, a collaborative attitude and perceived authenticity influence the nature and strength of task engagement. The methodological approach taken is a qualitative multiple case study approach (Yin, 2014). The decision for taking this approach is motivated by my research focus on studying task engagement in authentic intercultural virtual exchanges and the natural complexity of the conditions and processes involved. It is assumed that studying task realisation from different qualitative angles contributes to a better understanding of task engagement and its underlying causes.

The results of this study are relevant for upper-primary and secondary school teachers who teach foreign languages and want to engage their students in online intercultural communication tasks in the target language in a pedagogically desirable manner. Throughout, the study has been conducted with this audience in mind. The second group of readers consists of researchers in the field. My aim is to introduce a social constructivist conceptualisation of task engagement and to discuss the advantages of a two-layered approach that makes it possible to study students' task engagement in virtual PLF communication in all its rich diversity by applying a tripartite quality perspective to characteristic task aspects.

In total, the dissertation consists of eight chapters that are broadly divided into three sections. Each chapter starts with a short introduction in which a short overview of the main topics that are dealt with is given. Chapter 1 serves as a general introduction to the dissertation and explains the rationale of the study along with its aims and research objectives.

- Section A comprises Chapters 2 and 3 and is used to introduce the major themes in this study and prepares the ground for the two theoretical-empirical models that are used in the empirical studies. Against the background of task-based language learning and teaching, computer-assisted language learning and a pedagogical lingua franca approach, Chapter 2 sets the scene of the study. Chapter 3 gives a short historical overview of the major developments and trends in virtual exchange and discusses the affordances of three-dimensional (3D) virtual world environments for foreign language learning and teaching. Special attention goes to the Erasmus+ project TeCoLa and the efforts made to implement intercultural virtual activities in secondary schools across Europe.
- Section B comprises Chapters 4 and 5 in which the models that are used in this study and the methodological approach taken are discussed. Chapter 4 discusses relevant literature on engagement and introduces my inwardly-oriented social constructivist perspective on task processing. In view of this, task engagement is developed in a conceptual model distinguishing the three complementary and interacting qualities of behavioural, cognitive and attitudinal engagement. Against this backdrop, the model of TP parameters is specified and illustrated. Then, to focus the empirical analyses, a two-layered approach suggests how task engagement can be studied by looking at the quality dimensions in relation to the TP parameters. Chapter 5 outlines the rationale for an exploratory multiple case study approach that is based on six intercultural virtual TeCoLa exchanges. Here, particular emphasis is on how the two-layered approach is applied for the actual analyses of the participating students' task engagement by exchange across all TP parameters to identify possible patterns of task engagement and ownership, and by TP parameter across all exchanges to gain insights for pedagogical interventions. This is accompanied by detailed

descriptions of the students, their teachers and, in particular, the pedagogical embedding of the learning station task that was carried out in the TeCoLa Virtual World.

- Section C comprises Chapters 6 and 7 in which the findings are presented and discussed. In Chapter 6, each exchange is described with regard to a TP parameter constellation that emerged as the most salient one for understanding task engagement in the specific virtual PLF exchange in which it was observed. In this process, attention is paid to characteristic profiles of task engagement and ownership and their suitability for foreign language learning in an online intercultural context. Chapter 7 introduces pedagogical mentoring as an essential part of intercultural virtual exchange and a cross-exchange analysis is carried out to identify appropriate pedagogical mentoring moves per TP parameter. Furthermore, the manifestations of task engagement and ownership development are evaluated from a pedagogical perspective. Subsequently, felicitous and non-felicitous manifestations of task engagement are discussed and suggestions for pedagogical mentoring moves suitable for initiating and supporting felicitous and preventing non-felicitous manifestations are made.

Finally, Chapter 8 outlines the main issues and findings, discusses the limitations of the study and makes suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2

Setting the scene

In the last two decades, awareness of the social dimension of language learning increasingly filtered into global debates on modern day foreign language education. Foreign languages are more and more seen as tools that enable its users to function successfully in varying formal and informal contexts in our multicultural societies. In line with this, the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2001) published a companion volume (2018) with new descriptors that include, in particular, online interaction and collaborative learning as key issues in modern day language learning and teaching contexts. In this guide, the authors describe contemporary language students as social agents who use language in a social world while being in charge of their own language learning process. The writers argue for

> a real paradigm shift in both course planning and teaching, promoting student engagement and autonomy. [...] The methodological message of the CEFR is that language learning should be directed towards enabling students to act in real-life situations, expressing themselves and accomplishing tasks of different natures (pp. 26-27).

This paradigm shift holds consequences for foreign language pedagogy. Preparing students to participate as social agents in real-life situations with individuals from varying linguacultural backgrounds implies practising this type of collaborative intercultural communication in a foreign language learning and teaching setting. Exposure to authentic intercultural communication can take place through recorded observations and language learning materials that portray how language is used "out there". For instance, by observing lingua franca communication, teachers can raise their students' awareness as to how people with different mother tongues (L1) communicate in a shared target language. However, mere exposure is not enough. The ultimate goal of contemporary foreign language education should be to facilitate authentic communicative encounters in which students can interact with peers in the target language and develop their intercultural communicative competence (ICC) along the way. With all this in mind, the time seems right to re-assess the effectiveness of existing classroom-based pedagogy and explore how we can use technology and technology-mediated tasks to facilitate the type of authentic communication that is necessary to develop our students' ICC in the context of foreign language education.

In this chapter, I set the scene of my PhD study on task engagement in virtual pedagogical lingua franca communication by touching upon those research areas and themes that are particularly relevant for understanding my work in the broader context of L2 research. Guiding questions that are addressed in the subchapters include 'What type of communication should teachers expose their students to for the purpose of ICC development?', 'How can teachers get their students to communicate in the foreign language?', 'How can teachers use technology to facilitate authentic intercultural communication?' and 'What kind of teaching approach facilitates pedagogically mentored authentic collaborative communication?'. Section 2.1 starts with an exploration of the communicative turn in foreign language teaching and English Language Teaching (ELT) in particular. This includes discussions of communicative competence and ICC as well as the key principles of communicative language teaching (CLT). In sections 2.2 and 2.3, issues of task-based language teaching and learning (TBLT) and computer-assisted language learning (CALL) are discussed. In section 2.4, concepts and principles of successful language learning and teaching are addressed through a social constructivist lens. Against this background, section 2.5 discusses the nature and strength of lingua franca communication, and introduces a pedagogical lingua franca (PLF) approach to enhance ICC development in a foreign language learning and teaching context.

2.1 | The communicative turn in foreign language teaching

To better understand contemporary ELT practice, it is important to gain a good understanding of the communicative turn in language teaching and how it shaped CLT and our present-day notion of communicative competence development. Communicative competence is a term used in the domain of language learning and teaching to describe and account for the knowledge and skills that are necessary for people to communicate successfully in social context. In 1965, Chomsky suggested that competence should consist of two aspects, namely grammatical competence and grammatical performance. With grammatical competence he referred to a set of grammatical rules that represent speakers' unconscious grammatical rule knowledge and helps them to distinguish grammatical from ungrammatical sentences, and with grammatical performance he referred to the actual production of sentences. Chomsky (1965) introduced his linguistic theory in reference to the "ideal speaker-listener" (p. 3) who has perfect knowledge of the language and applies it flawlessly under all kinds of unforeseen conditions such as memory limitations and distractions. Hymes (1972) was one of the first to criticize the idea of having an ideal speaker-listener as the reference point for a model of competence. As Hymes' own work was grounded in ethnographic research (i.e. he studied the type of knowledge and skills children from varying backgrounds and communities need to participate successfully in communication), he argued for a broader conceptualisation of competence. One that also

takes into account how real speakers of the language communicate. In addition, he was critical towards Chomsky's notion of grammatical competence. According to Hymes, having knowledge of the various aspects of a language and the rules for putting them together into well-formed sentences is not enough to perform or use the language in an appropriate manner in different communities. He believes that:

> a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others (Hymes, 1972, p. 277).

Taking a broader perspective, one that acknowledges and integrates relationships between the use of language and its socio-cultural components was at the core of Hymes' notion of communicative competence. For a linguistic theory to be adequate, Hymes argued it must account for four judgements that determine whether and to what extent 1) something is possible in a systematic way; 2) something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available; 3) something is appropriate (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated; 4) something is in fact done, actually performed, and what its doing entails (Hymes, 1972, p. 281). A speaker who meets all four requirements is a competent user of the language. It is this notion of communicative competence that sparked off the communicative turn in ELT and announced a major shift of focus from grammar-based teaching to communication-oriented approaches to teaching.

CLT was introduced during the 1970s on the basic premise that students should be able to use language in social context. As speaking is the vehicle through which students can build relationships and develop their competences, oral communication is at the heart of this approach. CLT emphasizes interaction as both the ultimate goal of language education and the means; activities guided by this approach aim at practising the type of communication that is considered to be meaningful in the real world. With their pedagogical recontextualisation of Hymes' work, Canale and Swain (1980) made an important theoretical and methodological contribution to CLT. They created a model consisting of three complementary dimensions of knowledge and skills students need to acquire in order to communicate successfully in the target language. Based on Canale and Swain's (1980) work, Canale (1983) slightly revised the model into a four-dimensional model of communicative competence. With grammatical competence, Canale refers to the mastery of the language code in terms of possessing the knowledge and skills that are needed to understand and express the literal meaning of utterances

accurately. It is a type of competence that concerns the grammatical correctness of utterances. Sociolinguistic competence focuses on the appropriateness of utterances when produced and understood in different sociolinguistic contexts. This dimension is crucial when interpreting the 'social meaning' of utterances, especially when their meaning cannot be traced back to the literal meaning. Sociolinguistic knowledge and skills concern what is situationally appropriate. In Canale's model, discourse competence is introduced as a separate category referring to one's ability to combine grammatical forms and meanings with the purpose to achieve a unified spoken or written text in different text types, e.g. an argumentative essay or a spoken narrative. Strategic competence concerns mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that are used to prevent communication breakdowns and to increase the effectiveness of the ongoing communication.

It should be emphasized that Canale and Swain's work led to a modification of Hymes' original ideas. Whereas Hymes' ethnographic research aimed at finding out how communication is accomplished in varying communities, Canale and Swain's focus was on a pedagogical model that could be used for developing a communication-oriented curriculum for foreign language learning. While Hymes studied language use in heterogeneous speech communities, Canale and Swain used the native speaker as the reference point for language students: "Knowledge of what a native speaker is likely to say in a given context is to us a crucial component of second language students' competence to understand second language communication and to express themselves in a native-like way." (1980, p. 16). Research about communicative competence was no longer about observing speakers from a variety of communities but the focus shifted to developing a pedagogical approach that helps students to develop the competence to communicate with native speakers. This pedagogical recontextualisation of Hymes' notion of communicative competence holds consequences for contemporary foreign language teaching in that the (English) native speaker is still being portrayed as the standard role model in most language learning materials and classrooms.

During the 1980s, the sociolinguistic dimension gained ground in foreign language teaching materials but attention for the socio-cultural component was still lacking. In this connection, Van Ek (1986) presented his "framework for comprehensive foreign language learning objectives" (p. 33) and proposed to add two dimensions of communicative competence, namely social competence and sociocultural competence. Social competence includes the familiarity with differences in social customs, confidence, empathy and motivation to communicate with others, whereas sociocultural competence is the ability to communicate in a language in a culturally appropriate way. More specifically, the sociocultural dimension concerns the knowledge of customs, rules, beliefs and principles of a given society. Although the social and sociocultural components are on the same hierarchical level as the other dimensions, many believe they

are at the heart of communicative competence. In the light of our earlier discussion, it is interesting to mention that in van Ek's framework the educated native speaker continued to be seen as the norm of how to communicate in the foreign language. Kramsch (1993) was one of the first to challenge the notion of the native speaker as a role model and argued that all students have the right to use the language they are learning for their own purposes, implying that reaching for native speaker competence is not necessarily the desired learning objective. Kasper (1995) added that it was more important to develop an 'intercultural style and tact' to overcome differences than accepting the norm of the native speaker. It is in this vein that Byram (1997) introduced his concept of ICC in relation to foreign language teaching as a new type of competence that reflects the ability to communicate and interact across linguistic and cultural borders appropriately and efficiently. According to Byram "the goal of intercultural awareness-raising in language courses is not to turn non-native students into cultural natives, but rather to make them intercultural speakers, by developing intercultural understanding through different social and cognitive activities involving analysis, reflection, and interaction" (1997, p. 55). In his model, Byram describes the interculturally competent speaker as someone who has acquired five 'savoirs' or abilities:

1. *Attitudes:* of curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own.
2. *Knowledge*: of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction.
3. *Skills of interpreting and relating*: to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own.
4. *Skills of discovery and interaction*: to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraint or real-time communication and interaction.
5. *Critical cultural awareness/political education*: to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries. (Byram, 1997, pp. 50-54)

It should be mentioned, however, that the attitudes Byram describes (e.g. empathy, flexibility, interest, curiosity, openness) do not necessarily differ from those that characterize successful communication in general (Kohn, 2020a). In ordinary communication, speakers of different gender, age and educational level interact with each other all the time, and attitudes such as being open, flexible, cooperative and empathic are used to make conversations run smoothly.

This means that successful intercultural communication draws on the communicative competence people already possess and use in their everyday communication.

Some researchers are concerned that the social and sociocultural dimensions of communicative competence are more complex and multifaceted than portrayed and practiced in foreign language teaching materials. Leung (2005) argues that Canale and Swain's pedagogical recontextualization of communicative competence led to a too narrow interpretation of the social dimension of communication. The majority of the students practice social interaction in more or less artificial classroom-based pair and group work in which they are asked to apply and learn communication-oriented language structures that are often taken from native speaker repertoire. In the real world, however, students will most likely encounter communicative contexts that require a stronger focus on attitudes such as empathy and flexibility. Accordingly, Leung argues that the notion of communicative competence that exists in foreign language pedagogy needs to be revised and extended beyond a functional focus on the development of students' linguistic knowledge (e.g. grammar, lexic and pronunciation) and skills to use this knowledge in specific situations (e.g. reading, writing, listening and speaking). He suggests to take Hymes' notion of communicative competence as the starting point of this endeavour and base pedagogy on how foreign language students actually communicate as speakers. Instead of focusing on complying with native speaker norms and conventions, more attention should go to observing how non-native speakers use the language in authentic communication. In a similar vein, Coste et al. (2012) stress the importance of restoring Hymes' original ideas. They wrote a critical overview of how language pedagogy adapted Hymes' notion of communicative competence:

> Although such a transposition does not take place without reduction and simplification, in doing so, it is important to not lose its fundamental quality: the need to take into account the social and cultural nature of competence as well as of the constitutive heterogeneity of all language communities (p. 12).

Fundamental to the development of the social and sociocultural aspects of communicative competence as reflected in Byram's model of ICC are student autonomy, authenticity and communicative collaboration. These three key principles of CLT are rooted in social theories of learning and derive from conditions that enable people to be successful in real communication beyond school. To start with, preparing students for communication in the real world requires them to take charge of their learning and make choices in the language learning process. In the literature, a focus on learner autonomy (Holec, 1981) derived from a change from teacher-centred to more student-centred practice in the 1980s. Little (1995) introduced the

term 'language learner autonomy' and argued that achieving autonomy should be seen as part of the language learning process students go through. He argues that it is the teacher who should engage "students' pre-existing capacity for autonomous behaviour [i.e. in their lives outside the classroom] and harness it to the business of language learning" (Little, p. 1). Second, communicative collaboration received heightened attention under the influence of social constructivist ideas (Vygotsky, 1978) that state that language learning is in nature a dialogic process or activity that requires its speakers to collaboratively construct and negotiate meaning. And third, to develop ICC, students need access to authentic activities and learning materials they can authenticate for their own communicative needs and purposes; also see Widdowson (1979) and Van Lier (1996) on authentication.

When looking at Byram's description of ICC and what is necessary to turn students into intercultural speakers with the 'right' abilities to participate successfully in discourse, we see that current classroom conditions are quite limited. To raise autonomous language students who are capable of participating successfully in real-life intercultural communication, foreign language pedagogy should aim at providing students with authentic environments in which they can develop their ICC through meaningful collaborative communicative activities. However, the face-to-face foreign language classroom makes it difficult, if not impossible, to implement the kind of activities necessary to put the three key principles of CLT into practice.

2.2 | Task-based language learning and teaching

To understand why many researchers and teachers take the premises of TBLT as a starting-point of integrating and studying communication in the foreign language classroom, it is necessary to grasp the basic principles behind a task-based pedagogy along with its affordances and challenges for raising intercultural awareness and ICC development. In the late 1980s, TBLT was introduced as a pedagogical refinement of CLT and a reaction to the use of more form-focused communicative methods. TBLT has the potential to facilitate language acquisition by creating conditions for a focus on meaning over form. As such, it is seen as an effective way to engage students in target language communication through tasks that promote activities that support the implementation of learner autonomy and communicative collaboration in authentic activities. In their seminal work on tasks in L2 learning, Samuda and Bygate (2008) look back on the rise of TBLT:

> The possibility of an approach driven by engagement with meaningful and relevant *tasks* offered a promising way through the communicative content/communicative procedure impasse that CLT seemed to have arrived at, and thus [was] seen by many as an opportunity to return to the conceptual foundations of CLT (p. 57).

In the literature, varying definitions of what constitutes a task can be found; useful overviews are offered by Bygate et al. (2001), Shehadeh (2005) and Ellis (2003, 2018). The common denominator in all definitions is a non-linguistic task goal whose achievement requires students to use language. For instance, paying tickets for a show becomes a language task by talking to the person behind the counter of the theatre. The rationale behind a task is that the communicative activities that arise during task realisation create contexts for acquiring new language which students had no particular intention to learn. In this way, TBLT aims at catering for incidental language learning and is seen as a 'natural' or 'experiential' approach that facilitates foreign language learning by carrying out non-linguistic pedagogical tasks (Ellis, 2009). Tasks are generally structured into three stages: pre-task, in-task and post-task. In the pre-task phase, teachers set the task and prepare their students to perform it. During the main or in-task phase, students use their existing linguistic-communicative repertoire to perform the task. In the post-task phase, they evaluate their own task performance. This can be done in many ways, varying from feedback provided by the teacher to practicing language items that emerged from the task itself. Based on Ellis (2003, 2009), Erlam (2013, 2015) came up with a comprehensive list of four criteria suitable for assessing language tasks from a TBLT perspective. These criteria include 1) emphasis of meaning over form, 2) occurrence of an information gap, 3) activation of students' own resources and 4) production of an outcome or result. These task design principles are often used by teachers to strengthen the successful implementation of a task-based approach in a variety of educational contexts.

Whereas there is a general consensus in the field that a task-based approach provides students with opportunities to develop their communicative competence, some scholars (e.g. Benson; 2001; Long, 1991) are concerned that tasks with a primary or exclusive focus on meaning might be too undemanding. They feel that the linguistic freedom students have when carrying out so-called unfocused tasks might jeopardize their foreign language development, and they argue that a secondary focus on form might be helpful to stimulate language learning. However, as Nunan (2004) highlighted in his comprehensive introduction to TBLT, meaning and form are very much interrelated and can never be completely separated. In this connection, researchers such as Long (1991) and Ellis (2003) argue for the usefulness of a secondary focus on form. It should be emphasized that with a focus on form, the primary focus is on meaning and attention is given to meaning driven linguistic elements necessary for the communicative event. In fact, a great deal of research on tasks has been devoted to identifying which design aspects and implementation possibilities lead students to focus on form (Ellis, 2018). For instance, several studies (also see Ellis & Shintani, 2014) reveal that corrective feedback can be useful for foreign language development by drawing students' attention to specific grammatical forms. In addition, an increasing number of studies show that a focus on form is possible

through languaging. Swain (2006) introduced this term as referring to "the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language" (p. 98). When languaging, students use language to think and talk about language, and it can be done on one's own or as a collaborative activity with others.

Although TBLT has been established for some time now as one of the main approaches to language learning and teaching worldwide, it has also met with criticism. The first criticism concerns that most studies have mainly focused on the implementation of task-based approaches in Western educational contexts. There is no consensus among scholars that the positive research results apply to non-Western contexts as well (Thomas & Reinders, 2010). Asian cultures may not easily lend themselves to a communicative and student-centred approach such as TBLT. In Japan, for instance, a primary focus on forms remains the dominant approach in foreign language education (Shintani, 2017). Ellis (2009, 2016) challenges this criticism by pointing to an incorrect interpretation of TBLT. He argues that many of the misunderstandings about TBLT derive in part from the tendency of its critics to view it as a monolithic approach that cannot be adapted to different foreign language learning and teaching contexts. He argues that there is no single task-based teaching approach and that TBLT should not be treated as a dogma but rather as an umbrella concept according to which meaning-focussed approaches can exist alongside and even be mixed with other more form-focussed approaches. According to Ellis, the versatility of TBLT is one of its strong points and is key to its sustainability as an approach to language instruction. The second criticism concerns a lack of research with beginner students (Carless, 2012). Most empirical research showing positive results on learning either took place in tertiary education with adults or was conducted in more or less artificial settings and not in the foreign language classroom with real language students (Van den Branden, 2006). Littlewood (2007) even claims that TBLT as an approach is not suitable for novice students since it does not provide them with enough structure to complete a task successfully without the input of the teacher. Ellis (2018) argues against this by emphasizing that the teacher should always take an active role in a task-based classroom and should orchestrate all activities resulting from the task. He follows Harley and Swain (1984), who claim that teachers' interventions are necessary because purely naturalistic learning in the classroom does not normally lead to fostering the acquisition of formal linguistic elements. The third criticism concerns limitations of the task-based classroom with regard to providing opportunities for students to participate in authentic target language discourse (Carless, 2012). Studies show that students are not always motivated or confident enough to use the target language during group interaction in the physical classroom and easily fall back on their shared L1 (Carless, 2004; MacIntyre et al., 1998). Students are often weak in using the target language in a meaningful way when there is a lack of authenticity (e.g. Harmer, 2007; Ozverir et al., 2017).

In this respect, Swan (2005), among others, states that the principles of TBLT cannot be put in practice in an 'acquisition-poor' environment such as the physical classroom with little or no exposure to authentic foreign language communication. In the internet era, a task-based approach would thrive better in a more immersive learning context.

2.3 | Computer-assisted language learning

Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is a general term used in the field of foreign language learning and teaching to refer to a range of processes and activities that pedagogically employ computers in the foreign language classroom. The evolution of CALL has been characterized to a large extent by a certain tension between technology and pedagogy (Kohn, 2009). Especially at the beginning of CALL, the main question seemed to be whether the research focus should be on technology, pedagogy or a combination of both. Whereas many teachers considered CALL research in the early days as being too technical and not sufficiently informed by pedagogical considerations (Thomas et al., 2012), the balance in contemporary CALL has tipped towards pedagogy. Now, more than ever before, focus is on issues regarding interaction and the tools that are used to enhance collaborative communication and learner autonomy in authentic technology-enhanced environments. This section discusses how CLT shaped developments in CALL and how technology is currently being used in the task-based foreign language classroom.

In his attempt to capture the evolution of CALL and its relevance for pedagogy, Bax (2003) identified three areas of development. *Restricted CALL* concerns the period from the 1960s to the 1980s, in which researchers discovered and started to explore the potential of the computer for language learning purposes. In these early days of CALL, computer-based technology was used in computer labs in line with the learning theory prevailing at that time, namely behaviourism, which was reflected in the relatively limited role and input of the teacher on the level of learning. Its restricted nature was visible in the software and the activity types that were used, e.g. focus was very much on form in drill-type exercises and answering of closed questions. Overall, students interacted with their computer-based materials but not with each other.

Bax referred to the second development as *Open CALL* which is about the period from the 1980s onwards to the time in which he published his article in 2003, and for some time thereafter. This development is characterised by a more open nature on all levels of learning varying from the more language-focused software used to the role of the teacher and the feedback given to students. At the beginning of *Open CALL*, interaction was primarily with the computer. Under the influence of CLT, multimedia and simulation games that supported self-study activities were introduced to stimulate learner autonomy, collaborative communication and authenticity in the early and mid-1990s. Add-on activities allowed students to decide when, where and

how they wanted to practice their language knowledge. Both in school and at home, students could access a variety of language learning materials, ranging from simple clicking activities to more elaborate and cognitively demanding spoken and written exercises. With the emergence of the Internet in the late 1990s and the possibility to connect with other students through email, forum and chat, more communication-focused learning materials became available. The availability of a wide range of social software meant a huge breakthrough in terms of more communication-focused language learning. CALL research started to contribute to activities that included designing and implementing more attractive and, for that time, innovative learning environments. In particular, the emergence of computer-mediated communication (CMC) was seen as a possible solution for the implementation of CLT. Especially synchronous CMC seemed promising because it allowed students in different locations to engage in communication with each other at the same time.

When presented almost twenty years ago, the third development of *Integrated CALL* did not yet exist. At the time of writing, it was a vision on CALL that was characterised by 'normalisation', i.e. a "stage when technology is invisible, hardly even recognised as a technology, taken for granted in everyday life" (Bax, 2003, p. 23). The idea behind *Integrated CALL* was that CALL activities should be fully integrated in every-day teaching. This vision is closely linked to what later became known as blended learning. Bax was among the first to use the term blended language learning which was later described by Kohn (2009) as "the pedagogical integration of traditional forms of language learning and teaching with the new potential of e-learning" (p. 584). In practice, blended language learning concerns combinations of online and face-to-face tasks, blending the any time and any place advantages of online technology with in-class task activities and teacher support. Up-to-date, CALL activities are increasingly implemented in the foreign language classroom as normal parts of a larger blended pedagogical ensemble. In this connection, it is also interesting to mention the possibility to flip communication from the classroom to an online space (Kohn & Hoffstaedter, 2015). Flipping the classroom is described in educational literature as a pedagogical approach in which familiarizing oneself with content moves from the classroom to home study. Subsequently, resulting classroom-based pedagogy focuses on guiding students when applying the studied content in meaningful tasks. In a foreign language learning context, flipping communicative activities to an online space can contribute to CLT in that it offers a solution for the communicative and intercultural limitations the physical classroom puts on authentic communication. In this connection, it is also interesting to read Otto (2017) who built on Bax in her overview of *A Hundred Years of Technology for L2 Learning*. Otto describes the developmental stages of CALL from a more contemporary perspective and concludes that although

> the fundamental media used in language instruction—text, audio, video, images—have remained constant over time, their technological formats and their role in language learning have changed dramatically. Language learning technologies and CALL have evolved from delivery via localized technological resources to any-time, any-place provision through networked digital means. Moreover, technology has advanced from its ancillary role in the curriculum to become a core source of content and a conduit for authentic language learning experiences (Otto, 2017, p. 21).

Throughout the last two decades, the possibilities that CALL activities offered for communicative practice have led an increasing number of researchers and practitioners to look at technology as a potential solution for the challenges CLT faced in the physical classroom (Chong & Reinders, 2020; Thomas, 2013; Thomas & Reinders, 2010). In this respect, Levy and Stockwell (2006) discussed how technology-mediated tasks can increase language learning opportunities beyond the boundaries of the physical classroom and create opportunities for authentic communication. The following studies illustrate the kind of research the CALL community has been focussing on in the 21st century task-based classroom. To start with, some studies look at possible effects of technology on motivation and speaking apprehension. For instance, Yamada (2009) and Reinders (2009) show that technology increases students' motivation and lowers their anxiety, and leads to an increased engagement in target language interaction. Other interesting research focuses on the use of a-synchronous technologies and these studies show that the extra time students have to think about what they want to write before they post it contributes to foreign language development. For instance, in a study by Reinders et al. (2015), students participated in different technology-mediated task-based activities in a forum and a weblog. Results reveal how the increased time students have to process their language output before sharing it, encourages them to produce more grammatically accurate and complex language. A related study by Reinders and Wattana (2015) led to similar results in that the increased processing time of a-synchronous communication raises students' attention to various linguistic features and enables them to proofread and self-correct their language output before they share it with others. Another interesting study was conducted by Van de Guchte and Rijlaarsdam (2018). They compared a group of students who prepared a task in pairs in a face-to-face setting with a group of students who did the preparatory work through WhatsApp. Results show that preparing the task with peers by means of chat messaging considerably increased target language use and positively affected the students' task performance in terms of fluency in a follow-up activity. Overall, the students perceived chatting as a good preparatory activity for speaking tasks.

Communication-oriented studies such as the ones mentioned here illustrate the potential of technology for communicative competence development, especially in a task-based context.

So far, however, both TBLT and CALL researchers have studied the roles and benefits of tasks incorporated in technology from their own perspective. According to Ziegler (2016), the strength could be found in combining these cognate areas:

> Tasks and technology are ideal partners in a reciprocal relationship, providing opportunities for researchers seeking to explore how the integration of technology can enhance or facilitate the benefits of task-based language teaching (TBLT) as well as addressing how TBLT can serve as a framework in which to ground research conducted in CALL contexts (Ziegler, 2016, p. 137).

In this connection, it is relevant for researchers who are interested in developing students' ICC through communicative tasks to combine forces and explore the possibilities of online intercultural communication. Now, more than ever before, CMC technologies such as Google Meet, MS Teams, Skype and Zoom have become an essential part of our everyday lives. These tools are relatively easy to access and offer possibilities for students to collaborate and communicate in authentic blended language learning environments in which online communicative activities can be combined with more form-focused in-class activities.

The first online cross-cultural communication projects between university classrooms from all around the world emerged in the early 2000s when both researchers and teachers were attracted by the idea to connect language students of the same target language with peers from other countries through technology. The practice of virtual exchange, also known in the field of foreign language learning and teaching as intercultural telecollaboration, is described in the literature as "The engagement of groups of learners in online intercultural interactions and collaboration projects with partners from other cultural contexts or geographical locations as an integrated part of their educational programmes" (O'Dowd, 2018, p. 1). Virtual exchange has become an integral part of CALL research and offers solutions for overcoming the limitations of the physical foreign language classroom by enabling authentic collaborative communicative interaction in the target language between students of different linguacultural backgrounds through online communicative tasks. Currently, virtual exchange is not limited to tertiary education anymore; an ever increasing number of primary and secondary school teachers are also exploring its possibilities for developing their students' intercultural awareness and ICC. Virtual exchange fits in with the vision of *integrated CALL* in that it can be easily embedded in a blended language learning scenario.

2.4 | Language learning and teaching from a social constructivist perspective

Social constructivist theories of learning (Vygotsky, 1978) help to better understand how language learning works and can serve as a starting point for the development of foreign

language pedagogy. In a language learning and teaching context, social constructivism provides a coherent theoretical framework for the key principles of CLT; learner autonomy, collaborative communication and authenticity (also see Wolf, 1994). These three conditions provide a context for meaningful social interaction in which students construct the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to acquire language. Taking a social constructivist perspective on foreign language learning helped me to enhance my understanding of the language learner as the principal agent in charge of his or her own learning when processing a task. In this section, a summary account of Kohn's (2018a, 2020b) inwardly oriented social constructivist understanding of language learning is given. His perspective on language acquisition informed my understanding of task processing (see section 4.2), the subsequent conceptualisation of a three-dimensional model of task engagement (see section 4.3), and the pedagogical approach taken in the intercultural virtual exchanges that are part of this study (see section 5.2).

Based on social constructivist views on learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Williams & Burden, 1997), Kohn describes language learning as a complex process of creative construction. According to this understanding, learners construct their own version of the language they are learning in their minds, hearts and behaviour through individual and social processes of creative appropriation. Kohn argues that being creative is not an intentional choice made by the learner when acquiring a language, rather it is a natural and essential part of ordinary human condition. The manner in which learners make use of their creativity can develop when they use the target language in authentic settings and become more aware of how to activate their 'ordinary' creativity for language learning purposes. When constructing their own version of the language, learners do not just copy and internalise other speakers' linguistic-communicative system but rather they create their own internal repertoire. In this connection, Kohn uses the term 'ownership by creative construction' (2018a) and emphasizes that owning the language is not a choice. Learners become owners of English, simply, because it is part of their creative process of constructing their version of the language. It should also be mentioned that learners do not necessarily have to feel comfortable with the way in which they construct the language, both in the foreign language classroom and beyond. For instance, learners might feel they are not fluent enough and deliberately avoid speaking activities in the target language. However, for them to become successful language learners, it is important that they perceive themselves as owners and address their speaking-related challenges by working towards becoming more fluent.

Learners' own version of the language is shaped by influencing forces such as previously learnt languages, target language perception and teaching objectives. In addition, a strongly influencing force is learners' personal requirements of communicative and communal success. Requirements reflect how learners perceive their need or wish to use the target language for

future personal and career purposes. Relevant personal requirements might include 'being able to express oneself' or 'participate in a community', and these might be different than the teacher had in mind when setting up a lesson. Kohn explicitly refers to requirements of both communicative ánd communal success because language acquisition does not take place in a void; all learners are part of a community in which they interact with others. It is with reference to their requirements that learners manage their learning and take ownership of the language they are learning. Requirements thus serve as beacons in the learning process and learners are successful in acquiring the language to the extent that they are able to meet their own requirements of communicative and communal success. So, from a social constructivist understanding, learning is based on and determined by students' 'inward reality' (Kohn, 2018a, p. 4) of the language they are learning and what *they* want to achieve with it.

Viewing successful language learning and teaching through a social constructivist lens holds implications for pedagogy. It first and foremost implies enabling and allowing language students to develop their own version of the language in a way that fits in with their own needs, desires and wishes, i.e. their requirements of communicative and communal success. This suggests extensive use of the target language in meaningful communicative activities. In this context, Kohn stresses that according to a social constructivist understanding of language learning, the still existing behaviouristic notion of repeating and conforming to standard language structures is replaced by a more open and emancipated view of language acquisition as a complex process of social creation. Hence, during communicative activities, students should be allowed to take their role as emancipated language learners and use their own linguistic-communicative resources and capabilities when interacting with others (Kohn, 2020a). At the same time, however, as learning takes place in an educational context, students cannot just learn as they please; the course objectives should play a role in students' construction of the language. Therefore, it is important that teachers guide their students when negotiating a requirement portfolio that suits their students' personal requirements, but simultaneously is appropriate for the developmental and curricular stage they are in. This is essential because only if students embrace the course requirements and incorporate them in their requirement portfolio, learning will take place in a pedagogically successful way.

Against this theoretical framework, I argue that in the ELT classroom, or any foreign language classroom for that matter, it is through carrying out tasks that students can fulfil their own language learning needs and desires, and create a version of English they feel comfortable with. This implies that although students are and should be exposed to standardised language structures in the classroom, they should also be taught that the target language can be used differently in the real world by real speakers of the foreign language, including themselves. Hence, for tasks to cater for successful English language learning, teachers and students

need to make a mental shift in the ELT classroom from the more "strict quasi behaviourist copying/cloning orientation" that often characterises mainstream CLT, to a more open social constructivist orientation that allows students to create their own version of English (Kohn, 2020a, p. 6).

2.5 | A pedagogical lingua franca approach

Throughout the last decades, English has taken on the role of global language and as such it plays a prominent part in international communication. Consequently, learning English has gained a separate status in foreign language education (Chapelle, 2003) and is even referred to as a "basic educational skill" (Ushioda, 2011, p. 1). Society expects secondary school teachers to educate students who are competent to communicate successfully in a multicultural context in which English is used as a lingua franca (ELF). For sustainable ELT practice, it is inevitable that researchers and teachers ask themselves questions such as 'How does intercultural communication in English differ from the type of communicative competence students develop in the mainstream ELT classroom?' and 'How can we prepare students for intercultural communication in the real world?'

Foreign language learning and teaching literature shows that students need access to the type of authentic intercultural communication that is used in the real world (Galajda, 2017). In authentic interaction, students can practice how to use English as a mediating language while connecting with real speakers and develop their ICC accordingly. In this connection, it is interesting to look at lingua franca communication as it offers a context for the open orientation students need to make English, or other languages they are learning, their own in a way that fits in with their own requirements of communicative and communal success. To better understand what lingua franca communication is all about, we take Seidlhofer's definition of ELF as a starting point. She defines ELF as "any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice and often the only option" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 7). ELF is used in intercultural communicative encounters ranging from formal speech events such as in international diplomacy and conflict resolution to more informal exchanges between international friends. In this capacity, lingua franca communication often takes place very naturally to facilitate one's communicative partner(s) understanding, express finer shades of meaning or assert one's cultural identity. In this regard, it should be emphasized that there is no such thing as 'standard ELF', nor do we talk about ELF as a variety. A variety comes with a speech community, a term used to describe a group of people who share the same language, speech characteristics, and ways of interpreting communication. However, people who use ELF come from varying communities and engage in lingua franca communication because it allows them to interact with speakers from different linguacultural backgrounds. Against

this backdrop, James (2005) characterized ELF as an "instance of language in a postmodern world. It is fragmented, contingent, marginal, transitional, indeterminate, ambivalent and hybrid in various ways" (p. 141). In line with this, Seidlhofer (2011) mentions creativity, innovation and performance as key characteristics of ELF communication. She argues they indicate the interdependence between form and function with speakers who are "performing their own ELF, shaping both the language and their identities in the process" (p. 97). As such, ELF speakers, just as students of English, are oriented towards

> a collaborative co-construction of meaning making skilful use of pragmatic moves, and capable of drawing on all the resources in their repertoires to jointly co-build and accomplish successful communication (Vettorel, 2017, p. 76).

This description of ELF-speaker orientation reflects the trend in educational philosophy to move towards social constructivist informed models of language teaching. ELF-oriented pedagogical models move from a traditional ELT focus on form according to a native speaker standard model to the awareness of English as "a contact language" (Firth, 1996, p. 240) which is used among people for whom English is not the L1. However, although the general suggestion at the heart of ELF pedagogy seems to be to take observations of ELF-communication as input for a pedagogical model in the ELT classroom, there are no convincing recommendations on how to integrate such an approach. First, at a more practical level, the overarching pedagogical goals of 'teaching' ELF need to be divided into smaller, more concrete and operational goals that offer guidance for teachers when designing and implementing syllabi and tasks. Second, implementing an ELF-oriented model requires fundamental rethinking of current teaching methodology and practice in context-relevant ways. In this regard, and in the light of the open orientation discussed earlier, the question also arises if what we observe in ELF communication out there should serve as a model for developing students' own productive skills in the language classroom. Observations that are taken out of context can confuse students and mere exposure is not enough to develop communicative competence. In this connection, students need an educational context that allows them to practice their productive skills and experience what it is like to communicate with other people who do not share the same L1. But, as not all students know how to behave adequately during multicultural encounters or are familiar with strategies they can use to strengthen their ICC in English, they need pedagogical guidance. Therefore, authentic intercultural communication should take place in a pedagogically mentored environment (O'Dowd et al., 2019), preferably one that provides room to students to develop English in a way they feel comfortable with.

It is in this connection that Kohn's (2020a) pedagogical lingua franca (PLF) approach is introduced. A PLF approach is an innovative approach to foreign language learning and teaching that facilitates natural communicative encounters in a target language between students in a pedagogically mentored educational context. In a PLF context, students engage in real lingua franca communication and, hence, are treated as real intercultural speaker-listeners. From a social constructivist perspective, a PLF context requires the kind of emancipated handling of the language that is necessary for successful language learning, and at the same time, this type of communication provides opportunities to use it. A PLF approach is based on the idea that a lingua franca condition "makes pupils feel in the same boat with their peers which enables them to lower their communication apprehension, focus on the communicative task and develop non-native speaker confidence" (Kohn, 2016, p. 293).

Organising activities under a PLF condition in the ELT classroom addresses recent developments in the function and use of English worldwide. Facilitating authentic communication in the foreign language classroom is not just about modelling the native-speaker's language and culture but should be about creating real uses for the target language. Teacher support in a PLF approach focuses on encouraging students to 1) learn from their own communicative ELF experience through reflective practice, 2) revise their requirements of communicative and communal success in relation to the current communicative and learning context, 3) improve their ELF-related comprehension, production and interaction skills, and 4) unleash their ordinary creativity as emancipated agents in the ELT classroom (Kohn, 2020a, p. 7). As a PLF approach moves from observing how non-native speakers use language to actual participation in authentic lingua franca communication and reflection on performance, it actively raises intercultural awareness and promotes ICC development.

Implementing a PLF approach in the foreign language classroom, however, requires students to participate in authentic communication with students from varying linguacultural backgrounds who use a shared foreign language as a PLF. One possibility would be to integrate PLF activities in the foreign language classroom at international schools where students with different L1s and varying cultural backgrounds come together to learn English. Then, it would make sense to design pedagogically mentoring activities that help international students to engage with the language they are learning. Yet, it would not make sense to take a PLF approach in a more mainstream classroom where students with the same L1 and cultural background come together and can easily fall back on their mother tongue. However, while the physical classroom cannot adequately support authentic lingua franca communication, technology can be used to facilitate this type of communication. In view of this, virtual PLF exchange (Kohn, 2020a, 2020b) offers opportunities for lingua franca communication by enabling students with different L1s to collaboratively carry out online communicative tasks during virtual exchange.

What makes virtual PLF exchange particularly interesting for foreign language pedagogy is that it provides teachers with the opportunity to offer tailor-made pedagogical mediation and guidance to student as part of their ordinary language classes.

2.6 | Conclusion

In the last 30 years, the tenets of CLT with a strong emphasis on students' ability to use the language they are learning in a meaningful way in real-world intercultural settings have settled in many foreign language classrooms. Nonetheless, many foreign language students are not exposed to the type of authentic communication that contributes to the development of their ICC. Rather, the prevailing pedagogy that exists to practice communicative competence in mainstream language education is more focused on limited functional communication in terms of focusing on structures native speakers would use and what students can do with them instead of experiencing first-hand what real intercultural communication is all about. The functional communicative approach that characterizes contemporary CLT does not provide opportunities for students to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are considered to be essential in intercultural communication. If teachers do not find ways of broadening the scope of CLT and include the social and sociocultural dimensions in their classroom practice, students run the risk of practising a type of communication that does not prepare them adequately for real world intercultural communication.

In addition, because of globalization and the developments in ELF research and practice, ELT has seen a shift of focus from accuracy to knowing how to use English appropriately as a multilingual tool for international communication. English has evolved from standard English used by native speakers to 'Englishes' used by a great variety of people from different linguacultural backgrounds who use the language as a lingua franca with differences in lexis, syntax, discourse, pragmatics and cultural conceptualizations. In our modern societies, being a global citizen means that instead of belonging to an external group, the language user is an internal member of the international community that uses ELF by default. This is reflected in ELT's shifting pedagogical goals that move from "manufacturing native or near-native speakers of English to developing and mentoring effective and strategic translanguaging users of English in multilingual communication contexts" (Xu, 2017, p. 704).

Overall, the pedagogical affordances and challenges of contemporary communicative approaches to foreign language learning and teaching, and ELT in particular, seem to be determined by the extent to which teachers are able to facilitate and mentor the type of authentic collaborative task activities that supports students in their effort of becoming autonomous communicatively competent users of the foreign language. A PLF approach can contribute to this paradigm shift in teaching that is directed towards preparing students for language use

in real-life situations. The principles of CLT are reflected in PLF activities that are organised to support intercultural virtual exchanges between the participating students. Where the boundaries of the physical classroom pose challenges for accessing authentic communication, virtual PLF exchange that is tailored to students' requirements of communicative and communal success allows for virtual PLF communication.

CHAPTER 3

Virtual exchange for intercultural foreign language learning

Intercultural virtual exchange enables secondary schools to enrich their foreign language curricula by providing students with the opportunity to develop their ICC in an online intercultural communicative environment. During intercultural virtual exchanges, students meet online with peers from different linguacultural backgrounds to carry out communication tasks in a shared language. Research has shown that the vast majority of students who participate in virtual exchange activities have a positive learning experience and enjoy communicating and collaborating with partners who are in other geographical locations (Dooly & Sadler, 2013; O'Dowd & Lewis, 2016). However, implementing virtual exchange in a way that leads to intercultural learning and communicative competence development is not without serious challenges. One of the obstacles concerns teachers' and students' lack of familiarity with certain technologies and knowledge on how to exploit them for intercultural foreign language learning. In this connection, the European Erasmus+ project TeCoLa offered tailor-made organisational, technical and pedagogical support to help foreign language teachers in, in particular, secondary schools across Europe to successfully set up their own exchanges in innovative online learning environments such as the TeCoLa Virtual World.

This chapter provides a background for the exchanges and tasks that were carried out in the TeCoLa Virtual World and used in this PhD research project to study the phenomenon of task engagement in virtual PLF communication. As such, it contributes to a better understanding of the pedagogical and methodological embedding of the communication tasks in a specific type of virtual world (also see Chapter 5) along with the analyses and discussions of the TeCoLa Virtual World interaction data later on in the dissertation (Chapter 6 and 7). Hence, in this chapter, focus shifts from addressing theoretical-methodological concepts concerning foreign language learning and teaching (Chapter 2) to discussing an innovative online learning environment that potentially fosters key principles of CLT. Guiding questions that are used in this chapter include 'How has the practice of intercultural virtual exchange evolved throughout the last 25 years?', 'What characterizes virtual world communication?', and 'How were different intercultural virtual exchange activities integrated in the TeCoLa project?'.

In section 3.1, the three main phases in the evolution of virtual exchange are discussed and attention goes to European projects that promoted and facilitated exchanges, teacher training and studied the practice of intercultural virtual exchange in different foreign language learning and teaching areas. This also concerns explaining the shift in terminology from

telecollaboration to intercultural virtual exchange. Section 3.2 addresses the key characteristics of three-dimensional (3D) virtual world environments together with the opportunities they offer for foreign language pedagogy. Together these two sections prepare the ground for section 3.3 which provides general information on the TeCoLa project and the efforts that were made to integrate intercultural virtual exchange activities in foreign language learning classrooms across secondary schools in Europe.

3.1 | From intercultural telecollaboration to virtual exchange

In our connected society, being a member of the global workplace requires the ability to collaborate and communicate online across regional, national and cultural boundaries. In intercultural virtual exchange, online communication tools are used to bring together foreign language students from different linguacultural backgrounds to carry out tasks with the aim to raise intercultural awareness and develop ICC. As such, intercultural virtual exchange can be used as an innovative activity that offers students opportunities to participate in intercultural communication and develop the communicative competence of the intercultural speaker (Byram, 1997). As the term virtual exchange has only been adopted recently as the preferred term to refer to online collaborative learning activities between groups of students from different geographical locations and linguacultural backgrounds, we take a few steps back and explain how it all developed.

Warschauer (1996) was among the first CALL researchers to experiment with online intercultural exchanges and introduced the term 'telecollaboration' in his publication *Telecollaboration and the Foreign Language Learner*. From then onwards, telecollaboration began to be used as an umbrella term for a variety of online intercultural foreign language learning activities that aimed at developing students' linguistic-communicative and intercultural competence. In early telecollaborative exchanges, students became involved in e-mail exchanges and collaboratively created products such as websites and presentations based on comparisons of their cultures. For instance, Müller-Hartmann (2000) studied how written literary discussion tasks promoted intercultural learning in three asynchronous e-mail exchange projects between lower-secondary school ELT classes in Germany, and English and Social Studies classes in the United States and Canada. Furthermore, Belz (2002) studied how American and German foreign language students collaboratively developed a website which contained bilingual essays and discussions of cultural issues such as family life and racism. Belz was the first to publish a working definition of telecollaboration in which she tried to capture its main characteristics as "institutionalized, electronically mediated intercultural communication under the guidance of a languacultural expert (i.e., teacher) for the purposes of foreign language learning and the development of intercultural competence" (Belz, 2003, p. 2).

With the rise of easily accessible communication tools in the mid-2000s, there was a shift from exchanges that mainly evolved around asynchronous text-based communication (e.g. email, wikis and discussion forums) to those that focussed more on synchronous communication (e.g. desktop video conferences and digital gaming tools). It was around this time that telecollaboration was picked up by a wider group of practitioners and researchers. This growing interest resulted in book publications that addressed key issues in telecollaborative learning; see Belz and Thorne (2006), O'Dowd (2006, 2007) and Dooly (2008). O'Dowd (2007), in particular, pushed the field forward when he published an edited volume that offered a rigorous exploration of the affordances of intercultural telecollaboration for foreign language education. In 2009, O'Dowd and Ware contributed to pedagogy when reporting on twelve telecollaborative task types they had identified in the research literature. In addition, they classified the activities students undertook when carrying out tasks in three main categories namely 'information exchange', 'comparison' and 'collaboration' and suggested teachers to use them when structuring their own exchanges.

When introducing *Telecollaboration 2.0*, Guth and Helm (2010) emphasized a new era in which social software was increasingly used to promote the development of language skills and ICC, and allowed for more variation in partner-constellations and forms of interaction. For instance, 3D virtual worlds such as Second Life and Opensimulator became popular with a larger audience and foreign language teachers started to explore these environments and their suitability for language learning purposes. In addition, students increasingly collaborated in specialized online interest communities and environments (e.g. public discussion forums and multiplayer online games) with partners that shared the same hobbies or interests. In this regard, it is interesting to see Thorne et al. (2009) who report on online fan communities, where students can establish relationships with like-minded fans of music groups or authors, and their potential for intercultural learning. As some online intercultural exchanges were organised completely independent of classroom activity and took part outside regular school hours, Thorne (2010) used the term 'intercultural communication in the wild' to describe a new type of telecollaborative learning that was "…situated in arenas of social activity that are less controllable than classroom or organized online intercultural exchanges might be, but which present interesting, and perhaps even compelling, opportunities for intercultural exchange, agentive action and meaning making" (p. 144). Against this background, the number of telecollaborative projects rapidly expanded in the last decade and research started to focus on issues such as what kind of new literacies are required to participate successfully in an exchange and how certain innovative tools can be used to enhance intercultural learning both inside and outside the foreign language classroom.

The activity of telecollaboration has evolved considerably throughout the last 25 years. Broadly speaking, three major developments took place that blend into each other, each one reflecting the key focus of foreign language pedagogy at a certain time. Initially, most exchange projects mainly focussed on communicative foreign language learning practices and attention went, in particular, to developing students' linguistic-communicative competence. However, under the influence of the intercultural turn in foreign language education (Thorne, 2006), teachers' focus gradually shifted to a type of telecollaboration that aimed at facilitating intercultural learning with an emphasis on raising intercultural awareness and ICC development. In this context, Hanna and De Nooy (2009) proposed to incorporate more authentic activities such as letting students participate in existing online asynchronous discussion forums of international newspapers with the purpose to enrich exchanges and familiarize them with the cultural rules and register of this genre of communication. In addition, influential scholars involved in intercultural learning such as Corbett (2010), Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) and Van der Kroon et al. (2015) described telecollaboration as valuable for raising students' intercultural awareness. Lewis and O'Dowd (2016) argue that such publications contributed to upscaling telecollaborative learning from a specialised CALL activity to an accessible pedagogical tool for intercultural language learning in mainstream education.

The above described development from telecollaborative practices that focus on developing students' linguistic-communicative foreign language skills to those that are more concerned with intercultural communicative practice is also reflected in the type of exchanges that are organised. Broadly speaking, students either participate in native speaker/non-native speaker tandems (O'Rourke, 2007), or in lingua franca exchanges with other non-native speakers with whom they share the same foreign target language. Although e-tandem exchanges with native speakers are still popular, some researchers question its long-term value when preparing students to become communicatively competent participants in a multicultural society. Already in 2006, Kramsch suggested that "[i]t is no longer appropriate to give students a tourist-like competence to exchange information with native speakers of national languages within well-defined national cultures. They need a much more sophisticated competence in the manipulation of symbolic systems" (Kramsch, 2006, p. 251). Especially when it concerns learning English as a foreign language, students are more likely to use the language as a lingua franca in their future employment (Graddol, 2006), rather than using it with native speakers. In addition, as telecollaboration is becoming more popular, there are simply not enough classes available of native speakers in countries of less commonly spoken languages to provide enough partnerships (Kohn & Hoffstaedter, 2015). Hence, both for pedagogical and practical reasons, lingua franca exchanges are gaining popularity, especially in the last few years.

Currently, a third overlapping development has set in as telecollaboration is now increasingly being used beyond the field of foreign language learning (Jager et al., 2016). Other areas besides those that explicitly target foreign learning and teaching have started to embrace practices that evolve around online intercultural collaboration. For instance, the project X-Culture (www.x-culture.org) illustrates how telecollaborative practice has been used in the field of international business. The project was launched in 2010 and since then serves as an ever-growing network for teachers and students who work in international virtual teams on business challenges that are presented by real companies. In 2016, UNICollaboration (www.unicollaboration.eu) was launched as the first cross-disciplinary organisation for telecollaborative exchanges in tertiary education. The community evolved from the European-funded INTENT project (2011-2014) (http://unicollaboration.unileon.es) and primarily aims at promoting telecollaborative research and practice across all disciplines and subject areas in higher education. In particular, the organisation wants to raise policy makers' awareness of the affordances of online intercultural exchange for foreign language learning and teaching.

To promote mobility and intercultural understanding, facilitating and stimulating meaningful online intercultural communication is high on the agenda of the European commission. Within the last 10 years, the European commission financed an increasing number of projects that focussed on intercultural telecollaboration and virtual exchange in varying foreign language learning and teaching contexts. For instance, the eTwinning community (www.etwinning.net) emerged from the European eTwinning project that received funding in 2005. The organisation aims at connecting primary and secondary school teachers working in Europe through a platform that facilitates online collaboration and communication between them and their students. Another example is that of the European project NIFLAR (2009-2012) (www.niflar.eu). This project aimed at making foreign language learning more authentic and interactive through implementing innovative e-learning environments such as Second Life-like 3D virtual worlds in university language learning programmes. The projects EVALUATE (2017-2019) (www.evaluate project.eu) and EVOLVE (2018–2020) (www.evolve-erasmus.eu) also took place in tertiary education. In these projects, teacher training courses were organised and studies were carried out on the impact of virtual exchange on foreign language teachers and their students in the context of initial teacher education in different European countries.

While most European funded projects have focused on promoting and studying the affordances of intercultural telecollaboration and virtual exchange in tertiary education, TILA (www.tilaproject.eu) (2013-2015) was one of the first European projects that stressed the necessity of more public awareness into the pedagogical opportunities of intercultural telecollaboration for secondary education students' intercultural language learning. More specifically, the TILA project promoted teacher development by addressing technological,

intercultural, pedagogical and organizational concerns for the successful integration of intercultural telecollaborative practices in foreign language education at secondary level (also see Jauregi-Ondarra, 2015). In this capacity, TILA provided a background for the TeCoLa project (www.TeCoLa.eu) (2016-2019). TeCoLa also aimed at familiarizing foreign language teachers and their students with intercultural telecollaboration activities but had a broader scope as it also included primary and vocational education. However, whereas TILA only aimed at introducing the practice of telecollaboration to teachers and making it accessible for them and their students, TeCoLa also offered a pedagogical space for the implementation and testing of pedagogical mentoring activities. In both projects, students collaborated and communicated in tandem constellations and pedagogical lingua franca (PLF) exchanges; for more information on the PLF exchanges see Kohn and Hoffstaedter (2015), Kohn (2016) and Kohn and Hoffstaedter (2017).

As regards terminology, O'Dowd (2018) suggested that telecollaborative practices varying from keypalships, intercultural telecollaboration, Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) to Globally Networked Learning (GNL) should be captured under the umbrella of 'virtual exchange'. He argues that using the same term enables the diverse research areas to share their findings more easily and the field as a whole to better strive forward. In 2019, the first International Virtual Exchange Conference (IVEC) (http://iveconference.org) was launched to discuss the increasing potential of virtual exchange to further internationalise education. IVEC is now considered to be the most prominent global event on online intercultural exchange in the world and promotes virtual exchange as a collective term for online exchanges that facilitate online intercultural learning across different educational fields. Against this backdrop, the term virtual exchange is consistently used throughout the dissertation in reference to the online intercultural exchanges that have been carried as part of the study.

3.2 | Virtual worlds

As addressed in the introductory part of this chapter, the online communication tasks that are used in the exchanges to study task engagement in virtual PLF communication were carried out in the TeCoLa Virtual World. Hence, to better understand the upcoming analyses and discussions of the participating students' interactions (Chapter 6 and 7), the key characteristics of virtual world communication are addressed in this section. Accordingly, special attention goes to the potential of 3D virtual world environments to engage students in authentic collaborative intercultural communication while carrying out tasks autonomously.

In the literature, virtual worlds are broadly described as graphical 3D environments which are populated by multiple users who either individually or collaboratively explore them, participate in their activities and communicate with each other in real time by means of avatars

which are virtual representations of the users themselves. Virtual worlds are interesting learning environments for intercultural virtual exchange (also see Thorne et al., 2009) because they have the potential to connect students with native or non-native speakers and peers who are in different geographical locations. More specifically, participating in virtual world activities as avatars that can speak, chat, walk around, run and fly, and in some cases manipulate virtual objects, allows foreign language students to engage in authentic communication in their target language in real-time with other language learners who also use the environment as avatars. As such, virtual worlds hold the potential to put the key principles of CLT, namely learner autonomy, communicative collaboration and authenticity in practice. But, before we explore the affordances of virtual world environments for foreign language pedagogy, we go back to the early 1990s and discuss how 'Metaverse' shaped virtual reality and virtual worlds as we know them today.

In his award-winning science fiction novel *Snow Crash*, Neal Stephenson (1992) created Metaverse which is a fictional 3D virtual space that the characters in his book travel to to visit 'The Street'. The Street is a virtual representation of an actual road that runs across a rather uninteresting, featureless black planet which is in need of environmental planning. To turn the planet into a more attractive place, the characters visit The Street as avatars and interact and collaborate with each other and so-called 'soft-ware agents' when selling, buying and adding real estate elements. Since *Snow Crash*, Metaverse has been widely used as a blueprint for 3D virtual reality-based environments in which users participate not as themselves but as avatars. The success of the novel also popularized the term avatar which is now the accepted term for a graphical representation of a player in computer games or a user of a virtual world environment.

In the mid-1990s, Metaverse inspired Multi-object oriented programmes (MOOs) and Multi-user Dungeons (MUDs) which were basically text-based virtual reality worlds that allowed multiple users, i.e. players, to connect with each other at the same time through text or chat messages. In these virtual environments, players communicated with each other by describing rooms, objects and themselves in a chat. As the other players could only see the written text, they had to use their imagination when creating mental pictures of artefacts and other users. Although most MUDs were set around monster themes (e.g. exploring a fantasy world or completing a dungeon and dragons quest), some were designed for educational purposes such as online group work and the teaching of object-oriented concepts. MUDS can be seen as the predecessor of the virtual worlds as we know them today such as Second Life (https://secondlife.com) and Opensimulator (http://opensimulator.org). In particular, Second Life caused a hype in the first decade of the 21st century and started to attract increased attention from teachers who wanted to explore its potential for foreign language learning. For an overview of virtual worlds in general, it is interesting to read the work of Jauregi-Ondarra

et al. (2021). They have recently published an overview of the development of virtual worlds and describe the evolution from the first massively multiplayer online 3D virtual environment *Habitat* (produced by Lucas film in 1986) that made it possible for players to interact with others through a graphical interface, to modern-day virtual worlds that promote language acquisition and ICC development.

In this connection, it is interesting to note that recent publications (e.g. Jauregi-Ondarra et al., 2021; Melchor-Couto & Herrera, 2021) make reference to terminology introduced by Costello (1997) concerning three different types of Virtual Reality (VR) systems. According to this typology, VR systems can be divided in three broad categories, namely 'low-immersive', 'semi-immersive' and 'fully immersive' VR systems. In contrast to semi- and high-immersive virtual environments that 'absorb' their users in a more 'lifelike' experience through the use of large screens surrounding the user or the use of head-mounted systems that completely enclose users' vision, low-immersive VR systems such as Second Life and Open Simulator include a desktop computer-based 3D graphic system that allows users to explore a virtual environment by using a computer screen, a keyboard and a mouse. In keeping with Costello's typology, the majority of 3D virtual worlds used in language learning research to date, including the TeCoLa Virtual World environment that is used in this PhD study, belong in the category of low-immersive VR systems.

To understand the potential and constraints of virtual worlds for foreign language pedagogy, it is important to realise that the distinguishing feature of 3D virtual world environments is that students take part in activities in both oral and written modes as avatars. Depending on the virtual world they use, students can dress and personalise their avatars and, hence, orchestrate their appearance and online personae. Although limited, some avatars can also show emotions such as happiness and sadness and communicate non-verbally by using gestures (e.g. wave and jump). These features are perceived as supporting interaction, emotional investment and immersion (Petralia, 2011). Being an avatar in the sense of being invisible raises students' confidence to speak which in turn leads to lower levels of communication apprehension (also see Melchor-Couto, 2017, 2018) and promotes students' active participation in communicative activities (Swier & Peterson, 2018). In this connection, some studies (e.g. Kuriscak & Luke, 2009) revealed that the display of a reduced inhibition leads to more enjoyment and positive attitudes. However, a sense of invisibility can also have a negative effect on learning. For instance, a study based on data taken from three language learning activities in Second Life shows that students' comprehension was negatively influenced due to the absence of their partner's avatar's gaze, facial expression and body posture and gestures (Tan et al., 2016).

Most research on virtual worlds in the field of foreign language learning focuses on their affordances for improving students' speaking skills, but some studies also show that virtual

world environments can be used to improve students' writing skills (e.g. Peterson, 2012) and grammatical accuracy (Kruk, 2013, 2015). Research by Nocchi (2017) also revealed that students who collaborated in Second Life engaged in languaging and explicitly addressed and discussed semantic and syntactic issues they were not yet familiar with in the foreign language. Virtual worlds also lend themselves to ICC development through tasks that stimulate students' curiosity, flexibility, openness and empathy towards students from other cultural backgrounds (e.g. Canto & Jauregi-Ondarra, 2017; Canto et al., 2014; Van der Kroon et al., 2015). For instance, Canto et al. (2014) studied how 27 students of Spanish and 14 native speakers negotiated intercultural meaning in Second Life when carrying out five Spanish learning tasks that had been designed to promote intercultural competence. The research findings indicated that being in Second Life triggered the students to participate actively in intercultural negotiation of meaning moves.

However, although virtual worlds offer opportunities for foreign language pedagogy, successful language learning should not be taken for granted. Using complex environments such as virtual worlds for educational purposes requires teacher and student training (Peterson, 2011; Wang, 2017). For instance, students need to practice how to operate their avatar, and use text and audio chat. In this connection, it is interesting to mention that some virtual worlds offer authoring tools that can be used to create learning objects that reflect the participating teachers' and students' interests and pedagogical purposes (Ganem-Gutierrez, 2014). Nonetheless, it should be emphasized that it is not easy to do so. Creating content in the sense of changing or adding text on already existing objects is possible but the creation of content in terms of designing and placing 3D objects in a virtual world environment is a complex and time-consuming activity that requires specialised technical skills that often exceed the digital competence of the average teacher. In a set up where each task requires its own content, it might be too demanding for teachers to create the 'right' environment on a regular basis. Hence, for practical reasons, it may be difficult to follow a task-based methodology in the virtual world.

3.3 | The TeCoLa project

In this section, a general description of the European Erasmus+ TeCoLa project (www.tecola.eu) and its aims and objectives is given along with the tools, tasks and pedagogical support that were made available to support teachers to successfully organise intercultural virtual exchange activities as extensions of their regular foreign language classroom practice. TeCoLa supported foreign language teachers who wanted to set up intercultural virtual exchanges that mainly focused on intercultural communicative foreign language learning with partner schools in other countries in either etandem or PLF constellations. To reach this objective, the project aimed at creating favourable conditions for the implementation of the key principles of CLT

by encouraging exchanges that required and allowed students to exercise their autonomy in authentic collaborative communication. In addition, innovative teaching approaches to tele-collaboration that addressed issues of learning diversity in intercultural learning in varied primary, secondary and vocational school settings were developed and tested. In this connection, it should be emphasized that TeCoLa did not only aim at facilitating class exchanges. In some of the TeCoLa exchanges, teachers participated with only a small group of students so that tailor-made and individual guidance for those who were involved was guaranteed.

The TeCoLa consortium brought together partners from six European countries (Belgium, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom) from different areas of expertise such as foreign language learning and teaching, intercultural telecollaboration, teacher education, and technology mediated pedagogy. To enable teachers to set up their own virtual exchanges, the TeCoLa Open Educational Resources pool provided teachers with TeCoLa teacher training support and contained suggestions for tools and environments, task descriptions, pedagogical guides, video accounts of teachers' and students' experiences and case study reports.

The tool section provided access and instructions to a variety of safe and engaging communication tools and environments such as the text chat and forum in Moodle, video communication in BigBlueButton and digital posts in Padlet facilitated both oral and written conversational interactions. Furthermore, students could come together to meet their partners in the TeCoLa Virtual World and collaborate on learning station tasks. In this tailor-made low-immersive VR environment in Opensimulator, all students were represented by moving avatars and could talk to each other through their headsets but they could also communicate through a text chat box. Within the TeCoLa Virtual World there were several small islands. On the *Welcome* island, there were shops with clothing and educational tools, a sandbox to build and some games to play. This was the area where all users started their journey and could find information on how to set their voice system and go to the other islands. *Arcadia* was an orientation island that offered user information and instructions on how to take the basic steps on working and navigating in a virtual world environment. Here, users could also play some games to practice their navigation skills. The remaining four islands were tailored for use in a particular language. *Chatterdale* was the island students visited to do English language tasks (see Figure 1), but for the other target languages there were different islands.

Figure 1 | The English speaking TeCoLa Virtual World island Chatterdale

As tasks are key to maximize collaborative communication in virtual exchange projects, the design of meaningful tasks was at the heart of TeCoLa (https://sites.google.com/site/tecolaprojectoer/tasks). To reflect real world interaction, the topics teachers could choose from concerned everyday life issues. The assumption was that by using topics the students could relate to, had experience with or knowledge about, they could participate more easily in intercultural communication. Figure 2 shows a screenshot of a learning path on the topic of breakfast. It was originally designed for the English language island Chatterdale with the purpose to discuss, compare and contrast the various ways in which people have breakfast in the participating countries.

Figure 2 | Learning path in the TeCoLa Virtual World on breakfast

To ensure deeper processing of content, the task section included accompanying worksheets that helped students to prepare for their meeting and guide them through their conversations. Teachers could either follow the task descriptions in the TeCoLa Open Educational Resources pool or use them as an inspiration for tasks that fit their own pedagogical needs and desires. The task description section also included suggestions for self, peer and teacher assessment. For instance, on how teachers could guide their students in specifying their personal learning goals at the beginning of the task or let them reflect on their task performance. Examples of tools for self-assessment include learner diaries, portfolios and journals, kahoot quizzes and online post-it notes.

Although intercultural virtual exchange offers exciting possibilities for innovative intercultural communicative practice, its smooth implementation should not be taken for granted. In this connection, the teachers who participated in the project were trained in tailor-made teacher training activities before each exchange. This was done to develop their technological and pedagogical competencies and get them started with their own TeCoLa exchanges in a pedagogically desirable way. After the initial teacher training activities, the entire process of course design, implementation and evaluation of task activities in the pilots was accompanied by a continuous coaching collaboration between the teachers and their TeCoLa coaches. In this context, it is also interesting to see the TeCoLa pedagogical guides that were created to support foreign language teachers when designing and implementing telecollaborative activities with their primary, secondary and vocational school students (https://sites.google.com/site/tecolaprojectoer/guides).

To make sure that students felt sufficiently comfortable and competent to participate in the online intercultural interaction, they were scaffolded along the way. Most exchanges started with easily-accessible and low-threshold technology, topics and content and slowly moved towards more demanding or interculturally challenging topics. To support the online communication, preparatory and follow-up activities were organised in the classroom before and after the online meetings to optimize communicative interaction during task realisation. For instance, one teacher implemented classroom activities that addressed the difference between face-to-face and online communication, and discussed strategies to build rapport.

Throughout the entire project, the TeCoLa researchers collaborated closely with the teachers while carrying out pilots and related case studies. The TeCoLa pilots were used to test tools, refine task descriptions and worksheets, and explore which challenges teachers and their students faced during an exchange. Both researchers and teachers reflected on their findings and experiences and used them to improve follow-up exchanges. The TeCoLa case studies can be found in the TeCoLa research report on https://sites.google.com/site/tecolaproject/documentation.

3.4 | Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen that developments in virtual exchange are characterized by three main phases that blend into each other. When it all began, telecollaboration mainly focussed on its affordances for students' linguistic-communicative competence development. However, focus gradually shifted to a type of telecollaboration that primarily aims at raising intercultural awareness and ICC development. At present, a third overlapping development has set in with intercultural virtual exchanges that target online intercultural collaborative practices in fields beyond that of foreign language learning and teaching. In this context, I explained that I am following current trends in the research literature and use the term virtual exchange throughout the dissertation to refer to practices concerning online intercultural exchange and, in particular, the TeCoLa Virtual World exchanges that have been carried out as part of the study.

We can conclude that intercultural virtual exchange is an innovative instrument for putting the principles of CLT into practice. As such, it holds great potential for raising intercultural awareness and the development of ICC. During intercultural virtual exchange, teachers can provide their students with tailor-made online task-experiences that enable them to meet those communication-focused requirements of task success that would be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve within the limitations of the mainstream traditional face-to-face classroom. However, collaborating and communicating in complex online intercultural environments is different from collaborative communication in the physical classroom. Task engagement in virtual PLF communication leads to new challenges and both teachers and students need to learn how to deal with them. In this connection, pedagogical support is essential for helping students make best use of the pedagogical potential of innovative but often unfamiliar learning environments such as 3D virtual world environments. To support foreign language teachers across Europe to successfully exploit the practice of virtual exchange for intercultural communicative language learning and set up their own exchanges in innovative online learning environments, the Erasmus+ TeCoLa project offered tailor-made organisational, pedagogical and technical support.

This chapter provided a background for the TeCoLa Virtual World exchanges and the tasks that have been carried out as part of this PhD study on task engagement in virtual PLF communication. To enhance comprehension of the learning environment in which the study took place, this chapter paid specific attention to the TeCoLa Virtual World and its affordances for online intercultural foreign language learning. Knowing how communication takes place in this type of virtual world helps to better understand the pedagogical and methodological embedding of the learning station task (also see Chapter 5) along with the virtual world interactions I will report on in Chapters 6 and 7.

CHAPTER 4

A conceptual clarification of task engagement

In recent years an increasing number of publications have addressed the topic of engagement in learning. However, up-to-date, our knowledge of engagement in a foreign language learning and teaching context remains limited. To pedagogically support students' engagement in and beyond the foreign language classroom, teachers need to understand the complex process of task processing and its implications for initiating and strengthening their students' engagement with tasks. In this chapter, drawing on insights from, in particular, SLA literature on engagement and a social constructivist perspective on task processing, I introduce a two-layered approach to task engagement based on a three-dimensional model of task engagement and a model of seven task performance (TP) parameters researchers can apply to better understand the creative processes students engage in when carrying out a task under virtual pedagogical lingua franca (PLF) conditions.

It should be emphasized that although some scholars use the terms interchangeably, engagement is not the same as motivation. On the level of the learning task, motivation refers to students' desire to carry out the task while engagement refers to the intensity and quality with which the task is performed. Even though motivation can affect the nature, strength and persistence of students' engagement, "motivation is necessary but not sufficient for engagement" (Reschly & Christenson, 2012, p. 14). As the focus of this study is on task engagement, a detailed discussion of the construct of motivation and its relationship with engagement is not within the scope of this chapter.

With this in mind, the chapter is divided into four main sections in which the study's first three research objectives are addressed in a chronological order. In section 4.1, a research review on engagement on the level of the task is included and limitations in the existing research are discussed (research objective 1). Guiding questions include, in particular, 'How is engagement with tasks in a language learning context defined?' and 'How has engagement with tasks been studied in foreign language learning and teaching research?'. Section 4.2 continues with a discussion of task processing, viewed through a social constructivist lens, that helps us to understand how students carry out a foreign language task and make it their own. Against this background, task engagement is conceptualized in section 4.3 with reference to a model distinguishing the three constitutive qualities of engagement (research objective 2). Guiding questions include 'What are relevant indicators to identify manifestations of task engagement

on the behavioural, cognitive and attitudinal level in an intercultural virtual context?' and 'How can these indicators be used to measure task engagement?'.

In this connection, the mind-heart-hands metaphor is introduced in this chapter and used throughout the dissertation in reference to the three constitutive qualities of human experience that together reflect the holistic nature of task engagement. More specifically, 'mind' relates to the cognitive, 'heart' to the attitudinal and 'hands' to the behavioural quality of task engagement. Varieties of this metaphor have been around for years and used, in particular, in psychology literature and transformative learning theories; e.g. see Sipos et al.'s (2008) 'Head, Heart and Hands Model'. It should be mentioned, however, that my use of the mind-heart-hands metaphor is inspired by Kohn's (2011, 2018b; also see section 2.4) account of language acquisition as a process of creating one's own version of the target language in one's mind, heart and behaviour. Accordingly, the metaphor is further conceptualised in relation to my inwardly-oriented social constructivist view on task processing (section 4.2) and my three-dimensional model of task engagement (section 4.3).

To study the special effort students invest with their minds, hearts and hands when engaging with tasks, data needs to be collected on what students do, what they think and how they feel during task realisation (research objective 3). For this purpose, section 4.4 specifies and illustrates a model of seven TP parameters of characteristic task aspects considered relevant for successful task completion in an online intercultural language learning context. To enable researchers to study task engagement in a transparent way, special attention goes to an innovative two-layered approach that combines the model of task engagement and the TP parameter model. Guiding questions include 'What instruments can be used to study the dimensions of task engagement?' and 'What type of data is needed to study task engagement in all its complexity?'. Finally, section 4.5 provides a summary conclusion of the chapter and contains a reflection on the insights gained as well as an outlook on Chapter 5.

4.1 | Research review

Learning engagement, also referred to as student engagement, is often described as an intuitively appealing holistic construct that focuses on the quality of a student's involvement with school (also see Christenson et al., 2012). As Skinner and Pitzer (2012) explain in their Model of Motivational Dynamics, research on engagement covers a wide-ranging spectrum of issues that are located in a hierarchy of four contexts: school, community, classroom, and learning activity. Depending on the research context and interests, certain aspects of engagement receive more attention than others, resulting in a lack of consensus in the literature concerning key concepts. Most early studies on engagement are concerned with studying the 'school context' (also see Finn, 1989) and they mainly focus on dropout and retention rates to identify students' sense of

belonging in school. From the 1990s onward, an increasing number of SLA studies started to focus on engagement at the level of the learning activity and looked at students' participation in tasks and its implications for L2 use and development.

Across all research contexts, engagement is generally associated positively with desired academic, social and emotional learning outcomes. Students who are engaged invest a lot of effort in their work, persist and self-regulate their own learning processes with regard to goals and outcomes. In this connection, there is consensus in the L2 literature that engagement with tasks in school is a necessary condition for all students to learn (also see Appleton et al., 2008; Finn, 1993; Fredricks et al., 2004; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Students who participate actively during task performance, in the sense that they know what needs to be done and act accordingly, perform better in classroom environments than those who stay silent and do not actively seek out learning opportunities.

So far, efforts have been made to describe engagement for the context of collaborative, task-based, face-to-face interaction in the foreign language classroom (e.g. see Platt & Brooks, 2002; Baralt et al., 2016; Philp & Duchesne, 2016; Phung, 2017). For instance, Baralt and colleagues used Svalberg's (2009, 2012) *Engagement With the Language* model to study the cognitive, affective and social dimensions of university students' engagement during task-based peer interactions in both face-to-face contexts and during synchronous computer-mediated chats. They conclude that these dimensions, which they refer to as the three types of engagement, are closely related; e.g. their data reveals that students' cognitive engagement is influenced by their affective and social engagement. In a similar vein, Philp and Duchesne (2016) describe engagement in the task-based language learning classroom as a multidimensional construct that is highly influenced by contextual factors such as the task and the setting in which it is carried out by students. They argue for future research to explore its multidimensionality in language learning contexts and, in particular, to synthesize different studies on engagement to better understand students' engagement in tasks and its influence on learning in language classrooms. Nevertheless, regardless of some very interesting studies in the field, students' engagement with tasks remains theoretically underdeveloped. Particularly with regard to the contemporary foreign language context in which a shaping influence of Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching (TBLT) and intercultural virtual exchange requires a more specific conceptualization of engagement on the level of the actual task.

Based on an increased understanding of the role that certain behavioural, cognitive and emotional factors play in students' learning processes and social development, engagement in its most generic form contains an observable, action-oriented subtype (behavioural) and two internal ones (cognitive and affective). These three dimensions are seen as central to the quality and range of everyday human experience. Most early research considered them in

isolation, for instance, Schumann (1997) with his study on students' affective engagement in L2 acquisition. More recent publications view the dimensions as interconnected (e.g. Christenson et al., 2012; Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012; Philp & Duchesne, 2016) arguing that it is difficult to research and ascribe certain behaviour a student displays into only one facet of engagement. For instance, when students connect with their partner during pairwork, their behaviour can evolve from their awareness of the importance of rapport building for effective collaboration, i.e. engagement on the cognitive dimension. At the same time, their behaviour can be influenced by them liking their partner, i.e. engagement on the affective dimension. Thus, to apprehend the full complexity of students' engagement with tasks, so the argument goes, it is necessary to take into account more than one dimension.

With regard to behavioural engagement, the research literature focuses on attention and effort (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Mahatmya et al., 2012). Anderson (1975) was one of the first to describe behavioural engagement as a dichotomy: students can be engaged and demonstrate on-task behaviour or they can be disengaged and show off-task behaviour. Since the late 1980s, some studies, still relatively low in number, have moved away from this rather strict division to develop more valid measurements for a deeper, more differentiated understanding of students' behaviour. To study interactions between the dimensions of engagement, some recent research views engagement as a continuum that depends on the degree and the quality of participation (e.g. Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Mahatmya et al., 2012) and focuses more on indicators such as 'active involvement' and 'persistence'. It must be noted, however, that although attempts are made to measure behavioural engagement along the lines of a continuous sequence, so far, it only seems to work in longitudinal studies that aimed at measuring students' engagement across various developmental phases. In recent research, observations, teacher reports, student self-reports, interviews, and post-task questionnaires and surveys relating to participation and effort (Darr, 2012), e.g., "I take care that my homework is done properly" (p. 713), are used to measure behavioural engagement (also see Fredricks & McColskey, 2012; Philp & Duchesne, 2016). In addition, students' participation as reflected in the time they spent on-task has also been used as a measure (Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000; Gettinger & Walter, 2012; Mozgalina, 2015; Reeve, 2012). Quantity of talk is, in particular, operationalised in terms of speaker turn (Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000) and word counts (Samuda & Bygate, 2008). The limitation of this approach is that a high word count does not necessarily relate positively to productive or meaningful interaction. It could well be possible that many words result from uncooperative behaviour or lengthy monologues that do not require attention, concentration or effort.

In studies on cognitive engagement, focus is on internal processes such as sustained attention and mental effort (Helme & Clarke, 2001), often including self-regulation strategies. Broadly speaking, the cognitive dimension concerns those moments when students are mentally

absorbed in what they are learning. In a foreign language learning context, being cognitively engaged often implies students making a mental effort to achieve conceptual understanding of L2 content. However, due to a rather broad understanding of this dimension, there is quite some variety regarding empirical indicators. Outward manifestations of cognitive engagement during peer-interaction include justifying an argument, giving feedback and completing peer utterances. But indicators also concern monitoring and self-repair (Wolters & Taylor, 2012), the number of elaborative clauses and negotiation of meaning moves (Lambert & Zhang, 2019), gestures and facial expressions, private speech, and exploratory talk (see Barnes, 2008; Mercer & Dawes, 2008). Research instruments include recordings of interactions, lesson transcripts, teachers' and students' observations, retrospective questionnaires and interviews, e.g. see Early and Marshall (2008) and Gass and Mackey (2014), and Likert scale items addressing, in particular, students' mental effort and their application of learning strategies during task performance. For instance, "I pay attention in class" and "I take notice of the comments my teacher makes about my work" (Darr, 2012, p. 713).

In the literature, the affective dimension of engagement, also referred to as emotional engagement, relates to task-facilitating emotions such as enthusiasm, interest and enjoyment or task-withdrawing emotions such as anxiety and boredom. As regards pair and group work, feelings of belonging or exclusion as well as a sense of autonomy and purposefulness (Baralt et al., 2016) have been used as indicators of emotional engagement. Emotional engagement is mainly measured by self-reported affective responses (Lambert & Zhang, 2019); so far, however, the affective dimension has not received much attention in foreign language learning and teaching research.

In this connection, it is important to mention that recent studies (Aubrey, 2017; Lambert & Zhang, 2019; Phung, 2017) suggest social engagement as a fourth dimension. These studies refer to a model of task engagement proposed by Philp and Duchesne (2016), which is based on previous work by Christenson et al. (2012). In the Philp and Duchesne model, the social dimension concerns the social and affective processes that take place during group work. Indicators such as 'listen to one another' and 'provide each other with feedback' are used to reflect, in particular, the cooperative behaviour students display when working together on a task. Building on the argument that peer interaction is by its very nature a social activity, the question arises what distinguishes students' social or collaborative behaviour from other types of pair behaviour in a communicative foreign language learning context. In other words, which other behaviour that conveys active participation in group work might students display? In addition, groundbreaking studies on patterns of peer-interaction (e.g. Damon & Phelps, 1989; Storch, 2002) describe the social interactions students engage in during pair group work as an essential part of their collaborative behaviour when completing a task successfully. The

few critical notes mentioned in the literature (e.g. see Svalberg, 2021, p. 42) are mainly limited to raising awareness that there is a conceptual overlap between the social and behavioural dimension in the Philip and Duchesne model. However, it should be mentioned that social aspects of learning such as building rapport and maintaining constructive working relationships with peers do not only intertwine with indicators of the behavioural dimension. How students engage with each other socially involves and requires the cognitive and affective dimensions as well.

Apart from the empirical problems that may arise when indicators cannot be classified transparently in the 'right' category, conceptualising social engagement as a separate dimension is not entirely consistent with other analyses. Social engagement concerns a highly relevant aspect of language learning and task processing, and is in this respect similar to, e.g., 'agentive engagement' (Reeve, 2012), 'engagement in virtual reality narratives' (Mills, 2021) or 'prosocial engagement' (Fukuda et al., 2021). Considering these studies, it is difficult to provide a theoretical justification for adding social engagement as a separate dimension and not doing the same for other types of engagement such as 'agentive' or 'prosocial' engagement. Studying types of engagement through a behavioural, cognitive and attitudinal lens allows researchers to study students' social interactions from a more differentiated perspective. Fredricks and McColskey's (2012) extensive comparative analysis of measurements of engagement provides strong theoretical and empirical support for a tripartite conceptualisation of task engagement including a behavioural, a cognitive and an affective dimension. In view of all this, the addition of an 'extra' dimension that captures students' social behaviour, their cognitive relationships with others and their socioemotional attitudes seems undesirable. As regards 'social engagement', my own two-layered approach differs from the one proposed by Philp and Duchesne (2016) by combining a tripartite model of task engagement qualities with a model of task performance (TP) parameters (see 4.3 and 4.4).

4.2 | Task processing from a social constructivist perspective

It seems natural to evaluate students' task processing through the eyes of the teacher or pedagogical content producer who authored the task along with instructions and criteria of successful completion. But is it safe to assume that individual students working on a specific task always realise it in the same way? The research literature tells us that the activities they engage in when carrying out a task can vary from student to student and also within individual students on different occasions (see Breen, 1987; Foster, 1998; Hosenfeld, 1976). Students' task activities result from task instructions, but how these instructions are interpreted and turned into activities is yet another and often a quite individual story.

To shed light on task engagement, it is important to describe and explain the complex processes of task realisation from an internally oriented perspective on the student as the principal agent of carrying out the task. Informed by a social constructivist view on language learning (see Chapter 2.4), task processing can be described as a complex process of creative construction in which students are in charge when processing a task (also see Kohn's work (2018b) concerning ownership of English). According to this understanding, students' task processing requires them to create their own version of the task in their minds, hearts and behaviour. When confronted with a foreign language learning task, students create their own inward reality of the task by asking themselves questions like 'What kind of task am I faced with?' and 'What is the relevance of this task for my learning?'. Although creating their own version of a task at hand seems like a rather individualistic endeavour, this process of creative construction does not take place in a void. Without exception, the process of constructing an inward reality of the task is embedded in a broader social and pedagogical context. Social factors such as the teacher, peers and the setting in which the task is carried out influence how students perceive the task and its worth for their personal L2 development. Being the principal agent of carrying out the task implies that students own the task. From a social constructivist perspective, making a task one's own is not a matter of choice. Simply by carrying out the task, whether they like it or not, students become owners and it is up to them to carry out the task in a way they seem fit for their learning. It is important, however, to keep in mind that not all students are always aware of and make use of the full learning potential of the task. Task appropriation is always both enabled and limited by how the students understand the task and its pedagogical value. It should be emphasized that how students take ownership of the task is determined by the degree and focus of their participation in the creative process of task construction. In other words, the type of effort students invest in carrying out the task reflects the way in which they make it their own.

When carrying out a task, students activate a wealth of prior experiences, task-related knowledge and attitudes as well as their personal requirements of task success. These factors shape their own internal reality of the task guided by what they deem necessary for successful task completion. Students' personal requirements of task success concern what they consider to be important when carrying out a certain task; and, more often than not, they adapt their requirements to the respective communicative situation. These requirements reflect underlying assumptions and ideas of what is necessary for successful task completion. For students participating in intercultural virtual exchange, requirements of task success may concern, for instance, being able to solve task-related technological problems, understand their partner, communicate ideas and opinions effectively, speak fluently, establish a relationship with their partner, use appropriate task-related vocabulary, or cooperate while performing the task. From

a social constructivist perspective, task success is achieved when students carry out the task in compliance with their requirements of task success. In other words, students are successful in completing the task to the extent that they are able to meet their requirements and thus take ownership in a way that contributes to their learning.

In this connection, as mentioned above, it needs to be emphasized that students' task processing is always embedded in a social context, in which they interact with their peers and teachers in classroom and/or online activities. For instance, when students are confronted with a task that is too complex for them to handle on their own, the degree and manner of support they receive from their partner can influence the way in which they make it their own. Hence, how students take ownership of the task may be different from what they had initially envisioned. This also implies that students do not always apply their personal requirements of task success, they also have to deal with their peers' requirements. For instance, when students participate in group work, they are confronted with their peers' requirements and these might differ from the ones they had envisioned for themselves. The way in which students carry out the task can vary from student to student and pair to pair and this holds implications for how they take charge of the task. Collaborative task processing involves becoming aware of each other's requirements of task success as well as negotiating a common ground of requirements for successful task completion among all partners involved. These processes of negotiation are a means of constructing a shared interpretation of the task instruction and establishing what needs to be done to carry out the task successfully.

As regards the teacher-student relationship, a common ground of requirements of task success is more complicated to achieve. While students' negotiations take place on an equal footing, this is not the case in a teacher-student relationship. In the end, it is the teacher who has the pedagogical authority and responsibility to set the task requirements. It is up to the teacher to find a good balance between ensuring that students manage to comply with them and, simultaneously, give students sufficient autonomy to adapt the task to their own needs, i.e. to reach their personal requirements of task success. It is important that students get the room they need to take charge of the task in a way that enables them to meet their requirements. If not, task success will be difficult, if not impossible to achieve. If, for instance, students' requirement is to speak fluently, then one way of achieving this would be to speak as much as possible. In a group task in which not a lot of speaking opportunities arise, going beyond task instructions and addressing other topic-related or personal issues might be one way of practising fluency in the target language. Thus, from a social constructivist perspective, successful task realisation is about teachers enabling students to make use of their available resources and capabilities to make the task their own. When doing so, it is important to provide students with space and support to negotiate and set individual learning goals within

the broader pedagogical context set by the teacher and the syllabus. In this connection, it is important to note that a teacher's requirements can only be effective for learning to the extent that they become part of the students' requirements. Unresolved divergences between teacher and student regarding requirements of task success will most likely lead to unsuccessful task completion. Thus, requirements of task success need to be open to situational transformation and collaborative negotiation and, ideally, teaching should aim at achieving a balance between teachers' and students' ideas and perceptions of what constitutes good language learning.

Depending on the pedagogical contexts, educational policies and/or teachers' views on what good language learning entails might block students' taking ownership in a way that suits their learning purposes. Therefore, task processing cannot be understood apart from the pedagogical context in which it is embedded and, as a result, depending on the way in which the teacher sets instructions and guides students, some learning contexts offer more emancipatory potential than others. Students need to feel that they have the right to take charge of the task in a way that contributes to reaching their requirements of task success. To achieve this, the teacher has to allow them to claim ownership and to perceive themselves, in reference to Kohn's (2018b) 'emancipated non-native speaker', as natural owners of the task. Following this social constructivist line of thought, it seems obvious that the way students realise a task is guided by their requirements of task success. Encouraging students to take ownership does not mean they are licenced to carry out a task without constraints. Task ownership can take the shape of an undesirable individualistic endeavour when not pedagogically guided by the teacher. However, taking an inward perspective on task processing implies that it is inevitable that activities differ from one student to the other. This needs to be accounted for pedagogically. A social constructivist perspective not only helps us to understand how students carry out foreign language learning tasks, it also offers us a lens through which we can view students' engagement with a task.

4.3 | The three qualities of task engagement

Throughout the research literature, engagement has been discussed in relation to the effort students invest when carrying out a task. Up to this point, however, the term 'effort' has been used in engagement literature in a rather broad sense. For the field to move forward, a growing number of scholars argue for a clear distinction between the kinds of effort that constitute engagement (e.g. see Fredricks & McColskey, 2012). So far, no attention has been given to the special kinds of effort necessary for students to engage in the complex process of task realisation. This includes, in particular, behavioural effort, i.e. the work that is done when carrying out a task and mastering its content, cognitive effort concerning understanding a task and its purpose, and attitudinal effort relating to liking a task and being interested in it.

Building on insights from previous research (e.g. Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012) and social constructivist views on task processing, I define task engagement as the special effort students invest in carrying out a task guided by their requirements of task success. To give an example, a student's requirement profile might include establishing a relationship with peers. When carrying out the task an effort could be made to show a sincere interest in one's partner's personal life by, e.g., giving the other room to share information and asking deepening questions. It should be noted, however, that more effort does not necessarily lead to more task success. For instance, if a student does not have the competence to perform a task, the task will, regardless of the amount of effort that is put into task realisation, not be completed successfully.

According to a social constructivist understanding, I argue that students engage in task processing in a holistic fashion, i.e. with their 'hands', their 'minds' and their 'hearts'. This motivates and justifies a tripartite conceptual model according to which task engagement has behavioural, cognitive and attitudinal qualities. It should always be borne in mind that these are the constitutive qualities of being engaged and are, as such, always present. They closely interact when students' actually carry out a task and make it their own. It is important to note that these qualities do not exist in isolation from each other. In the following paragraphs, I will explicate the three complementary quality dimensions in keeping with the 'special effort' nature of task engagement.

regard to its behavioural dimension, in reference to the 'hands' metaphor, task engagement concerns what students actually do when carrying out a task. Students who are behaviourally engaged make a special effort to participate actively and to encourage and support their partners to do the same. Indicators of behavioural engagement may include, for instance, checking one's technological infrastructure, attending to the task instructions, making arrangements for meeting each other, practicing avatar moves, reading the learning station boards, responding to questions, contributing to the discussion, and prompting partners to say something. Evidence may be based on performance observations and recordings as well as on participant reports in student diaries or interviews.

With regard to its cognitive dimension, in reference to the 'mind' metaphor, task engagement concerns the special effort students invest when aiming to understand the task and its pedagogical purpose, to address arising problems and challenges, and to develop a sense of task ownership. This involves students analysing and trying to improve on their own and their partners' shortcomings. It should be emphasised that task understanding is always strongly influenced by the students' conception of 'good' language learning and their requirements of task success. The 'special effort' nature of cognitive engagement is most apparent in problem-solving activities, which generally require deeper, more thorough and more creative ways of

knowledge processing. Indicators of the cognitive quality of task engagement can be found in how students reflect on their own and their partners' task understanding, on the problems they are facing and on issues with regard to making the task their own. Evidence might be gained from the students' introspective comments in worksheets, student diaries, or post-task focus groups and interviews. In addition, asking questions, giving an explanation or providing a simplified paraphrase may serve as performance manifestations of underlying thought processes.

With regard to its attitudinal dimension, in reference to the 'heart' metaphor, task engagement concerns the special effort students invest when using one's attitudinal endowment when carrying out a task and this presupposes learners noticing their own and their partner's weak attitudes and trying to improve on them. In this connection, it is helpful to distinguish between two broad types of attitudes. Emotional-attitudinal engagement is about liking the task and certain aspects of it such as the technology used or the topics discussed. Cognitive-attitudinal engagement is about being interested in the task and about the readiness to take it seriously. Evidence might be available from students' exclamations and remarks during the interaction (e.g. "This is great!" or "I'm eager to learn more about the topic") or from introspective comments in worksheets, student diaries, or post-task focus groups and interviews.

It should be emphasized that the behavioural, cognitive and attitudinal qualities of engagement can only be understood in interaction with each other and in regard to the effect on task engagement as a whole. To strengthen research results and do justice to the complementary dimensions of task engagement and their interactions, it is important to combine multiple qualitative methods that disclose indicators and evidence on each dimension in a valid way (also see Davis et al., 2011 on the Multiple Method approach). Using a variety of qualitative methods also corresponds to the students' possibly varying communicative preferences. Some of them might feel more comfortable in a face-to-face interview whereas others prefer to write about what they did, thought or felt in a reflective worksheet.

It is also important to keep in mind that from a social constructivist perspective, it is not possible that students are not engaged. By simply carrying out the task, they engage with it. This conceptualisation of task engagement differs from most conceptualisations in the literature that build on people's every-day notion of being engaged in terms of the extent of their active participation in the communication. As such, task engagement as conceptualised in this chapter is always there and does not lend itself to measurement on ascending quantitative scales that move from less to more engaged behaviour, cognition and attitude, or the other way around. Hence, 'measuring' task engagement should not be about labelling the degree of involvement in terms of being more or less engaged with a task. Instead, taking a social

constructivist perspective on task processing implies that research attention should go to studying *how* students engage with a task and draw pedagogical conclusions from that.

Consequently, I argue for a methodological approach that allows researchers to combine multiple qualitative methods to better understand how students engage with tasks. Taking this approach ensures that the research focus does not drift away from the kind of activities students put a special effort in when engaging with the task and making it their own. To illustrate how multiple qualitative methods can be applied when identifying manifestations of students' task engagement on the three quality dimensions, an additional set of seven characteristic task aspects relevant for successful task completion in a contemporary foreign language learning context will be discussed in the upcoming section.

4.4 | Task Performance parameters

As engagement does not emerge in a void, it always has an object (Hiver et al., 2021; Svalberg, 2009). In this section, I describe the concept of task (i.e. the object of engagement on a macro research level) with regard to its situated characteristic aspects (i.e. the objects of engagement on a micro research level), such as, for instance, the task's topic or the technology. These characteristic aspects are described as the task elements students' special effort is directed to, for instance, students make an effort to actively use the task's technology. Which aspects are characteristic differs according to the type of task and the environment in which it is realised, e.g. whether it requires learners to use video communication, avatar interaction in a virtual world, text chat or face-to-face activities.

In this section, I specify and illustrate a set of TP parameters, capturing those aspects deemed relevant for successful task completion. Considering the 'TeCoLa' nature of the tasks used in the exchanges (also see Chapter 3.3), the model of task engagement with its three quality dimensions of behavioural, cognitive and attitudinal engagement is not sufficient to study how students engage with an online intercultural communication task in all its complexity. To better understand what students do, think and feel during task realisation, we need specific information concerning their engagement with learning activities on the level of a specific task aspect. In this connection, studying task engagement with regard to certain task aspects also offers insights for teachers to develop pedagogical measures that help students to focus on meaningful pedagogical task activities with their minds, their hearts and their hands and develop their knowledge, skills and attitude accordingly. Therefore, I introduce an additional model of the following seven TP parameters: Task Appropriation, Task Management, Topic & Content, Language, Partner Orientation, Communicative Participation and Technology (see Figure 3).

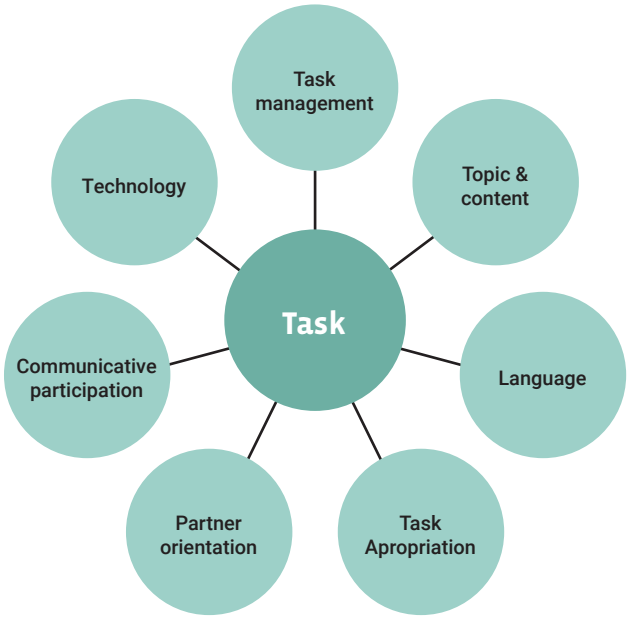


Figure 3 | Seven Task Performance parameters for successful task completion

In this connection, it should be emphasized that these seven TP parameters do not come from the engagement literature but emerged from the empirical data in a bottom up fashion or, as referred to in Chapter 5, by taking a 'light' Grounded Theory (GT) approach (Charmaz, 2006); also see Chapter 5.4 on the development of the TP parameter model. In the course of the data analysis, it became evident that the above-mentioned TP parameters captured the most salient task activities students engaged in when carrying out a task under virtual PLF conditions.

Since the TP parameters refer to task aspects whose handling is assumed to determine task success, they are highly suitable for identifying and analysing the behavioural, cognitive and attitudinal peaks and dips in students' engagement when carrying out a task. In other words, task engagement is usually not equally intensive and stable throughout the various phases of a task and across all TP parameters. For a differentiated account, it is thus helpful to focus the engagement analysis on selected TP parameters and interactions between them. Observations concerning student's engagement with a given task in general are arguably too unspecific for useful pedagogical measures. For this reason, describing how students engage with a task in connection with characteristic task aspects is considered more relevant and helpful for drawing pedagogical conclusions.

Two types of empirical evidence can be considered: (a) performative evidence, i.e. certain characteristics of the students' communicative and behavioural performance that can be

interpreted as being linked to the task parameter under consideration, and (b) introspective evidence available from, e.g., worksheet entries filled in during the exchange or focus group discussions and reflective interviews conducted as post-task activities. It is important to keep in mind that evidence can be observed before, during and after task realisation. When discussing students' task engagement with regard to TP parameter X, it is also important to keep in mind that the qualities of behaviour, cognition, and attitude do not exist in isolation from each other. They are complementary and closely intertwined, and, depending on the parameter, they may be manifested more or less strongly. At this point, however, it should also be emphasized that although the TP parameter model is designed for studies that aim at better capturing and understanding students' engagement with tasks, it can also be applied to other task-based studies where the research focus is not on engagement.

As described in section 4.1, an increasing number of researchers in the field argue for the addition of a fourth dimension that captures students' social relationships and interactions during collaborative communication. Although it is indeed important to acknowledge the social dimension of language learning in a model of engagement, awareness has also been raised towards the theoretical-empirical shortcomings of models that include it as a separate dimension of engagement (e.g. Svalberg, 2021). Against this background, I propose a two-layered approach that involves a three-dimensional model of task engagement qualities and a model of TP parameters. The approach recognizes the importance of social interactions in fostering the kind of engagement that leads to learning (also see Fredricks et al., 2016), but at the same time, avoids some of the problems researchers run into. By its very nature, the two-layered approach enables researchers to focus on a particular aspect of the task (layer 1) and study students' actual activities through a three-dimensional lens (layer 2). This approach differs from those used in the literature in that it does not place students' social involvement in a task on the same conceptual level as a constitutive quality of engagement. Taking a two-layered approach makes it possible to study and talk about students' social engagement with tasks, along with other types of engagement, in a more transparent and differentiated way which ultimately contributes to a better understanding of task engagement.

At this point, it is note-worthy that the two-layered approach was used in this study to explore how students engaged with their tasks (also see Chapter 5 for a more thorough discussion on its implementation). This also means that the three-dimensional model of task engagement was used to analyse 'social engagement' under the conceptual umbrella of the TP parameter Partner Orientation (see 4.4.7). Accordingly, social engagement is not seen in this study as a separate quality of task engagement but studied as one of the task elements students' engage with with their minds, hearts and hands when carrying out a task.

4.4.1 Task Appropriation

Students' engagement regarding the TP parameter Task Appropriation concerns the effort they invest while making the task their own. This involves discovering its relevance and suitability for their own needs, purposes and desires. In this connection, the students may feel the need to go beyond the instructions as a way of establishing their own requirements of task success.

On the behavioural dimension, students' engagement shows, in particular, in what they are doing when questioning, and going beyond the task instructions and the thematic focus of the task. Relevant performance indicators include ignoring task instructions (e.g. We are not going to take notes'), or focusing on content beyond the instructions. While evidence is not always directly observable in the online meeting, evidence can also be found in post-task reports.

On the cognitive dimension, students' engagement concerns whether they reflect on the relevance of task appropriation and evaluate their own engagement and ways of improving it. Cognitive engagement often shows in performative evidence of underlying thought processes such as commenting on instructions, asking if one's partner has the same understanding of the task, talking about the purpose of the task and making adjustments to the task instructions (e.g. 'Shall we look for more information on how they deal with waste in other countries outside the EU?'). Valuable insights can also be gained from introspective evidence available in, e.g., reflective interviews.

On the attitudinal dimension, students' engagement concerns their emotional and cognitive-attitudinal orientation, i.e. whether they like to appropriate (part of) the task or are seriously interested in it. Performative evidence includes statements like 'this is fun' or 'I'm really happy with the result'. Introspective evidence might be found in reflective diaries and interviews.

4.4.2 Task Management

Students' engagement regarding the TP parameter Task Management concerns the effort they invest in preparing for the task before the exchange and procedures they carry out during and after task realisation.

On the behavioural dimension, students' engagement shows, in particular, in what they are doing when managing the task. Relevant evidence concerning task preparation includes familiarizing oneself with instructions, worksheets and deadlines, downloading, installing and testing technology in advance, arranging a meeting, and reaching agreement on who takes notes. Regarding task procedure, evidence includes clarifying instructions, providing support with technical problems, note-taking and worksheets, or discussing how to approach a follow-up task. This evidence is not always directly observable in the online exchange; evidence can also be found in post-task reports.

On the cognitive dimension, students' engagement concerns whether they reflect on the relevance of task preparation and task procedure, and evaluate their own engagement and ways of improving it. Cognitive engagement concerning task management often shows in performative evidence of underlying thought processes such as saying how one interprets the instructions, commenting on the order in which procedural activities should be carried out and talking about underlying reasons for turn-taking. Valuable insights can also be gained from introspective evidence available in, e.g., reflective interviews. This includes reflecting on strategies such as note-taking or using Google translator.

On the attitudinal dimension, students' engagement concerns their emotional and cognitive- attitudinal orientation, i.e. whether they like preparing for the task and following task procedure or are seriously interested in it. Performative evidence includes statements like 'I like to know what needs to be done', 'I have organisational skills!', 'I take these preparatory activities seriously' or 'Let's do our best to solve these audio problems'. Introspective evidence might be found in reflective worksheets, diaries and interviews.

4.4.3 Technology

Students' engagement regarding the TP parameter Technology concerns the effort they invest in exploiting the respective task technology to the best of their ability.

On the behavioural dimension, students' engagement shows, in particular, in what they are doing when using a tool or technological environment. Relevant performative evidence include exploring the virtual world, checking out the functionalities of buttons, interactive boards and avatars, using a tool to draw pictures of things they cannot translate or explain in the L2, or creating links to Google documents to support effective group work. While evidence is not always directly observable in the online meeting, evidence can also be found in post-task reports.

On the cognitive dimension, students' engagement concerns whether they reflect on the relevance of the technology used, and evaluate their own engagement and improve on their technological skills. Their cognitive engagement often shows in performative evidence of underlying thought processes such as finding solutions for arising challenges, discussing how to improve on their technical skills and commenting on the pedagogical opportunities technology offers for learning. Valuable insights can also be gained from introspective evidence available in, e.g., reflective interviews.

On the attitudinal dimension, students' engagement concerns their emotional and cognitive-attitudinal orientation, i.e. whether they like the technology used or are seriously interested in it. Performative evidence on the emotional-attitudinal level includes showing excitement that the tools work, feeling comfortable in the environment, enjoying experimenting with the avatar

and being enthusiastic about the affordances of a tool, e.g. 'This is nice' or 'I love it'. On the cognitive-attitudinal level, performative evidence includes statements like 'It's interesting to see how you can record and listen back to your own voice'. Introspective evidence might be found in reflective worksheets, diaries and interviews.

4.4.4 Topic & Content

Students' engagement regarding the TP parameter Topic & Content concerns the effort they invest in understanding the topic discussed and the content presented in the learning environment. It should be mentioned that in the context of intercultural virtual exchange, most, if not all, topics concern global issues such as waste avoidance and climate change or cultural critical incident topics. Critical incidents in intercultural communication are brief descriptions of situations in which a misunderstanding, problem, or conflict arises as a result of the cultural differences of the interacting parties, or a problem of cross-cultural adaptation and communication (Apedaile & Schill, 2008).

On the behavioural dimension, students' engagement shows, in particular, in what they are doing to deepen their topic-related knowledge and content processing. Relevant performance evidence include searching information on the topic, asking topic-related questions, comparing opinions on the topic, and checking topic facts on the Internet. While introspective evidence is not always directly observable in the online meeting, evidence can also be found in post-task reports.

On the cognitive dimension, students' engagement concerns whether they reflect on the relevance of the topic and how it is presented, and evaluate their own engagement and ways of improving it. Their cognitive engagement often shows in performative evidence of underlying thought processes such as checking if their partner has understood the topic, talking about strategies for improving topic-knowledge, and commenting on coverage and depth of topic and content-related discussions, e.g. 'I've just read a blog on the topicality of climate change' or 'I think these pictures help us to understand the video better'. Valuable insights can also be gained from introspective evidence available in, e.g., reflective interviews.

On the attitudinal dimension, students' engagement concerns their emotional and cognitive-attitudinal orientation, i.e. whether they like the topic and content and are seriously interested in it. Performative evidence includes being enthusiastic when discussing the topic and displaying openness towards partner's opinions on the topic. Introspective evidence might be found in reflective worksheets, diaries and interviews.

4.4.5 Language

Students' engagement regarding the TP parameter Language concerns the effort they invest in addressing linguistic-communicative challenges and involves issues of languaging in

connection with developing their topic-related vocabulary, as well as phrases and collocations (regarding the concept of languaging see Chapter 2).

On the behavioural dimension, students' engagement shows, in particular, in what they are doing when they pay attention to the language they are using in the communicative exchanges. Relevant performance evidence includes discussing the plural form of a verb, explaining difficult words, looking up topic-related vocabulary (e.g. using Google translator), checking comprehension, paraphrasing, repeating difficult words out loud or asking for feedback on pronunciation. While evidence is not always directly observable in the online meeting, evidence can also be found in post-task reports.

On the cognitive dimension, students' engagement concerns whether they reflect on the relevance of processes of language-related and communication-related problem-solving, and evaluate their own engagement and ways of improving it. Their cognitive engagement often shows in performative evidence of underlying thought processes such as commenting on how to learn topic-related vocabulary and talking about opportunities of languaging for learning. Valuable insights can also be gained from introspective evidence available in, e.g., reflective interviews when students comment on their language performance and think about how to express themselves better.

On the attitudinal dimension, students' engagement concerns their emotional and cognitive-attitudinal orientation, i.e. whether they like attending to linguistic-communicative issues and trying to cope with the problems and challenges arising or are seriously interested in it. Performative evidence includes being excited when discussing which form is best or being satisfied when providing support with word finding problems or being interested in solving linguistic-communicative challenges. Introspective evidence might be found in reflective worksheets, diaries and interviews.

4.4.6 Communicative Participation

Students' engagement regarding the TP parameter Communicative Participation concerns the effort they invest in participating in communicative activities during task realisation.

On the behavioural dimension, students' engagement shows, in particular, in how much writing and speaking time students spent during task realisation. Relevant performance indicators include the number of utterances and turns used in the exchange.

On the cognitive dimension, students' engagement concerns whether they reflect on the relevance of contributing actively to peer interaction and evaluate their own engagement and ways of improving it. Cognitive engagement often shows in performative evidence of underlying thought processes such as commenting on the actual time spent on writing and speaking as

in statements like 'Come on, we should speak more'. Valuable insights can also be gained from introspective evidence available in, e.g., reflective interviews.

On the attitudinal dimension, students' engagement concerns their emotional and cognitive-attitudinal orientation, i.e. whether they like to participate actively in communicative activities or are seriously interested in it. Performative evidence includes positively commenting on time spent communicating, e.g. 'We did well!'. Introspective evidence might be found in reflective worksheets, diaries and interviews.

4.4.7 Partner Orientation

Students' engagement regarding the TP parameter Partner Orientation concerns the effort they invest in establishing and deepening a relationship with their communication partners for the purpose of strengthening the interaction. As such, it addresses the social aspects of language learning and involves students demonstrating flexibility, a cooperative attitude and empathetic rapport. It should be emphasized that showing empathetic rapport is not the same as displaying feelings of sympathy. Being empathetic requires students to make an effort to understand their communication partner instead of passively accepting their input. Furthermore, given the international character of virtual exchange, Partner Orientation in this context requires students to apply the above in an intercultural context where clarifying and negotiation of meaning of cultural rituals and issues are essential components of intercultural collaboration.

On the behavioural dimension, students' engagement shows, in particular, in what they are doing when establishing a relationship. Relevant performance indicators include operating one's avatar to walk side by side with the partner's avatar, paying attention to what the partner is saying, providing and accepting support and feedback, giving compliments, using comprehension checks and production prompts (e.g. 'Am I going too fast?' or 'What do you think?'), rephrasing and simplifying, expressing comprehension confirmation (e.g. 'I understand') or doing a head nod. Although body language is often limited in a virtual world environment, evidence may include the avatar's head nods and waving arms. While evidence is not always directly observable in the online meeting, evidence can also be found in post-task reports.

On the cognitive dimension, students' engagement concerns whether they reflect on the relevance of strengthening the interaction with their partners and evaluate their own engagement and ways of improving it. Cognitive engagement often shows in performative evidence of underlying thought processes such as commenting on the importance of developing a relationship with a partner. Valuable insights can also be gained from introspective evidence available in, e.g., reflective interviews such as students reflecting on teamwork, e.g. 'I wouldn't have come this far without my partner's help'.

On the attitudinal dimension, students' engagement concerns their emotional and cognitive-attitudinal orientation, i.e. whether they like to strengthen the interaction with their communication partner(s) or are seriously interested in it. Performative evidence includes commenting positively on working together with their partner (e.g. 'I like to do this with you!), saying that they feel comfortable with their partner, and asking if the partner feels comfortable as well (e.g. 'Are you okay?'). Introspective evidence might be found in reflective worksheets, diaries and interviews.

When participating in an exchange, the constellation of TP parameters students engage with when carrying out the task can vary from student to student and pair to pair, which holds implications for the way in which they make the task their own. Based on a social constructivist understanding of task engagement, I argue that the way students engage with a constellation of certain TP parameters with their attitudes, their cognition and their behaviour constitutes how they take ownership of the task. In other words, the way in which students engage with the task in relation to relevant TP parameters characterizes their task ownership profile. This implies that different pair exchanges are characterized by their specific task ownership profiles of which some are more beneficial to learning in a foreign language learning context than others.

4.5 | Conclusion

While there is a growing body of work on student engagement in general, a good understanding of students' engagement with tasks in a foreign language learning and teaching context and adequate ways to measure it are missing. So far, no attention has been given to the special kinds of effort necessary for the students to engage in the complex process of task realisation in terms of the work that is done when carrying out a task and mastering its content, understanding a task and its purpose, and efforts relating to liking a task and being interested in it. To better understand students' engagement in tasks and its influence on language learning, scholars argue for research that explores task engagement in all its multidimensionality in contemporary foreign language learning contexts.

In this connection, I developed a three-dimensional conceptual model of task engagement that consists of a constitutive behavioural, a cognitive and an attitudinal quality of being engaged that closely interact when students carry out a task. The model is informed by an inwardly oriented social constructivist perspective on task processing according to which students are the principal agents in charge of making a task their own through both individual and collaborative processes of creative construction. From this perspective, task processing can only lead to learning when students engage with the task and make it their own in compliance with their requirements of task success. In addition, a model of seven TP parameters was introduced for the purpose of better capturing and studying the special

effort students invest with their minds, hearts and hands when engaging with tasks during intercultural virtual exchanges. As such, the parameters Task Appropriation, Task Management, Technology, Topic & Content, Language, Communicative Participation and Partner Orientation can be used to collect and categorize data during intercultural virtual exchange.

Against this backdrop, I proposed a two-layered approach that involves my three-dimensional model of task engagement qualities and the model of TP parameters. The two-layered approach enables researchers to focus on a particular aspect of the task (layer 1) and study students' actual activities through a three-dimensional lens (layer 2). According to this approach, social engagement is not seen as a separate quality of task engagement but studied as one of the task elements students' engage with with their minds, hearts and hands when carrying out a task. The approach enables researchers to study and report on students' social engagement with tasks in a more transparent and differentiated way. In addition, studying students' task engagement on the level of characteristic task aspects enables researchers and teachers to draw pedagogical conclusions and develop foreign language pedagogy that helps students to focus their effort on those task activities that are potentially relevant for learning.

The two-layered approach is used in the analysis and discussion chapters when reporting on what students do, what they think and how they feel during task realisation. In chapter 6, focus is on the analyses and discussions of the data 'by exchange'. As such, the way in which the participating student pairs engaged with the task is portrayed in relation to different constellations of TP parameters that manifested themselves as the most salient ones for understanding task engagement in virtual PLF communication. In Chapter 7, I report on the findings of a 'by TP parameter' analysis that focused on how all student pairs engaged with each individual TP parameter. It is in this connection, that I address what teachers can do to pedagogically mentor their students towards more desirable patterns of task engagement and ownership. However, before we move on to the actual implementation of the two-layered approach, Chapter 5 discusses the study's research methodology along with the procedures used to collect and analyse the empirical data from six intercultural virtual PLF exchanges in more detail.

CHAPTER 5

Case study design and implementation

To gain a better understanding of foreign language learners' task engagement in virtual pedagogical lingua franca (PLF) communication, six Dutch and German upper-secondary school student pairs who carried out an English language learning task in the TeCola Virtual World were followed. In this chapter, the study's research methodology is outlined with a particular emphasis on the implementation of the two-layered approach combining the three-dimensional model of task engagement with the TP parameter model. The approach was adopted to analyse the participating students' task engagement (a) by exchange across all TP parameters to identify possible patterns of task engagement and ownership (Chapter 6), and (b) by TP parameter across all exchanges to gain insights for pedagogical interventions (Chapter 7).

With this in mind, section 5.1 gives a recap of the five specific research objectives and discusses the rationale for an exploratory multiple case study that is based on six intercultural virtual exchanges. This is followed by section 5.2 in which detailed descriptions are provided of the teachers, their students and the pedagogical embedding of the learning station task that was carried out in the TeCoLa Virtual World. In section 5.3, the qualitative instruments and procedures that are used to get a better understanding of the participating students' task engagement in virtual PLF communication are discussed. This is followed by section 5.4 that discusses the ethical issues that have been taken into consideration during the research process.

5.1 | Objectives and rationale

The study's main focus is on getting a better understanding of task engagement in virtual PLF communication and its manifestations in intercultural virtual exchange. For this purpose, five specific research objectives have been described in Chapter 1, three of which have already been addressed in the previous chapter. To start with, the engagement literature was critically reviewed on the level of the learning activity and its essential elements were brought together in a coherent overview in Chapter 4.1 (research objective 1). Then, a description was given of my inwardly oriented social constructivist perspective on task processing in Chapter 4.2. This understanding informed the three-dimensional model of task engagement that was introduced in Chapter 4.3 to observe students' engagement with tasks (research objective 2). To collect data on the participating students' engagement, a model of seven task performance (TP) parameters was introduced in Chapter 4.4 (research objective 3). Combining the two models

in a two-layered approach allowed for a more differentiated analysis of task engagement both in terms of the behavioural, cognitive and attitudinal qualities involved and in terms of relevant task characteristics (e.g. topic, technology, partner orientation). The remaining two research objectives that are addressed in the upcoming chapters concern the data analyses and discussions of the intercultural pair exchanges (research objective 4) and their pedagogical implications (research objective 5).

Adopting an exploratory multiple case study approach (Small, 2009; Yin, 2014), six pairs of secondary school students that participated in intercultural virtual exchanges were followed. The decision for a case study approach is motivated by my research focus on aiming to understand how students engage with and take charge of a task in an authentic foreign language learning context (also see Duff, 2008; Yin, 2004). In addition, the choice for exploring multiple exchanges is driven by the ambition to study varying ways in which different pairs of students engage with and take charge of the same task in a holistic manner. This orientation is closely connected with my pedagogical interest in raising teachers' awareness of what is possible in online intercultural peer exchanges in terms of students' task engagement and ownership. Although the exchanges in this study are in some or more respects unique, they serve as examples of what is possible when secondary school students carry out a task under similar circumstances (also see Hammersley, 1992; Ragin & Becker, 1992). To offer their students effective pedagogical guidance, teachers need to be familiar with the possibilities of task engagement so that they can use their knowledge when designing, implementing and evaluating their own tasks. As Hoffstaedter and Kohn (2019) state in their article on monitoring for successful communication in pedagogical lingua franca (PLF) exchanges, "It is for the teachers to judge which of the attested possibilities are desirable in a given pedagogical context; and it is within the scope of their pedagogical competence and responsibility to make desirable possibilities actually happen" (p. 7).

In this connection, many studies in the field apply qualitative case study research to gain better insights on what does and what does not work when implementing virtual exchange in the foreign language classroom (Rienties et al., 2020). A study by Peterson et al. (2019) also revealed that the majority of studies in the field of foreign language learning and teaching that took place in a 3D virtual world environment were often small-scale case studies with a descriptive nature that applied either a mixed method or a qualitative approach with the latter being the most dominant one. An advantage of taking a multiple case study approach is that its design allows researchers to first conduct within-case analyses and give detailed descriptions of each case and salient themes that emerge during the exploration phase. Second, to provide input for the interpretative phase that is often overlooked in other types of case study research, the within-case analysis phase is often followed by a thematic analysis across all cases

(Creswell, 2014). Accordingly, the data from the six exchanges was analysed to study the participating students' task engagement (a) by exchange across all TP parameters to identify possible patterns of task engagement and ownership, and (b) by TP parameter across all exchanges to gain insights for pedagogical interventions.

5.2 | Participants

The two Dutch and German teachers who participated in the exchanges with their students were both experienced ELT teachers, but had not yet taken part in an intercultural virtual exchange. In the autumn of 2017, they individually joined TeCoLa and were paired up for their first TeCoLa pilot project which served as the preliminary study (2017-2018) for the actual PhD study that took place 6 months later (2018-2019). For the preliminary study, the teachers organised online intercultural exchanges for 8 Dutch and 8 German lower-secondary school ELT students, aged 13-14 (CEFR B1). To stimulate reciprocal interaction, the teachers had their students working together in pairs.

At the beginning of the pilot study, online workshops were organised to familiarize the teachers with Moodle, the video-communication environment BigBlueButton and the TeCoLa Virtual World. One of the TeCoLa coaches created an online classroom on the TeCoLa platform in Moodle, filled it with useful information and worksheets and created Moodle passwords for the participating teachers and their students. Although the teachers came up with the initial task ideas, the final design and implementation of the tasks took place in ongoing coaching collaboration with the Dutch PhD researcher and the two other German TeCoLa coaches that organised this pilot. During the exchanges, the teachers met on a regular basis online with their coaches to discuss task ideas, dates and deadlines, and kept in close contact with each other through WhatsApp and email. Although they met with their students during class, the teachers also created a WhatsApp group to contact them outside class hours.

In this pilot, the teachers could experience what it was like to participate with some of their students in an intercultural virtual exchange, work together, design and implement tasks for their students, and familiarise themselves with the affordances and the challenges of the technology. During the preliminary study, the idea for a conceptual model that reflected task aspects was born and suggestions for task performance parameters were shared between the PhD researcher and the other two TeCoLa coaches. In addition, instruments for data gathering were tested, e.g. the PhD researcher experimented with several formats of the reflective worksheet and conducted post-task group interviews to better understand what students did, what they thought and how they felt when carrying out tasks in BigBlueButton. One Dutch-German student-pair volunteered to carry out a learning station task on sports in the TeCoLa Virtual World. Their experiences, together with those of the German TeCoLa coach who set

things up and observed them, were used to sharpen up the learning station task on waste that was used in the PhD study. After this pilot, the teachers agreed to set up a new project in the following school year (2018-2019) for some of their upper-secondary students.

The twelve students who participated in the PhD study attended mainstream upper-secondary education in Germany and the Netherlands and joined the TeCoLa project voluntarily with their teachers and classmates. They were primarily focused on the opportunity to experience authentic communication with a peer from a different cultural background and to develop their oral interaction skills and ICC. The TeCoLa activities the students participated in were extensions of regular classroom practice; e.g. the technical briefings and workshops, and additional in-class pre- and post-task activities took place in small groups during the obligatory English classes. Throughout the exchanges, English was used as a PLF (also see Kohn, 2018a). The tasks used in this study were all communication-oriented tasks in which the students were prompted to either get to know each other or discuss topics from an intercultural perspective together with their partner. Consequently, their patterns of task engagement and ownership could not be described properly without reference to their partner's engagement (also see Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000). Therefore, along with the methodological and pedagogical motives described above for exploring multiple exchanges, the students' task engagement and ownership profiles were mapped within the context of the pair exchange in which they participated. Table 1 shows that in each exchange (E), the task was carried out by a pair (NL-DE) that differed from the other pairs in composition either in terms of age, gender or proficiency. Of the twelve students that participated in the exchanges, five students were 16, six were 17 and one student was 18 years old. They were randomly paired up in two female-female, one male-male and three male-female constellations. Furthermore, it is interesting to mention that their English speaking proficiency had been assessed in the classroom prior to the project and varied between A2 and C1 (CEFR, 2001).

Concerning case selection, it should be mentioned that all twelve students participated in the project voluntarily with either a need or a desire to practice and improve on their personal, collaborative and intercultural communicative skills. On this basis, it was expected that desirable patterns of task engagement would occur. In reality, patterns that did not contribute to students' learning were observed as well, but it should be emphasized that the exchanges in which they occurred had not been selected on forehand with the aim to test the validity of the model of task engagement; also see Mahoney and Goertz (2004) on "positive" and "negative" case selection.

	Exchange 1: E1		Exchange 2: E2		Exchange 3: E3		Exchange 4: E4		Exchange 5: E5		Exchange 6: E6	
Students' reference	NL1	DE1	NL2	DE2	NL3	DE3	NL4	DE4	NL5	DE5	NL6	DE6
Nationality	Dutch	German & Irish	Dutch	German	Dutch	German	Dutch	German	Dutch	German	Dutch	German
Age	16	17	16	18	16	17	16	17	16	17	17	17
Gender Female (F) Male (M)	F	F	F	M	F	M	M	M	F	M	F	F
Proficiency CEFR (2001)	B2	C1	B1/2	B2	B2	A2/B1	B2	B1	B2	B1/B2	C1	C1

Table 1 | Overview of the six Dutch-German virtual pair exchanges.

5.3 | Tasks and pedagogical approach

A blended language learning approach was adopted which meant that the tasks the students carried out online were pedagogically embedded in activities in the physical classroom. Since meeting their peers from their home computers provided the privacy most students needed to communicate freely in the target language, most exchanges took place outside school hours. This happened with the exception of one German student (DE4) who accessed the learning station task from a computer at school because his internet connection at home did not offer enough bandwidth to access the TeCoLa Virtual World. Once a task was introduced and explained in class, the students got approximately 5 days to contact each other to set a date for the online meeting. The teachers kept track of the agreed time slots and sent their students reminders on WhatsApp.

The English course requirements at both the Dutch and German school stipulated that the students had to pass a speaking test at the end of their academic year. For the Dutch students this meant they had to give an in-class presentation on a self-chosen global issue in the target language and answer questions from an audience consisting of fellow students and their teacher of English. The German students had to discuss a given global issue together with a fellow student while being observed by their English teacher and a second assessor. It was the participating teachers' wish to make the students' TeCoLa experience as relevant as possible. Therefore, they designed the tasks in such a way that they could serve as preparatory activities for the final exam. At the same time, however, both teachers felt it was important to give their students the freedom they needed to carry out the tasks in compliance with their personal requirements of task success. In this connection, it should also be pointed out that although the assumption was that the pedagogical lingua franca condition would rather naturally invite the students to focus on issues such as getting to know each other and making themselves understood, the PhD researcher was well aware that the students might nevertheless feel they had to attend to issues of accuracy and appropriateness in compliance with the existing school course requirements. Since these requirements could impact on the students' own requirements of task success, they could also influence the way in which the students would engage with and take ownership of the tasks.

This project consisted of three tasks: 1) a warm-up task in BigBlueButton, 2) a learning station task in the TeCoLa Virtual World, and 3) a self-chosen task in either BigBlueButton or the TeCoLa Virtual World. In preparation for the warm-up task (Task 1), the students familiarize themselves with the video chat room BigBlueButton and arrange a meeting with their foreign partner. To prepare their students for collaborative communication outside the familiar context of the face-to-face classroom, the teachers provided pedagogical support. In an in-class pre-task activity, both the Dutch and the German teacher raised their students'

awareness concerning the importance of rapport building. For instance, the Dutch teacher had her students build a mind map consisting of useful phrases to start and keep a conversation in English going. Furthermore, in preparation for the warm-up task, she moderated a classroom conversation in which the students discussed and wrote down things they could tell their partner about themselves and questions they could ask to get to know their partner better. Just before the meeting, the students filled in a pre-task worksheet based on open and closed questions designed to help them to prepare for the online conversation and think about their personal requirements of task success. Questions in the pre-task worksheet included 'What motivated you to participate in this online exchange and how do you expect to benefit from it?', 'What is important for you when you carry out this task?' and 'Do you expect to encounter any challenges or problems?' (see appendix A). During the exchange, the students had to get to know each other and practise their conversation skills by talking about themselves, listening to their partners and asking questions. After the exchange, the students had to answer two main questions in the post-task worksheet, i.e. 'What did you find out about your partner?' and 'Why does your partner participate in the exchange? How does this differ from your own motivation?' (see appendix B).

In order to carry out the learning station task (Task 2), the students had to visit the TeCoLa platform in Moodle and log in with their email and personalised password. Before the meeting, all students followed a TeCoLa Virtual World training in which they learnt how to operate their avatar and the interactive boards. The aim of this task was to negotiate opinions and come to an agreement while discussing environmental problems and potential measures that could be taken to avoid waste. The learning path on waste avoidance consisted of eight learning station boards that aimed at evoking discussions on the waste problem and possible solutions to avoid it. As the screenshots below reveal, the students had to discuss what they think would happen with the waste we produce and take notes (Board 1). At Board 2 the students had to watch the Youtube video *Trashed* which was about waste problems.

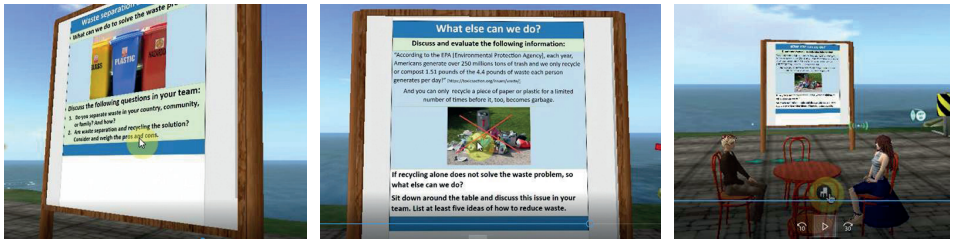
Board 1

Board 2

The following boards had the same set up; here the students were prompted to discuss video-related true or false statements. The central questions on the boards were 'How do we handle our waste?' (Board 3), 'Are we aware of our waste problem?' (Board 4), 'Are chemicals in the environment harmful?' (Board 5) and 'Will things change for the better?' (Board 6). Once they agreed on the answer they had to press an interactive button on the board (option A, B, C or D) and receive instant feedback. When the answer was right, a corresponding affirmative sound was audible, if not, a more negative sound signalled that an incorrect answer was given.

Board 3, 4, 5 and 6

At Board 7, they were asked to exchange personal experiences and opinions about waste. The two guiding questions they had to answer were: 'Do you separate waste in your country, community, or family? And how?' and 'Are waste separation and recycling the solution? Consider and weigh the pros and cons.' And finally, at Board 8, they sat around a table and had to think of five ideas, besides recycling, to avoid waste.



Board 7 and 8

During the exchange, the students filled in the Task 2 worksheet (see Appendix C). The worksheet consisted of a mixture of open-ended assignments that resembled those on the learning stations. Here the students could also write down their notes. After the exchange, they had to fill in the reflective part of the worksheet in which they self-assessed their performance. They had

to answer the following open questions: 'Have you managed to do the task the way you wanted to do it?', 'Did you manage to meet your requirements?', and 'Which communication problems did you encounter? How did you manage to solve them?'. Then, they had to upload the entire worksheet to the TeCoLa platform in Moodle.

In the final task (Task 3), the student-pairs could choose between a discussion task in BigBlueButton (Tasks 3a) and a learning station task on sports in the TeCoLa Virtual World (Task 3b). For the discussion task (see appendix D), they were given time to prepare for a conversation on a global issue. In the pre-task worksheet, the students had to think about what they should especially pay attention to when carrying out the task. Then, they had to structure their argument on either 'gun control', 'globalisation' or 'stereotypes in the media' and in relation to these topics search for relevant topic-related vocabulary. After that, they met with their partners in BigBlueButton for at least 15 minutes and had a conversation in which they shared and discussed pros and cons regarding the topic they had chosen. It is important to mention that this is the only task that set a minimum time; all the other tasks had no set time limits. After the exchange they filled in the reflective part of the worksheet and answered the following questions: 'Is there anything that went particularly well? Why?', 'Is there anything that you could have done better? Do you have any idea why you didn't do it?', 'In which ways were you engaged? What did you 'do', 'think' or 'feel'?', 'Why were you or weren't you engaged?', and 'I would have been more engaged if…' (also see appendix E). The aim of the learning station task on sports was to negotiate opinions and come to an agreement while discussing sports that were displayed on interactive boards in the TeCoLa Virtual World. Task 3b was also accompanied with a worksheet that students could use to take notes while doing the smaller tasks on the learning path (also see appendix F). Although all tasks prepared the students for their oral exam, the set-up of the discussion task in BigBlueButton (Task 3a) was identical to the German students' oral exam. To make the task equally relevant for her students, the Dutch teacher limited the choice of topics for the Dutch students' in-class presentations to those available for the discussion task.

This study focused on the empirical data of the learning station task that was carried out in the TeCoLa Virtual World (Task 2). In addition, the recordings and worksheets of the warm-up task in BigBlueButton (Task 1) along with the transcripts of two post-task 1 focus group interviews were used to compare and contrast students' task engagement between Task 1 and 2. The main aim of the focus groups was to gain insights on students' task engagement with the purpose to optimize pedagogical guidance during the implementation of Task 2. A few days after the students had met for the first time in BigBlueButton, the Dutch teacher and the PhD researcher organised two separate focus group sessions with four Dutch students each during the English lesson. These focus groups were used to get the students' introspection on

their and their partner's engagement with the warm-up task. In several rounds, the students were asked to answer questions about their experience with and attitudes towards the task in BigBlueButton. Meanwhile, their fellow students listened and could respond to what they had to say; also see Linstone and Turoff (2002) for an exposition of a focus group technique. Questions included 'What was important for you when carrying out the task?', 'Have you got the feeling that you got to know your partner?' and 'What did you do when you could not come up with the right word?'. The focus groups were carried out in the students' L1, recorded by the PhD researcher and transcribed.

5.4 | Instruments and procedures

To collect data on how the students engage with and take ownership of the learning station task under their exchange-specific conditions and to ensure a sufficiently differentiated understanding of their activities, multiple types of qualitative methods were used (also see Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The performative and introspective data were collected, in particular, through recording the exchanges, the reflective worksheets and semi-structured interviews. Together these research data were intended to portray what it was like for students to be in the virtual world and to catch the close-up reality and 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of their 'lived experiences' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 290). Data from the teachers' reflective interviews and the researcher's field notes were used to complete the picture. Before discussing the specific affordances of these instruments and the approach taken, I will first give a description of the development of the TP parameter model.

Early onwards in the preliminary study, it became clear that it would be difficult to study students' task engagement by looking at the data only through the lens of the three-dimensional model of task engagement. In line with a bulk of studies that can be traced back to Breen (1987), observations revealed that the same task instructions may easily lead to a variety of activities focussing on certain aspects of the respective task, e.g. technology, topic, or partner orientation. To better capture this variety, I decided to adopt a two-layered approach that would make it possible to study students' behavioural, cognitive and attitudinal task engagement in relation to certain task aspects deemed characteristic for doing tasks in an online intercultural context. The way in which the model was developed carries a strong resemblance with Charmaz' (2006) light version of the Grounded Theory method and is described below as part of the qualitative multiple method approach applied in this study.

The first step in the procedure was to record and analyse the performance data that concerned students' actual meetings in the TeCoLa Virtual World. When the students met in front of the first board, one of the TeCoLa coaches was present as an observing avatar to screencast their encounter. The resulting screencasts are computer screen recordings from

the position of the observer's avatar that capture the students' avatar movements in the virtual environment as well as their voice and chat interactions while carrying out the task. After all six pair-exchanges were recorded and transcribed, the PhD researcher watched the video recordings and noted down for each exchange what the students were actually doing when carrying out the task. These observations were made for each learning station board.

Next, a Google Sheet was designed with the aim to place the varying observed activities under broader classifications or categories. More specifically, the sheet consisted of eight categories that were assumed to capture all task-related activities the participating students would engage with when carrying out the learning station task, namely 'task management', 'task content', 'task collaboration', 'comprehension', 'production', 'languaging', 'rapport' and 'monitoring'. After a short general description of what happened at a learning station board, relevant data was placed in that category that best seemed to capture the essence of the activity the students undertook. For instance, observations that students 'took notes' or 'filled in their worksheets' were described as evidence concerning engagement with Task Management issues. To signal a student's effort to build rapport, a description of an episode in which a student showed solidarity was given and the transcription "Yeah, I know what you mean. It's a bit difficult" was added. In the final two columns of the sheet, the notes included reference to episodes that highlighted those instances in which the students participated actively, or could have participated more actively but neglected to do so. In addition, the notes also covered what the students did to encourage and support their partners to participate.

As "qualitative analysis emphasizes the importance of remaining open to what is in the data" (Roulston, 2014, p. 305), it should be mentioned that throughout this entire process an emergent coding approach was applied. In an emerging coding approach codes are drawn from recordings or text as the researcher interprets the data (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In other words, although ideas for categories were formulated in the preliminary study, inductive codes and themes arising from the recordings and transcripts were used to sharpen up the model of TP parameters. To secure intercoder agreement, the two other TeCoLa coaches separately followed the same approach while analysing the recordings. Then, the three of them compared notes, rewatched critical episodes together, and consolidated their findings. To come to precise and logical definitions of the parameters and guarantee conceptual validity, there were several rounds of going back and forth from the empirical data to the model. In this iterative process, the model of seven TP parameters that represented those aspects of the task that characterize how students carry out tasks in an online intercultural context was established (also see Chapter 4.4). Experimenting with varying 'draft versions' of this model also contributed to better understanding task engagement.

For the collection and analysis of the introspective data, reflective worksheets and semi-structured interviews were used; also see Dooly (2011) who reported on the relevancy of introspective student data to better understand how students process and engage with online intercultural communication tasks. Where the interaction analyses of the recorded meetings gave information on *what* the students did when carrying out the task, the introspective data provided insights on *how* the students perceived what they did and *why* they did or did not engage with certain task aspects. The data of the reflective worksheets was also used to find out if the students were satisfied with how they and their partners communicated and collaborated with each other during task realisation. For instance, the students had to think of challenges regarding understanding their partner, expressing themselves, being fluent and correct, and whether they had managed to create a positive and cooperative atmosphere, and fill in a Likert Scale the extent to which they were satisfied with their performance. Other questions concerned whether they did their best when communicating and collaborating with their partner and what they would do differently in a future exchange. By asking the students whether the activities they undertook complied with their requirements of task success, information was collected on how they made the task their own. The data in the reflective worksheets was also categorized per TP parameter. For instance, a student who was not completely satisfied with how he/she handled the topic-related discussions wrote that "do[ing] some research before meeting each other" (NL1) might have helped her to better reach her requirements of task success. This student comment provided evidence of her cognitive engagement regarding the TP parameter Topic & Content. Yet, although the recordings and reflective worksheets provided some insight into the students' engagement with the learning station task, complementary introspective data from the semi-structured interviews was necessary to draw more solid conclusions and establish possible patterns of task engagement and ownership.

The individual reflective student interviews were conducted within a week after the online exchanges. All interviews were conducted on the basis of a fixed set of open-ended questions and complemented by some exchange-specific questions intended to uncover the students' introspection on the effort they put in task processing (see appendix G). To structure the data analyses, the topics covered in the interviews were related to the TP parameters and concerned, for instance, topic-related and communicative issues, task preparation, the task's technology, and teamwork. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed the PhD researcher to address and discuss the topics rather naturally as they arose in the conversation. As the students were explicitly asked to recall, explain and reflect on their actions, thoughts and feelings, their answers gave more clarity on the underlying reasons for their behaviour during task realisation, and either strengthened or weakened the PhD researcher's preliminary assumptions with regard to the students' cognitive and attitudinal engagement regarding certain task aspects. All

interviews were conducted in the students' L1, recorded and transcribed. The Dutch students met with the PhD researcher at their school and the German students' interviews took place in BigBlueButton.

To complete the picture, the teachers participated in an interview at the end of the TeCoLa project. These interviews (see appendix H) were also semi-structured for the reasons outlined above and focussed on the teachers' perceptions of their students' participation in the task-related activities. This data was also used to better understand the individual students' motives to join the project. In the discussions, the following questions were addressed: 'How do you look back on this project?', 'What did the students tell you about the tasks they did?', 'How do you look back on their participation?', 'What can you tell me about their involvement in the tasks?', 'How did the students perform at the exams?', and 'What would you do differently if you had to do this project again in terms of maybe getting your students even more involved in the tasks?'. The semi-structured nature allowed both the PhD researcher and the teachers to address a wider variety of task engagement related topics such as 'autonomy support' (e.g. through WhatsApp), 'the pedagogical value of the worksheets', 'the frequency of the online meetings' and 'task topics'. In addition, the data from the teachers' interviews was used to establish the students' descriptive profiles in Chapter 6, and the teachers' experiences and recommendations were used to further illustrate the pedagogical guidelines in Chapter 7. The teachers' interviews took place in English in BigBlueButton, were recorded and transcribed. To further enhance the credibility of the findings, the PhD researcher wrote down her preliminary interpretations in field notes and came up with basic conceptualizations of the data during the categorisation and analyses of the qualitative data (Lempert, 2011).

This constellation of qualitative data provided insights per TP parameter regarding the complementary qualities of engagement and their interactions. The recordings provided, in particular, a window for observing the behavioural quality and the introspective evidence that was collected through the reflective worksheets and semi-structured interviews helped to observe the students' cognitive and attitudinal qualities. Using a variety of qualitative methods also corresponded to the students' varying communicative preferences. Whereas some were more comfortable in the face-to-face interview, others gave more explicit information on what they did, thought or felt in the reflective worksheet. In addition, the teachers' interviews helped to better understand the individual students' motives for the way in which they carried out the task.

Once all the evidence had been collected, the two-layered approach was used to analyse the empirical data. Accordingly, student-pairs' engagement was studied in terms of its behavioural, cognitive and attitudinal qualities in relation to the seven TP parameters. Combining the three-dimensional model of task engagement with the model of TP parameters in a two-layered

approach made it possible to study certain task aspects from the three quality perspectives. It is important to stress that the two-layered approach was used to reveal things that might otherwise have remained unnoticed.

In this connection, research attention was on exploring the phenomenon of task engagement by analysing the participating students' task engagement by exchange across all TP parameters to identify possible patterns of task engagement and ownership (see Figure 4), and by TP parameter across all exchanges to gain insights for pedagogical interventions (see Figure 5). The data was described in relation to the TP parameters from a behavioural (B), a cognitive (C) and an attitudinal (A) perspective.

Besides the PhD researcher, two other raters were involved in the analysis process of the students' task engagement by exchange. Six initial patterns were discussed in a face-to-face meeting with the second and third raters at the *Evaluate* conference in León in Spain in September 2019. In preparation for this meeting all raters had individually analysed all data 'by exchange' while following the two-layered approach. In other words, all TP parameters were first fully analysed by exchange, and then selected for inclusion on a specific constellation of TP parameters. The main criterion that was used when selecting TP parameters for inclusion in a pattern of task engagement and ownership was saliency. Those TP parameter constellations that emerged as the most salient ones for understanding task engagement in the specific context of online intercultural foreign language became part of the task engagement and ownership profile. With the feedback from the first round, the PhD researcher made adaptations to the profiles and presented them to the same raters for the second and final discussion round at the *International Conference on Intercultural Learning in the Digital Age on Building up Telecollaborative Networks* in Valencia in Spain in November 2019.

A cross-case analysis is particularly useful because it forces researchers towards the end of a study to attend to all evidence afresh and consider the data again from a different perspective; also see Creswell (2014) and Yin (2014) on cross-case analysis in multiple-case study research. In this study, the decision to add a cross-exchange analysis by TP parameter was motivated by the observation that the student pairs engaged with different TP parameters in different and characteristic ways and that these ways of engagement had interesting pedagogical implications regarding what went well, what did not and what kind of pedagogical interventions might be needed.

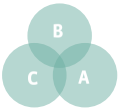
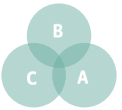
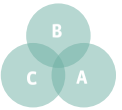
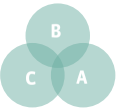
	Task Management	Technology	Topic & Content	Language	Communicative Participation	Partner Orientation	Task Appropriation
Exchange 1							

Figure 4 | Visualisation of the analysis by exchange.

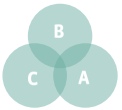
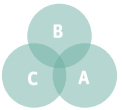
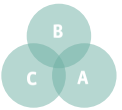
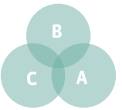
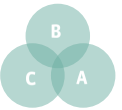
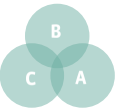
	Exchange 1	Exchange 2	Exchange 3	Exchange 4	Exchange 5	Exchange 6
Task Management						

Figure 5 | Visualisation of the cross-exchange analysis by TP parameter.

Following a social constructivist understanding of task processing, according to which students make the task their own with their minds, hearts and hands, the three qualities of task engagement coexist. They are like three sides of the same coin. Students' engagement regarding the behavioural quality only exists in relation to their engagement on the cognitive and attitudinal dimensions, and the other way around. Accordingly, to provide a complete picture of how the students engaged with the task and its aspects, the qualities of engagement were studied in relation to each other. However, taking this perspective on data analyses holds implications for the way in which findings are reported in the findings chapters. Hence, task engagement and its quality dimensions are discussed in the findings chapters as 'three' co-existing and interacting sides of the same coin in relation to the model of TP parameters.

To conclude with, the uniqueness of the exchanges should be emphasized once again. They were not treated as representative samples and no generalisations will be made from them in the upcoming analyses chapters (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Nevertheless, they offer teachers insights of what could happen under the similar circumstances and can therefore "serve as prototypes for others' replication and transformation" (Schön, 1992, p. 136).

5.5 | Ethical considerations

The fact that this research was embedded in the TeCoLa project guaranteed relatively easy access to the students' school context. The qualitative nature of the study is reflected in the way in which the data was collected, i.e. in close contact with the participating students and their teachers. To be able to collect, analyse and report on the data in the above-described manner, it was important for the PhD researcher to keep in close contact with the students, either directly or through the teachers, throughout the entire research process. Maintaining a caring relationship with the participants is regarded as a strength of qualitative inquiry and of case study methodology specifically (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Reschly and Christenson (2012) argue that engagement can only be studied when one has a good understanding of the context in which the phenomenon is likely, or not, to reveal itself. In this connection, the PhD researcher herself had already participated in four other intercultural virtual exchanges with her own university students prior to the PhD study exchanges in 2014, 2015 and 2016, and in two other Dutch-German TeCoLa pilots where she acted as a TeCoLa coach in 2017. Hence, the PhD researcher was not a novice telecollaborator and also applied these previous experiences to this study.

The participating teachers and students were informed extensively about the TeCoLa project's aims and objectives. Then, they were asked whether they would consider participating in an exchange with partners from a Dutch or respective German secondary school and were assured that their participation would be voluntary. When the students agreed, their parents

were asked to give their written consent that the data could be used for TeCoLa research purposes. In particular, the parents gave permission that the data retrieved from the students' online meetings and interviews could be used for this PhD research project. To guarantee a safe space in which the students' could carry out their tasks, the recordings of the meetings in BigBlueButton were set from public to a 'private setting' immediately after they took place. This was done to avoid that other students and TeCoLa members could access the recordings. The recordings of the meetings in the TeCoLa Virtual World were only available to the two TeCoLa coaches and the PhD researcher who participated in the study.

To let the students speak freely without being interrupted, the interviews with the Dutch students were conducted on a voluntary basis in a separate speaking room at their school. In the same week, the interviews with the German students took place on a voluntary basis in the video chat room BigBlueButton on the TeCoLa platform. The students' L1 was used to build rapport during the interviews. Research shows that students speak more freely and give more vivid and richer examples when speaking in their mother tongue (Dey, 1999). To protect their privacy, the students' names are replaced by alpha numeric expressions, e.g. NL1 or DE2 (also see Table 1). All qualitative data that was collected and analysed during the research process was securely stored in the TeCoLa cloud in a password protected environment and after the project it was safely stored on a secured server for linguistic research data at Utrecht University in the Netherlands.

CHAPTER 6

Analysis and discussion by exchange: task engagement and ownership profiles

This first findings chapter addresses the actual application of the two-layered approach for the analysis 'by exchange' (research objective 4). The three-dimensional model of task engagement and the model of TP parameters were combined to analyse the empirical data with regard to the students' task engagement and ownership profiles. As such, focus was on the task engagement of the individual student pairs across all TP parameters. Guiding questions that were used to analyse and discuss the data in their exchange-specific context include 'How does each student pair engage behaviourally, cognitively and attitudinally with the task across the TP parameters?', 'How do the three dimensions of task engagement interact with each other on the level of a salient constellation of TP parameters?, 'How can the literature help us to better interpret the empirical data?', and 'Which patterns of task engagement and ownership emerge?'.

Each subchapter deals with one of the six exchanges and starts with the descriptive profiles of the students involved and a short account of their exchange-specific context. All exchanges are described with regard to those TP parameter constellations that emerged as the most salient ones for understanding task engagement in the specific context of virtual pedagogical lingua franca (PLF) communication. In line with the light Grounded Theory (GT) approach that was used to become aware of the issues most prominent in a respective exchange, the literature was consulted throughout the analysis process. As such, following this methodological approach justifies combining the analysis and discussion of the data in one chapter. Focus is, in particular, on topic familiarity (section 6.1), peer scaffolding (section 6.2), non-collaborative (section 6.3) and collaborative task realisation (section 6.4), and negative (section 6.5) and positive partner influence (section 6.6). Finally, the chapter ends with a summary conclusion and addresses, particularly, the exchange characteristic profiles of task engagement and ownership and their desirability for language learning in intercultural virtual exchange (section 6.7).

Extracts from the recordings, reflective worksheets, field notes and semi-structured interviews are used to keep the students' stories in the forefront of the reader's mind and to make the conceptual analyses and the discussions of the data more accessible. For this purpose, the extracts from the interviews have been translated from the students' L1, respectively Dutch and German, into English (R = researcher). In a narrative manner that reflects the qualitative nature of the study, the exchange chapters provide empirically validated portraits of how the different

student-pairs engage with and make a task their own during an intercultural virtual exchange in a 3D virtual world environment.

6.1 | Topic familiarity

NL1 (Female) is a 16-year-old Dutch student of English (CEFR, B2) and her partner DE1 (Female) is a 17-year-old German student of English (CEFR, C1). NL1 participates in the TeCoLa project because she wants to practise her fluency, listening and conversational skills. For her, it is important to connect with and get to know her partner and to participate in a natural conversation. NL1's teacher describes her as a quiet student who does not share much in class and whose English is quite good. DE1 has been raised bilingually by a German mother and an Irish father; at home they speak both languages. DE1 joins because she wants to try something new and have a conversation in English with a person who has learnt English in a regular foreign language learning school context:

> So since I already speak English at home, it was not just about talking with someone, so speaking in English at all, but talking with someone who may have a different accent than what I know from home, or know from school and from my teacher. And then see how well that works and how well you can communicate with other people who have learned English in a completely different way. (DE1)

DE1's teacher describes her as a hard-working student and says that although she is near-native, her oral performance in class would have been better if she had more general knowledge of the world.

Their warm-up task in the synchronous conference room BigBlueButton (Task 1) goes well. Both are well-prepared, can easily understand their partner and express themselves, and are looking forward to carry out another task together. They arrange a meeting for the learning station task in the TeCoLa Virtual World (Task 2) and make an effort to prepare themselves. For instance, before the meeting, NL1 downloads the worksheet and explores the virtual environment on her own, and DE1 puts a lot of time and energy in getting technology to work. At the start position of the learning path, they exchange information on the readability and the appearance of the first board's content and DE1 displays an interest in her partner's task readiness. Due to technological problems NL1 is not able to see the interactive boards and, instead, she uses online documents containing the board contents, i.e. screenshots of the google docs files and a link to the video. The fact that she has to switch between several documents ("I could not view two things at the same time") and operate her avatar leaves her with less thinking time than her partner. Although NL1 mentions in the post-task interview that she would have liked to see the

contents of the boards in the virtual environment, she does not comment negatively on the task technology or the alternative display of the content. Based on their experiences with the warm-up task, they start the learning station task on waste avoidance with the shared assumption that they are both competent enough to carry out the task successfully. However, NL1's lack of topic familiarity negatively influences the way in which both students engage with the task. Their meeting lasts 26 minutes.

In task-based literature, topic familiarity, also referred to as prior knowledge, concerns students' familiarity with the task topic in the sense that they possess enough topic-related information to process content and contribute to discussions in a meaningful way. In this connection, Skehan (1998) states that drawing on prior knowledge has a positive influence on students' fluency and accuracy in oral performance. Adams and Alwi (2014), who are the first to describe the effect of topic familiarity on task production in a technology-mediated environment, notice that students who are not familiar with the topic do not engage in topic-related discussions and, as a result, their language production and fluency declines. They also conclude that performing a task without having prior knowledge increases the lexical complexity of the task. In addition, although all students in their study complete the task, they only do the bare minimum. So far, only a few studies have looked at the relationship between topic familiarity and task engagement. It is interesting to mention, however, that Robinson and Gilabert argue in their study (2007) that being unfamiliar with the topic may place a demand on students' engagement with the task. To shed more light on the matter, I will discuss topic familiarity in relation with the students' task engagement and ownership profile. I will do so, in particular, with regard to the TP parameters Communicative Participation, Topic & Content, Language and Technology.

Starting with Communicative Participation, the data from the warm-up task reveals that both students are fluent speakers of English in everyday situations. In the learning station task, however, they have to discuss a more specialised topic, namely the global issue of waste avoidance, and observations show that NL1's content-related contributions are weak. Initially, she seems eager to participate in the discussion and tries to describe what happens to the waste we throw away. However, coming up with solutions for the waste problem is difficult for her and she asks her partner for support ("Anything else that could be done with it?"). From the first board onward, more instances of NL1's somewhat hesitant behaviour follow. For instance, she asks her partner to repeat phrases, checks whether she understands things correctly (e.g. "Is that what you mean?") and fades into silence. On the behavioural dimension, manifestations of NL1's struggle to process the board content and contribute to the discussions emerge and continue for most of the learning path. In this respect, it is interesting to mention that introspective evidence on the cognitive dimension shows that NL1's partner DE1 wanted to

talk more, in particular about the topic ("Perhaps I wanted to communicate more, so speak more about the topic, besides only answering the questions"). The fragment below (Board 7) illustrates how DE1 tries to keep the conversation going by, for instance, expanding on NL1's contribution:

NL1: We are actually producing waste… (silence)

DE1: We are producing it in masses and, I think, if you for example go shopping, and look at the products in which way they are packed. There is so much plastic and other things around it which are unnecessary which could just have been left away but they aren't so...avoiding, for example, that...that would be even a solution on top. (silence)

NL1: That's true…

Whereas DE1 is both an active listener and an active speaker (e.g. she continually engages with her partner's contributions by referring back to them, repeating and adding to them), NL1's overall communicative participation is low. NL1 avoids or breaks off topic-related discussions; to fill awkward silences, she displays hasty behaviour such as quickly proceeding from one board to the next. To some extent, NL1's behaviour prevents her from more personal contact with her partner, for instance, when her avatar walks away from DE1's avatar in the middle of a conversation. To find a plausible explanation for NL1's rather uncharacteristic way of behaving, let us look at some relevant L2 research on the nature of the topic and its impact on communication.

Brown et al. (1984) make the distinction between 'chatting' and 'information-related talk' as representing two ends of a continuum in respect to the purposes of 'talk'. Chatting, as was the pedagogical goal of the BigBlueButton warm-up task, is viewed as a predominantly social activity in which topics are not necessarily discussed very deeply. At the other end of the continuum is information-related talk, which is about transferring information on a particular topic (Luoma, 2004). This latter type of talk is often used among more proficient speakers. In addition, Zuengler and Bent (1991) studied which roles students take on when participating in a task, e.g. as active speakers or active listeners. They found out that when discussing what they labelled 'less important topics', such as talking about food or hobbies, the less proficient students acted as active speakers, whereas with the 'more important topics', the more proficient or native speakers became more dominant. In this connection, it could be argued that discussing a variety of so-called 'soft' topics in the warm-up task was easier for NL1 than talking about the more complex topic of waste avoidance in the learning station task; also see the companion volume to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (Council of Europe, 2018) on the issue of topics.

Could it be possible that NL1's weak content contributions are evidence of her low attitudinal engagement with the topic? Literature reveals that students who find the topic not interesting will talk significantly less (Marsh & Langé, 2000) and a lack of interest can lead to more superficial discussions of content (Adams & Alwi, 2014). In our case, however, evidence points in another direction. For instance, introspective comments on both the emotional-attitudinal and cognitive-attitudinal dimension concerning Topic & Content reveal that NL1 finds waste avoidance a "really nice topic" and describes the Youtube video *Trashed* as "interesting". Moreover, she says it is important for her to make a real effort to carry out the task (e.g. "That you really want to do the assignment"). In this connection, it is also important to note that evidence on the behavioural dimension reveals that NL1 uses Google translator and describes words in her attempts to answer the questions on the boards and keep the communication going. It is interesting though that evidence on the cognitive dimension shows that, in contrast to DE1, NL1 does not possess enough topic-knowledge to readily process all content and contribute to meaningful discussions on waste avoidance. The interview extract below reveals that her knowledge is mainly limited to how waste is separated at her home:

R: Did you know a lot about the subject?

NL1: Not really much. Yes, I knew that we separate waste, plastic bags and such. But yes ... not really that much.

In the same post-task interview, NL1 shows awareness of her weak contribution to the content discussion and relates it to her unfamiliarity with the topic:

> Perhaps it would have been useful to get a few questions in advance...that you could familiarise yourself with the subject. That you could talk about it more easily with each other or something like that. I would have liked that...now, I actually didn't know anything anymore...you also had to think of how you could dissolve waste then ... and I think if you had already known it in advance, then you can think about it and then I think it is easier for you to have a discussion with each other, one that is better. (NL1)

This comment clearly shows that NL1 would have liked to familiarize herself with the topic in advance. More specifically, she says receiving some questions before the meeting would have helped her to think about waste avoidance in advance, leading to richer contributions to the discussions during the meeting. In fact, when analysing her weak behaviour, NL1 makes the task her own by thinking about strategies to use for a hypothetical new task (e.g. "If I had been given more vocab, I would have been able to cope with it [the topic]"). She is well aware that

she needs to step up if she wants to meet her requirements of task success (i.e. to practise her fluency and conversational skills) in the upcoming discussion task in BigBlueButton (Task 3a). In the discussion task, the students have to debate the pros and cons of a global issue of their choosing. The topics they can select from (i.e. 'globalisation', 'gun control' and 'stereotypes in the media') are similar to those of the oral exam which will take place only a few weeks after the discussion task. NL1 is eager to pass this exam and learn from this learning station task experience. So, there is no performative or introspective evidence to support a line of thinking according to which NL1's attitude impacts negatively on her task engagement. She wants to engage with the topic cognitively and behaviourally but it is difficult for her to do so because of her lack of topic familiarity. This is in line with previous research (e.g. Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Gass & Varonis, 1985) according to which students rely on prior knowledge when trying to understand and discuss a topic. If content-specific knowledge is not available, performance is generally not optimal. NL1's problems with communicating about content also have to do with the TP parameter Language, in particular her lack of topic-related vocabulary. Introspective evidence on the cognitive dimension from NL1's post-task interview reveals that she does not have enough words and phrases at her disposal to express her ideas and opinions on waste avoidance:

> Sometimes you were stuck with words and you thought oh, what was that in Dutch or that you were thinking... and then I thought, gosh, what am I supposed to say? (NL1)

Even if content-knowledge is available and can be used in L1 communication, this does not assure communicative success in the L2. In fact, as the interview extract below shows, there is a perceived need for more specialised topic-related vocabulary to engage in more in-depth discussions on the topic:

> R: And when I look at the subject in combination with your learning goals, was it for you a good topic to talk about?
>
> NL1: Yes, yes, I think so because then you have such a subject and then you need to have more vocabulary to really be able to talk about it. You can't have a conversation about that with primary school English.

Content-knowledge and content-specific language are intimately related to each other. On the one hand one needs content in order to be able to talk about something: the topic "provides the information base that enables them [individuals] to use language with reference to the world in which they live, and hence is involved in all language use" (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 65).

On the other hand, insufficient knowledge of topic-related vocabulary can hinder students from understanding the meaning of spoken and written messages and producing meaningful output during a communicative activity. Qian (2002) states that vocabulary knowledge helps students to process content: "...having a larger vocabulary gives the student a larger database from which to guess the meaning of the unknown words or behaviour of newly learned words, having deeper vocabulary knowledge will very likely improve the results of the guessing work" (p. 518). When you learn the meaning of a word, you actually require knowledge of the world. Nation et al. (2004) show that students with high levels of vocabulary knowledge are able to decode and understand reading passages better than students with low levels of vocabulary. This is in line with more recent research (e.g. Dobao, 2016) that views L2 vocabulary learning as involving both the acquisition of new knowledge and the consolidation of previous knowledge. Thus, the more words students know, the easier they will process content and participate in topic-related talk. So, being familiar with the topic regarding both content and language would have made it easier for NL1 to cognitively and behaviourally engage with the task.

What makes this exchange particularly interesting is that NL1, despite the cognitive challenges she faces, does not raise her topic or language-related problems with DE1. What is more, when DE1 initiates a collaborative languaging dialogue, NL1 does not take it up. In the conversation extract below, DE1 is not sure about her use of "crude oil" nor can she think of more solutions to avoid waste (Board 1):

> DE1: Yes, I know that a lot of things are recycled and at the end are burnt too...in the way of ...oh, the English word...uhm...is it called crude oil? I'm not sure… (silence)...but it is also burnt at the end, so, yeah...I guess [...] teams used it...I can't think of any other… (longer silence).

NL1, however, seems to ignore her partner's struggle to come up with an English expression for unrefined petroleum and tries to push the task forward:

> NL1: Shall we watch the video now?

NL1's behaviour might explain why DE1 primarily focuses on initiating dialogues concerning task management issues (e.g. "I think it's C, what do you think?") and generally avoids starting dialogues that lead to collaborative languaging or in-depth topic-related discussions. So, although DE1 is ready and willing to engage more with Topic & Content and Language, without a partner to do so with, she adjusts her ambitions as well and makes the task her own by just enjoying the online intercultural experience.

A closer look at the TP parameter Technology draws attention to the virtual environment and the fact that the two students cannot see each other (e.g. NL1: "You don't see each other so you don't know if they understand you"). This might offer an explanation for why they do not address or discuss NL1's topic-related and linguistic-communicative challenges. Both NL1 and DE1 are very much aware of the environment they collaborate in. For instance, they inform each other on their whereabouts (e.g. "I just have to read it through, one second", "I just have to go over and see" and "I'm done watching"). One might assume that this behaviour is influenced by the fact that NL1 cannot see the contents on the boards in the TeCoLa Virtual World. But, as the interview extract below reveals, introspective evidence on the cognitive dimension seems to suggest that informing her partner was done because she could not see your partner:

> It is different than if you [...] see each other [...] in the virtual world you just see an avatar and then it is very different to talk to each other. (NL1)

In line with this, NL1 comments in the interview that not seeing her partner and her partner not seeing her, could have had an effect on her engagement with the task:

> R: If we then discuss how you compare this task with the first one?
> NL1: [...] I think the main difference is that you can see each other in one task and not in the other. I think that makes some difference.

We know from the literature that communicating in a virtual world is not the same as communicating in a face-to-face environment where facial expressions and body language can be used to negotiate meaning and address problematic issues (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997; Tammelin, 2004). In virtual world settings, students represented by avatars do not have access to kinaesthetic cues as they are not in the same physical room with their peers and this holds implications for peer interaction. Because students do not have visual cues such as hand gestures, a sad face or a look of satisfaction readily available, they are required to develop and use different strategies to address problems. This, however, is not easy. Especially as both students are used to the face-to-face classroom in which collaborative communication is generally not foregrounded. In addition, it should be mentioned that the teachers did not provide their students with special pedagogical input concerning the communicative implications of teamwork in the virtual world. All this might explain why NL1, in her exchange with DE1, does not verbalise her problems concerning her weak topic familiarity. And why, as a result, DE1 is largely unaware of her struggles.

To sum things up, this exchange reveals an interesting relationship between topic familiarity and task engagement. We have seen how one student's lack of topic familiarity negatively influences the way in which both students engage with the task. More specifically, NL1 is engaged on the overall attitudinal dimension with the majority of the TP parameters, but due to her low topic familiarity in terms of both content and topic-related vocabulary, she cannot reach the level of cognitive engagement she needs to fulfil her requirements of task success. This holds implications for the way in which the two students engage with the learning station task and make it their own. Arguably, their task engagement and ownership profiles might have been more desirable for language learning if they had managed to solve NL1's problems collaboratively. Instead, the learning station task provides them with a valuable experience which could help the students to perform better in similar tasks in the future.

6.2 | Peer scaffolding

NL2 (Female) is a 16-year-old Dutch student of English (CEFR, B1) and her partner DE2 (Male) is an 18-year-old German student of English (CEFR, B2). NL2 participates in the TeCoLa project because she wants to practise her conversational skills, meet new people and overcome her language speaking anxiety. For her, it is important to get to know her partner and have a natural conversation. NL2's teacher describes her as a quiet and serious student who is very insecure about her English. Preceding the project, NL2 and her brother voluntarily joined a summer camp in England to practise their conversational skills and work on their speaking anxiety. When asked how she felt when joining the project, NL2 says "... a little anxious before we got started, but I just thought, I will see what will happen". DE2 joins because he wants to improve his English and try the TeCoLa Virtual World. Furthermore, it is important for him to have fun and pass his A-levels, in particular, the oral exam. His teacher describes him as a nice young boy who has lots of interests. He adds that, although DE2's English is on an intermediate level with many grammatical mistakes, he is very active in in-class discussions.

Their warm-up task in BigBlueButton (Task 1) does not go entirely smoothly. Although they carry out the task and talk about each other's hobbies and interests, it is a very short and somewhat unnatural encounter of two people who do not seem totally at ease with the task and each other. In a post-task focus group, NL2 says, "You don't know each other at all and then you see each other for the first time through Skype [i.e. BigBlueButton] and yes, that was kind of weird". Despite the awkward silences, they enjoy talking to each other (e.g. NL2: "I also really enjoyed it and yes, after a while you don't know what to talk about because the questions were finished, but he was very nice"). They keep in contact through SnapChat and WhatsApp, and arrange a second meeting for the learning station task in the TeCoLa Virtual World (Task 2). In contrast to DE2, NL2 gets clear instructions from her teacher, downloads the worksheet

in advance and knows what needs to be done. During task realisation, the students use a peer scaffolding strategy to guide each other through the task and they collaboratively succeed in performing the task. Their meeting lasts 14 minutes.

In this chapter, I focus on peer scaffolding referring to the kind of mutual support that emerges rather naturally when students carry out a task together. More specifically, it develops when students are confronted with a problem that requires attention or needs to be solved before they can proceed with their task. Problems students may encounter include 'not understanding the instructions', 'not knowing how to say something in English' or 'lacking the skill to operate their avatar'. When such problems arise, especially during a virtual exchange in which the teacher is not present, the students can guide each other through the challenging parts of the task. Scaffolding as we know it from early educational literature refers to processes in which teachers model or demonstrate how to solve a problem, and then step back, offering support as needed (Bruner, 1960). This kind of pedagogical scaffolding is built on the idea that students, when receiving support, can construct their individual zones of proximal development (ZPD). The ZPD is used in the literature (Vygotsky, 1978) as a metaphor to describe the difference between students' actual and their potential level of development. The actual level comprises skills that have already been mastered and the potential level can only be reached with the help of others. When newly acquired skills become stable and autonomous, a new zone can be entered to develop further competence. Since the 1990s, an increasing number of L2 studies (e.g. Donato, 1994; Kowal & Swain, 1994; Ohta, 1995; Swain & Lapkin, 1998) show that scaffolding also occurs in peer interaction. Peer scaffolding builds on the idea that students learn through social interaction with more knowledgeable peers. Yet, the nature of scaffolding in peer interaction is different from scaffolding by the teacher. As it is part of the teacher's workplan, i.e. the instructions and materials used, pedagogical scaffolding is in its very nature intentional whereas peer scaffolding has a more spontaneous and incidental character. In addition, students' roles are more versatile during peer scaffolding. Studies by Kowal and Swain (1994) and Ohta (1995) show that students' roles can shift from novice to expert and the other way around during task performance. Whether or not peer scaffolding takes place depends on the kind of relationship students develop. In this chapter, focus will be on how NL2 quite naturally scaffolds DE2 through task procedure and how DE2, in turn, guides his partner in the same intuitive manner through more challenging task content. Analysis shows how peer scaffolding enables the students to engage with the learning station task and make it their own. In this respect, my analyses of the TP parameters Task Management, Communicative Participation, Partner Orientation and Technology are particularly relevant.

NL2's engagement on the behavioural and cognitive dimension concerning Task Management manifests itself in taking the procedural lead. For instance, she takes notes, verbalises

instructions (e.g. “We have to watch a video”), checks if her partner can see the questions (e.g. “Can you see…?”), initiates discussions (e.g. “So what do you think we can do to solve the waste problem?”) and sets the pace (e.g. “Maybe we can go to the next one”). She makes sure they stick to the instructions and fills in the worksheet. In contrast to NL2, DE2 is not familiar with the instructions. For instance, when meeting in front of the first board, DE2 says, “What do we have to do?” and NL2 guides him through the procedural part of the task. Furthermore, as the conversation extract below shows, when DE2 thinks they have finished the task (Board 8), NL2 refers to the worksheet and points out they have to think of five solutions for the waste problem. She adds she has written down three solutions, implying they have to think of two more:

DE2: So, I think that’s it...

NL2: In the answers sheet it says we have to do five.

DE2: Hmm…

NL2: So, I have three now.

Introspective evidence on the cognitive dimension from DE2’s interview shows why he does not focus on task preparation. As the interview extract below reveals, DE2 compares the learning station task with an authentic conversation.

> You cannot prepare for a normal conversation either. In that sense, maybe it’s quite okay to just go into something like that [the task] unprepared. (DE2)

His weak behaviour concerning task preparation should not be confused with indifferent behaviour regarding following task procedure. On the contrary, in the short time they spent online, both students’ main focus was on reaching agreement on the correct answers and completing the task (e.g. NL2: “Getting the same answers” and DE2: “Get the job done“). As if they were participating in a game where points can be earned for giving the right answer within a limited time frame, their pace is quite high when they proceed from one board to the next. Once they have answered a question on a board correctly, all attention goes to the next board and communication breaks down, which corresponds with their overall low engagement with Communicative Participation. Taking NL2’s descriptive profile into consideration, the question arises whether NL2’s initial feelings of speaking anxiety play a role in the learning station task and might offer an explanation for her limited contribution to the content discussions and their failure to keep the conversations smoothly going. To answer this question, a closer look at the literature concerning communication apprehension is required.

Communication apprehension is referred to in communication studies as a "broad-based fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated [oral] communication with another person or persons" (McCroskey, 1977, p. 78). The fear of others judging one's performance and self-image are what often fuels the anxiety. One well-researched behavioural pattern of communication apprehension is 'communication withdrawal'. This happens when people communicate only the absolute minimum in the sense that they speak only when spoken to, answer questions and keep their responses short, or lapse into complete silence. In the L2 literature, foreign language anxiety is discussed as a domain-specific type of anxiety and is considered a unique factor affecting the oral production of the targeted language. In line with the above-mentioned findings, Horwitz et al. (1986) mention 'remaining silent' as an important indicator of foreign language speaking anxiety. The reason for this silence is often because students fear to make errors and get corrected by others. More so, students may feel that it is better to remain silent until fluency in the foreign language is established.

As mentioned earlier, NL2's and DE2's warm-up task in BigBlueButton is characterised by awkward silences. In the learning station task, however, although not much time is spent on speaking, the conversation lasts a little longer than in the warm-up task. In their post-task interviews, both students comment positively on their speaking time:

DE2: It was definitely better, we talked longer because the task of getting to know each other... we simply worked through the points briefly and then said goodbye […] And otherwise [in the TVW] we could now simply continue to work from one board to the other and so, and somehow, no idea, it just, somehow, worked better.

NL2: The second one lasted longer with me anyway...so then you still talked more with each other than with the first one.

NL2 adds that she kept making an effort to contribute to discussions ("Sometimes I didn't really know how to say things, but then I used other words") and introspective evidence of the emotional-attitudinal dimension from the interview shows that her anxiety is lower in this task:

R: Which assignment made you feel most at ease, was that the first or the second?

NL2: I think the second [...] anyway it was less exciting in advance because you already knew each other and with the first you didn't know who your partner was going to be.

Another factor that causes anxiety has to do with the novelty and/or familiarity of what is being discussed. Among other things, talking about an unfamiliar topic can be a stressor of language speaking anxiety (Woodrow, 2006). However, in line with findings from Wörde (2003), the fact

that both students are confronted in the learning station task with a topic neither of them knew a lot about, and thus makes them equally unprepared, lowers NL2's anxiety (e.g. "It was also nicer to talk to each other about a subject that you both don't really know"). Taking all this evidence into consideration, it is not likely that NL2's initial feelings of anxiety impact on her task realisation. NL2's changing feelings between the warm-up task and the learning station task correspond with MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) and Horwitz (2001) who emphasize that speaking anxiety is a situation-specific phenomenon. Although she joined the project to work on her communication apprehension, her initial fear of experiencing this anxiety during the realisation of the learning station task is not observable. In fact, she feels quite comfortable and it is more likely that NL2 is taking the procedural lead as a strategy to get a better grip on task content. By doing so, she makes the task her own. For instance, to understand the content on the boards better, NL2 prompts DE2 to answer questions and share his thoughts and when he does, NL2's attention is focussed on how her partner processes and paraphrases content:

> No ... I didn't understand everything. But he did understand so ... usually I just listened to what he had to say [...] then I understood what he said. (NL2)

In addition, Matsuda and Gobel (2004) argue that working with a partner one feels comfortable with decreases anxiety and that helping each other contributes to building a sense of solidarity. In this connection, the interview extract below shows that NL2 likes her partner and is happy with the way they assist each other during task realisation. In addition, it supports their sense of peer scaffolding and their need of it:

> That you also listen to each other and that you let each other finish talking and that you sometimes complement each other [...] it was nice to work together. (NL2)

When taking a closer look at Partner Orientation, introspective evidence on the cognitive-attitudinal dimension reveals that DE2 makes the task more interesting for NL2 ("Because his opinion is different from mine and he knew other things than I knew"). Although introspective evidence on the cognitive dimension reveals that NL2 perceives learning largely as an individual activity ("When I don't know a word, I try to find out myself"), evidence on the emotional-attitudinal dimension shows that she likes the way in which her partner adapts to her scaffolding needs:

> R: Did you enjoy working together like this? That he indicated what it was about or that he gave his opinion and you could respond to it?
>
> NL2: Yes!

In this connection, it is important to mention that DE2 enjoys collaborating with NL2 as well ("We actually helped each other a bit") and feels sympathy for her 'situation'. In the post-task interview, he says he noticed her struggles to express herself and adds he experienced similar problems:

> So in the beginning it definitely took some time to get it out ...because she had the same problems as I had with word finding and things like that. (DE2)

Although the pedagogical lingua franca context also provides some linguistic-communicative challenges for DE2: "In your mother tongue you can just start talking and now besides talking you have to think about how to say it", he does not use Google translator or other resources to improve upon his contributions. According to him, their communication is good enough to answer the questions ("That we can communicate enough to complete the task"). Nevertheless, although largely unaware (e.g. "It actually worked that way"), DE2 guides his less proficient partner through the more challenging parts of the task and during task realisation peer scaffolding develops largely organically and as needed by NL2. Hence, the assistance DE2 provides does not seem to be part of a conscious strategy to support peer interaction. Whereas during more intentional scaffolding, a student might encourage his or her partner to extend on existing knowledge, DE2 does not do that. Instead, he is satisfied with the short and simplified answers NL2 gives. At Board 6, for instance, he agrees with NL2's addition but does not expand on it. Instead he turns around and says "Next board!" and moves away. The conversation extract below concerns Board 8 and illustrates how DE2 scaffolds the interaction. NL2 asks "So what do we think we can do to solve the waste problem?" and DE2 not only gives an answer but also describes how he sees it and gives examples. In this respect, it is interesting to mention that there is also evidence in the literature that students can benefit from observing their partner. Wood et al. (1976) identify 'simplifying the task' and 'demonstrating an idealised version of the act to be performed' as functions of scaffolding. In addition, NL2 retrieves information from her partner by reformulating his sentences as questions. She uses this strategy to double-check if she has understood the intended meaning correctly:

NL2: So what do we think we can do to solve the waste problem?
DE2: I think we could just try to produce less waste, so using more things again, such as glass or something…
NL2: Yes, aha…(silence) So, like if you go to a supermarket, use a plastic bag multiple times?
DE2: Yes, like that...or just bring your own bag so that you can pick things like vegetables or something like that in it instead of using one from there.

In addition, when they continue, we can observe how DE2 gives NL2 room (indicated by pauses as DE2 quietly waits for a cue from NL2 to continue) to process what he says:

NL2: Yeah... (long silence)...so yes, I don't know…

DE2: Something like that. Just be responsible for what you use.

NL2: Yeah, ...like everybody has to watch his own waste?

DE2: Yes.

Ellis (1994) found that "active participation [in negotiation of meaning activities] may be less important for acquisition than is sometimes claimed" (p. 480). Allwright (1980) suggests that quiet students can benefit from classroom interaction because all attention goes to observing their peers' interaction and their cognitive resources do not have to focus on output production. In addition, Dobao (2016) argues that new knowledge is more likely acquired by silent students than those whose attention goes to consolidating previously acquired knowledge during speech. This corresponds with studies that describe how students can 'language' with themselves through private speech (Swain et al., 2011), which can also be subvocal and therefore not directly observable – what some authors refer to as inner speech (De Guerrero, 2005). A private speech area, a space in which students are silent, can emerge through subvocal private speech. During private speech students regulate their own actions and thinking processes (Appel & Lantolf, 1994).

At this point, the question also arises to what extent the virtual environment plays a role in requiring and facilitating peer scaffolding. In the literature, virtual worlds are described as rich environments that facilitate the co-construction of linguistic and cultural knowledge (Zheng et al., 2009) and offer opportunities for students to notice how other students, often more proficient speakers of the target language, construct meaning (Sykes et al., 2008; Thorne, 2008). Since technology is not neutral, different virtual environments can offer different opportunities for language development (Hampel & Hauck, 2006; Thorne, 2003). Therefore, it is important to take a closer look at the TeCoLa Virtual World and the opportunities it provides for peer scaffolding.

To begin with, being an avatar gives NL2 a sense of anonymity; also see Peterson (2006) and Gardner et al. (2011). In these studies, anonymity is referred to as a characteristic of physically detached and isolated environments such as the TeCoLa Virtual World. A sense of anonymity in virtual communication provides students with feelings of safety and freedom of expression (Baggio & Beldarrain, 2011), and can impact on the way in which they interact and collaborate with each other. In line with this, NL2's perception of being semi-anonymous makes it possible for her to momentarily disappear in a private space. For NL2 it was important to engage cognitively with the content and her partner's contributions in an environment where she

does not feel being watched. In addition, on the attitudinal and cognitive dimension, evidence shows that both DE2 and NL2 like the content being displayed on the boards and they find it helpful to discuss a challenging topic such as the one they are presented with:

> DE2: We could just talk better somehow, especially because we had content that was given to us [i.e. on the learning station board].
>
> NL2: Then you are also going to talk about difficult topics instead of you introducing yourself.

Furthermore, DE2 explains in the post-task interview how being on a shared mission, i.e. doing small tasks on a pre-structured learning path, increases peer interaction:

> The fact that you actually meet in this world and both know where to go, naturally encourages communication and these discussion tasks. (DE2)

As mentioned above, DE2's requirements of task success include to have fun and be active. The TeCoLa Virtual World enables him to meet them. In fact, DE2 takes ownership while he uses the task to practise for his upcoming oral exam in a relaxed and rather informal way. In the post-task interview, he says that "the virtual aspect was really cool" and that he liked it that he could also be active as an avatar ("Now at least you have something to do" and "You could do a little on the side, instead of just talking"). DE2 was so busy with the interactive boards (e.g. "...that you are just finding out what you can do on these boards"), and operating his avatar (e.g. flying, jumping and moving arms and legs) that, at times, he lost sight of his partner and her needs.

This rather short exchange is characterized by peer interaction that focuses on communicating only the bare minimum. Analysis shows that limited talk, however, does not imply that the students are not attitudinally and cognitively engaged with the task. Depending on the problems they encounter, they make the task their own as they switch from novice to expert roles. More specifically, through peer scaffolding, they manage to create a cooperative atmosphere that allows NL2 to guide DE2 through the procedural part of the task and DE2 to scaffold NL2 through challenging content. In addition, it was interesting to observe how being in a virtual environment lowered NL1's initial feelings of speaking anxiety and positively influenced their pattern of task engagement. In fact, the task technology contributes to a task engagement and ownership profile that elicits peer scaffolding. Had they carried out the task in another environment, their profile would probably have been different.

6.3 | Non-collaborative task realisation

NL3 (Female) is a 16-year-old Dutch student of English (CEFR, B2) and her partner DE3 (Male) is a 17-year-old German student of English (CEFR, A2/B1). NL3 participates in the TeCoLa project because she wants to talk to someone from another country ("...that I have someone from abroad that I can talk to") and improve on her fluency, listening and conversational skills. NL3's teacher describes her as a sweet girl whose English language skills are average. DE3 joins because he wants to learn English in a positive and cooperative atmosphere. His overall proficiency and, in particular, his conversational skills are below average. His teacher says he can be lazy and could achieve more if he would work harder. DE3 volunteered for the project because he felt the need to improve his English in order to pass his A-levels.

Their warm-up task in BigBlueButton (Task 1) goes well and NL3 describes her partner as "very nice and enthusiastic". Both are curious to find out more about each other and they talk for a relatively long time (32 minutes). Although NL3 fills most of the speaking time, DE3 later emphasises that there are enough opportunities for him to contribute to the conversation. Between the warm-up task and the learning station task in the TeCoLa Virtual World (Task 2), they communicate daily through WhatsApp and SnapChat and are eager to see each other again. When they meet in the virtual environment, NL3 knows what is expected of her ("We did talk about what you should be able to do in the class and what you can expect so I was really prepared"). This time, she clearly dominates the conversation and does not help DE3 to join in. They are online for 27 minutes.

Literature reveals that certain patterns of peer interaction are more effective for language learning than others. So far, however, only a few studies have documented how students with different proficiency levels interact with each other. For instance, Kowal and Swain (1997) report that in highly heterogeneous dyads the stronger participant tends to carry out most of the work. A ground-breaking contribution is that of Storch (2002), who conducted a longitudinal study into the nature of pair interaction in adult ESL classrooms. Based on research by Damon and Phelps (1989), Storch identifies four patterns of interaction amongst pairs (see Figure 6).

In this model, equality refers to how students share control over the direction of a task and mutuality refers to how they engage with each other's contributions. Students who make a team effort to solve a problem (collaborative pattern) or learners who assist their partner (expert/novice pattern) are more likely to scaffold each other and open to the assistance given. In pairs where one learner dominates the interaction, while the other remains reasonably passive (dominant/passive pattern) or where both learners try to dominate the interaction and are not receptive to advice offered by their partner (dominant/dominant pattern) there are fewer opportunities for language learning. In addition, Storch found that, when a large proficiency difference exists within a pair, only a collaborative pattern of interaction might be conducive to

L2 learning. In this section, I will discuss how the high-low proficiency pair NL3-DE3 engages with their learning station task and make it their own. A closer look at the TP parameters Communicative Participation, Task Management, Language, Partner Orientation, and Task Appropriation will help to shed some light on NL3's non-collaborative attitude and behaviour.

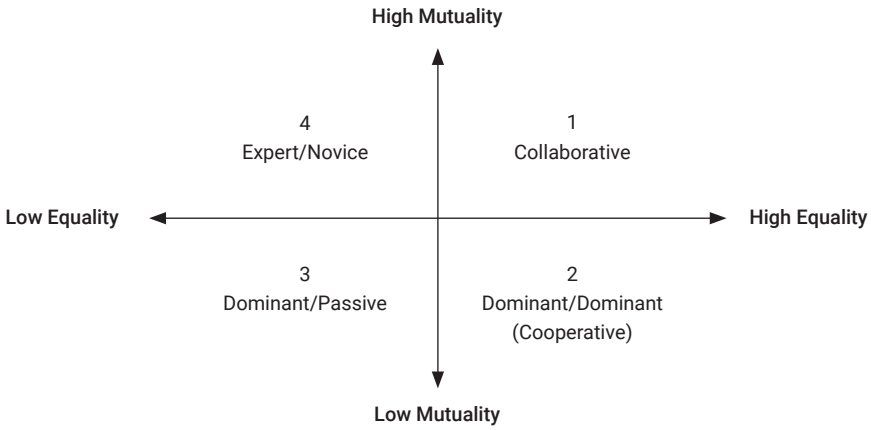


Figure 6 | A model of dyadic interaction by Storch (2002, p. 128).

From the students' engagement with Communicative Participation and Task Management, it is evident that NL3 approaches task realisation very much on her own rather than as a joint activity and does not leave much room for DE3 to contribute. DE3's comment in the post-task interview shows that he is fully aware of this:

> She often took the initiative to speak and indicated how it [the task] should be done. (DE3)

On the behavioural dimension, it can be observed that many of NL3's utterances are self-directed. She, for instance, comments on what she is doing, e.g. taking notes on her phone. Her focus is not on reaching agreement concerning the multiple-choice answers but rather on making decisions without consulting DE3 (e.g. "We have to choose D"). There are other instances in which DE3 is not ready to proceed (e.g. "I might have needed more time"). Nonetheless, NL3 pushes the task forward (e.g. "I'm away from the board right now" and "We have to watch that video about..."). At other moments, NL3 interrupts him when he tries to say something. For instance, when they are standing in front of Board 2, DE3 makes an effort to formulate a sentence and NL3 ignores his attempts. Instead, she responds: "I'm done with the video" and proceeds to the next board. DE3 only gets the opportunity to speak when NL3 has a problem, does not know the answer, or needs more time to think about, for instance, possible solutions

to avoid waste. Halfway through the learning path, NL3 realises that their pace deviates from what her teacher told her in class and says: "My teacher said this assignment will take an hour but I think we're done really fast…". Despite this observation, however, she does not slow down: "Okay!!! Next board!". Introspective evidence on the cognitive dimension reveals that NL3 is not aware of her dominant behaviour ("It went really well together"). Although, noticing that they "actually finished it really fast", NL3 adds in the post-task interview that there is nothing she would do differently in a repetition task: "It just went well [...] I would just do everything the same" and "We are a good team". NL3 also explains that they kept up a high pace because they agreed on the answers: "We also had more or less the same ideas". DE3, on the other hand, would have liked "...to take more time to carry out the task, but it seemed as if she had to go somewhere". According to Storch's model, interaction in this exchange resembles that of a dominant-passive pair with a non-collaborative orientation. In this pattern, the dominant student takes control of the task with an authoritarian stance and the passive partner adopts a more subordinate role. In the following paragraphs, I will extend my analysis of manifestations of NL3's dominant behaviour to the TP parameters Language and Partner Orientation.

In the post-task interview, it becomes clear that NL3 notices DE3's problems with expressing himself: "He did know things but he found it hard to say them in English". But she does not slow down or offer effective peer support. DE3, for his part, says that he felt frustrated that he could not complete the task without NL3's help: "It was only possible together with her"; and he adds: "It was...let's say difficult in the sense of expressing yourself, [talking] about the topic in English and then also understanding what she wants to say in English". The conversation extract below reveals how he tries to explain his problems to NL3:

DE3: ...when you look what I say and what you say, I say nothing, because I have much sentences in my head, but I don't know…
NL3: You just can't get them out.
DE3: ...how to translate.

Unfortunately for DE3, NL3 does not seem to understand the scope of his low proficiency. In the post-task interview she says: "We didn't really have many problems". When asked if there were challenges in the collaboration or with regard to speaking English, she briefly replies: "No". The collaborative dialogues that take place are quick and superficial and do not aim at getting to the bottom of DE3's problems. For instance, the conversation extract below illustrates how NL3 starts to explain the meaning of a statement on Board 6 (i.e. "Regulations regarding drink driving, smoking or wearing seat belts are inefficient") without first asking DE3 what it is he finds difficult to understand:

DE3: I don't understand the sentence.

NL3: Uhh, yeah...how to say. How can I explain that? Uh, if it makes sense that they are doing that, you know...that it is working or not. That the rules are working or that they are just not making sense. You understand what I mean?

DE3: No.

NL3: For me it's easy because that's a word in the Netherlands too but I don't know if it's a word in German…

DE3: Which one?

NL3: Inefficient.

NL3 wrongly assumes that DE3 does not understand the word 'inefficient'. But DE3's problem concerns the word 'regulations'. So when NL3 says "regulations are rules", her partner immediately understands and emphatically responds "Yes, yes, yes!". Without checking whether DE3 needs further assistance with anything else, NL3 pushes the task forward:

DE3: Yes, it's the same in German.

NL3: Yeah, okay...regulations are rules I believe so…

DE3: Yes, yes, yes!

NL3: So...it's the rules for drunk driving, smoking or wearing seat belts are making sense or not. (continues with the next statement).

As in Storch's study, this evidence shows that NL3's uncollaborative behaviour considerably weakens knowledge transfer. If her negotiations had focussed on actually solving problems together instead of merely addressing them superficially and then quickly moving on with the task, DE3 might have been able to contribute more, and the conversation would have been more collaborative. So, why does NL3, other than in the warm-up task, ignore the collaborative value of peer interaction?

In this connection, one could argue that the pattern and roles students adopt during peer interaction do not merely depend on students' proficiency level and subsequent pairing but are also influenced by their understanding of the task. We know from literature on task types (e.g. Skehan, 2014; Saunders, 1989) that the nature of the task may affect the pattern of interaction and the roles students adopt during pairwork. In addition, Gass et al. (2005) have tested tasks in both laboratory settings and intact face-to-face classrooms, as did Yilmaz (2011) in a technology-mediated context, and both studies conclude that tasks that elicit activities that bear resemblance with real world communication seem to promote the most collaborative interaction patterns. For instance, Lam (2015) found out that L2 tasks often fail to lead to

authentic communicative activities because most students are used to task approaches that focus on passing, usually written, language tests. In this connection, a recent study on self-monitoring for communicative success by Hoffstaedter and Kohn (2019) raises attention to the school effect tasks can have. They argue that in a typical school task, students' attention is on completing the task in terms of finding the solution (e.g. answering questions, filling in the gap), and achieving high scores at the expense of communication. If students regard a task as a typical school task, the school effect may come into play and all energy will go to quickly and faultlessly completing the task. The tasks used in the studies referred to in recent literature on peer interaction all seem to fit the profile of a typical school type task. More specifically, the tasks used in the studies by Donato (1988), Nelson and Murphy (1993), Lockhart and Ng (1995) and Storch (2001, 2002) are, with no exception, written tasks that vary from sentence and text based grammar exercises to more open writing assignments in which students have to summarize texts, analyse language functions and comment on the written work of their partner. Furthermore, these tasks were carried out in the face-to-face foreign language classroom as part of the regular class work the students had to do to get graded. The obvious school type nature of these tasks strongly supports the assumption that they are likely to have triggered a certain school effect on the students' requirements of success, attitudes and performance, and influenced their pattern of interaction and the roles they took on during pair work.

How is it possible that NL3 perceives the learning station task as a 'typical' school task students are often presented with at school and adjusts her behaviour accordingly? Since the warm-up task in BigBlueButton has the characteristics of a more personal and less school type task, a comparison of the warm-up task and the learning station task concerning NL3's approach to task realisation might throw some light on the matter. In the warm-up task, students were asked to get to know each other and practise their conversation skills by talking about themselves, listening to their partner and asking questions. When taking a look at the TP parameters Language and Partner Orientation with regard to the behavioural dimension, the conversation extract below reveals that NL3 shows a sincere interest in her partner and gives DE3 the room he needs to consult an online dictionary. Moreover, on the attitudinal dimension, NL3 shows empathy when she reassures him that she also uses an online dictionary to look up difficult words:

NL3: No? No! Okay. What do you want to study or don't you know?

DE3: I…I…wait a second I must translate it…(nods no)…

NL3: Okay, it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter. I have to translate things too because I have a lot of words I just don't know you know. (meanwhile M is searching the Internet).

DE3: Mechanical engineering.

NL3: Oh, alright, oh…technic…a technical study…oh right.

DE3: Yes.

In another part of their conversation in the warm-up task, NL3 engages with DE3's contribution by explaining that she is not good at technical subjects, and she continues the conversation by asking what he wants to do for a living after school. When DE3 does not understand her question, she applies various strategies such as using Google translator and rephrasing her question in three different ways to explain the word 'profession' to get him to join in:

NL3: Oh no, I'm really not good at that kind of thing. I'm better with languages and history but I'm not that good in, you now, math, or something…no, no, no…but yeah and what do you want to become? After magical, me..meg..uh, your study? …Do you know what you want to become after it?...Something with technic or something?

DE3: Uh, what did you mean when…

NL3: As I…what do you want to become after your study so you…uh…wait a moment I gonna look it…I'm gonna find it on Google translate…I have to look it up…*Dui…nee*, *Nederlands*, *Nederlands*, …yes, *beroep*, professions, yeah, that's right, it's called profession. You know what you wanna be? You know when you are older or something. Where do you wanna work or you don't know?

When NL3 asks: "What is your favourite vacation country?", DE3 replies: "Good question, ah…", which triggers NL3's smiling comment: "Yeah, I'm good at asking questions". Furthermore, at the end of their meeting, they agree that it was a nice conversation:

NL3: It was nice, right?

DE3: Yes!

Thus, in the BigBlueButton warm-up task, NL3 is attitudinally and cognitively engaged with her partner and his contributions. Getting to know DE3 requires NL3 to let him talk and help him when he gets stuck. This explains why the students' interaction is more collaborative in the warm-up task than in the learning station task. DE3 notices the difference in peer dynamics between the two tasks. In the post-task interview, he characterises the communication in the warm-up task as more open and balanced:

I found the first task better in the sense that we...so I don't know how long the chat with her went there, but I was definitely there with her for three quarters of an hour and so, that was it, I talked to her forever and that's why I found it, I would say better because I, I participated into the

> conversation a lot more than with the second task [...] my partner was relatively open there [Task 1], that was right, so that...I say the chemistry was right. (DE3)

In the learning station task, the students have to discuss issues of waste avoidance based on the content on the interactive boards. Authentic materials (e.g. the YouTube video *Trashed*) are used to introduce a real-world problem. As the main pedagogical purpose of the task was to get students involved in discussions that resemble authentic communication, Erlam's four criteria for task-based language learning (2015) were applied for task design. More specifically, these concern (1) focusing on meaning rather than linguistic form, (2) closing some kind of gap in understanding or knowledge across students, (3) requiring students to use their own linguistic resources rather than pre-taught structures or expressions, and (4) leading to an outcome other than language use. Yet, the school context and the setup of the learning stations may nevertheless have triggered a school effect. At this point in the discussion, it is important to mention that while some tasks can have a strong school-type character, the school effect must not be seen as a task property. Rather, certain tasks are more likely to trigger a school effect than others. What might seem a typical school task for student X, might be perceived as the more authentic being by student Y. Thus, the school effect comes into play when a task either bears the characteristics of a typical school task or is perceived as one.

When discussing evidence concerning Task Appropriation on the behavioural dimension, we see that although NL3 says: "[It] is a kind of game", she follows the task instructions quite narrowly. For example, at the end of the learning path, NL3 expands on the topic by explaining what happens when you leave rubbish on the ground in Australia. For a moment, she briefly steps away from the instructions and personalises the task to fit in better with her own needs and interests when she talks about her desire to visit Australia, a topic she also addressed in the warm-up task:

> I believe in Australia, yeah, it's really forbidden to throw things on the ground. If you do that you really have to go to the police station...ohh, I really want to go to Australia...once...but I already said that. (NL3)

But sticking to task instructions seems to be more important:

> Okay...but that's a whole other subject...we have to think about two other solutions. (NL3)

On the cognitive dimension, evidence shows that NL3 feels competent to do the learning station task on her own: "The assignment itself was pretty easy [...] I think it was too easy"). In

addition, she seems to see the task as a typical school task and does not consider collaboration essential for doing the task: "You usually do things alone at school". When confronted with a problem, she does not consult her partner but considers it important to: "...find solutions yourself" and prefers to employ tools: "Some words you don't know but you have a translation site for that". In the warm-up task, the situation is quite different. Since it is about getting to know each other, NL3 needs her partner to open up to her and share information. By contrast, in the learning station task, she does not need DE3's contribution to complete the learning path successfully. So, the 'school-effect' the learning station task triggers, offers an explanation for NL3's uncollaborative behaviour and attitude. NL3's perception of the task as a school task, however, holds implications for how both students make the task their own. Whereas NL3 uses the task to meet her requirements of task success (i.e. practise her fluency and conversational skills), DE3 is forced in the role of passive contributor. Although he tries to make the best of it, one wonders what could have happened if he had had another partner.

In keeping with Storch's argumentation, we have observed that an imbalance in peer interaction may be negative for learning. In addition, however, findings strongly support the assumption that the school effect has to be considered as well. This exchange shows that the school effect makes it almost natural for the higher-proficient student to dominate the collaboration; and it is also tempting for low-proficiency students to let themselves be dominated because they think or feel it is about finalizing the task with as less mistakes as possible since this seems to be the safest road to success. Acknowledging that certain tasks can trigger a school effect holds implications for future task engagement research. So far, focus in engagement studies and research on peer interaction has been mainly on students' proficiency and dominance but based on the observations made in this chapter, research attention should also go to the school effect tasks can trigger. In this exchange, the school effect characterizes the students' task engagement and how they make the task their own. All in all, their task engagement and ownership profile would have been more desirable for language learning, especially for DE3's learning, if NL3 had taken a more collaborative approach to task realisation.

6.4 | Collaborative task realisation

NL4 (Male) is a 16-year-old Dutch student of English (CEFR, B2) and his partner DE4 (Male) is a 17-year-old German student of English (CEFR, B1). NL4 participates in the TeCoLa project because he wants to improve his pronunciation, practise his fluency and test his vocabulary and conversational skills in an authentic setting. For him it is important to get to know his partner and have a natural conversation. In an interview, NL4's teacher describes him as: "...a very social person who likes to talk and he wants people, like him, to feel relaxed and comfortable". DE4 joins because he wants to improve his pronunciation and meet someone new. Furthermore,

it is important for him to "speak slowly and clearly, especially at the beginning". He is afraid that, otherwise, NL4 might not understand him because of his strong dialect. In the post-task interview, DE4's teacher mentions two reasons.

> One is that he wanted to improve his English, his communication skills. The second point, I guess is that he was just interested in it, he likes talking. He likes to work in groups and he is interested in technology. He is for example a student who uses a tablet...PC, in class, instead of paper. I guess it helps him. (German teacher)

The warm-up task in BigBlueButton (Task 1) starts with some technical problems and initially NL4 is insecure about speaking English correctly: "At the beginning I thought I would say things incorrectly, especially with vocabulary….that I cannot think of the right words or just make grammatical mistakes"; but he manages to shake these thoughts off: "I actually let that go in advance [before the meeting]. Like, yes, I am also here to learn and I just want to do my best so I just moved past that". In a focus group following the warm-up task, NL4 explains why he liked their first getting together: "Great, that it just clicked and that he was also motivated. He also wanted to put some effort into it and I like that". DE4 is also nervous, but his anxiety disappears when he meets his partner and realises they have a lot in common. In preparation for the learning station task in the TeCoLa Virtual World (Task 2), he enjoys editing his funny looking avatar: "My character is so ugly, but I love it". When they meet in the virtual environment, DE4 is still a little anxious that he is not proficient enough to express himself in English but NL4 gives him the confidence he needs to join in. The meeting lasts 38 minutes.

Recent studies suggest that the inherently social nature of peer interaction is of key importance for L2 development; see Philp et al. (2014) and Sato and Ballinger (2016) for a review. Research findings tell us that students' ability to profit from peer interaction is greatly affected by the social dynamics of their pair work (e.g. Breen, 2001). When students feel comfortable they tend to speak more and are more open to receiving feedback and correcting their own errors. In addition, a greater level of comfort helps students to attend to errors in their partners' speech and give them corrective feedback as well (Sato & Ballinger, 2016). Students who engage in a collaborative pattern of peer interaction participate in pair work, create and maintain a 'joint problem space' (Teasley & Roschelle, 1993) in which they engage with each other's ideas (Erickson, 1989) and join forces on all task aspects (Underwood & Underwood, 1999). Focussing on the TP parameters Partner Orientation, Communicative Participation, Language and Task appropriation, I will now discuss how NL4's collaborative behaviour and attitude contribute to a safe learning environment in which he and his partner DE4 engage with the task and make it their own.

At the heart of this exchange is the students' strong engagement with each other's contributions. On the behavioural dimension of Partner Orientation, evidence reveals that NL4 and DE4 collaborate and complement each other (e.g. DE4: "We worked well together and we complemented each other reasonably well"), consistently refer back to and expand on each other's previous comments, and encourage one another to continue (e.g. T: "You can speak" and "That's a good idea"). During task realisation, NL4 consistently checks in on his partner (e.g. "Are you okay?") and offers assistance. This can also be observed on the behavioural dimension of Task Management when NL4 guides his partner through task procedure. For instance, he advises DE4 to take notes and, towards the end of the learning path, checks if he has done so ("Are you writing these stuff down?"). NL4 also explains how he goes about note-taking and how writing down some keywords will make it easier for DE4 to complete the worksheet after the meeting. According to DE4's teacher, the way in which NL4 offers support is exactly what DE4 needs to perform well:

> I guess he can do a lot on his own but he needs a guiding hand who says 'do it now…stay focussed… hand in the project'. He's someone who needs a lot of guidance, but if he feels comfortable and if you guide him and motivate him, then he is able to perform. (German teacher)

Evidence on the emotional-attitudinal dimension of Partner Orientation shows they enjoy spending time together (e.g. T: "It was very nice") and DE4 suggests to stay on the learning path ("Shall we visit the city [Chatterdale] here - a little bit?"). In addition, there are longer passages of saying goodbye and wishing each other good luck, and they laugh a lot. These comments also support their strong engagement concerning the TP parameter Communicative Participation. With regard to Partner Orientation, it is important to mention that before they started with the task, NL4 mentioned it should be okay to address their problems. In the post-task interview, he says: "We had discussed beforehand that if you didn't know something, it doesn't matter, then just say it, then we'll help each other". Introspective evidence on the cognitive dimension reveals that for NL4 it should be "accepted that you make a mistake [...] and that you correct each other" because he thinks "that's how you learn". He believes experimenting with the L2 in a safe learning environment is essential for learning. According to NL4 it is important "that you are not going to say less because you actually don't dare and are afraid to make mistakes. So just try everything". In addition, he emphasizes that "it is also nice if you do not feel much pressure on it then". This attitude can also be observed in the meeting when they address DE4's word finding problem. In the conversation extract below, NL4 says that being correct is not important to him and adds they should feel free to say so when one of them does not understand what the other is saying:

DE4: Sometimes I want to say something in English. I have the German sentence in my head, but then I recog-, no not recognise, then I think then.
NL4: Yeah, I know what you mean.
DE4: Recognise that I haven't the right words to say that.
(NL4 agrees and says it happens to him all the time)
NL4: If you try and do your best, it's perfect.
DE4: As long as you understand me.
NL4: It's okay. If I don't get it, I'll say it and if you also do this, it will be okay.

NL4 also tries to make his partner feel relaxed so that he experiences the same level of comfort as NL4 himself ("Then I try to put him at ease so that from his side that feeling is there as well, that's what I try"). According to NL4, people are more likely to participate in conversations when they are relaxed ("That you put each other at ease so that you can share more"). The expression of empathy greatly helps to make his partner feel comfortable. For instance, when DE4 remarks at the beginning of the learning path: "...and the sixth and the fifth...sixth..ehm...my spelling is awful sometimes", NL4 reassures his partner that making mistakes is "no problem". He believes they should be able to "...just communicate openly [...] with each other", and he is consistent with his own advice by talking about his own weaknesses. In her interview, the Dutch teacher mentions an in-class feedback session she had with NL4 in which he explained how he tried to put DE4 at ease:

> I think DE4 was a bit shy and insecure and NL4 said that he really tried to help DE4 with that. So, he said 'I made a few mistakes so I hope he knows he can make mistakes as well'. But I also think that NL4 quite liked the fact that he could help someone and that he could see that DE4 at some point tried to talk more, so he was a bit more comfortable. (Dutch teacher)

NL4's efforts to make his partner feel comfortable enough to process the content and talk about it pay off as is evident from DE4's comments in the post-task interview:

> The main thing was the communication, that is, that it is given, that you understand each other, understand the arguments, and then I also think the content, what you say, that you understand it and, above all, that what you understand makes sense. (DE4)

For both students it is crucial to achieve communicative success; being correct is perceived as less important. This observation corresponds with findings in the literature. For instance, Kohn and Hoffstaedter (2017) observed that students participating in pedagogical lingua franca

conversations "relax their classroom-related requirement of correctness and put a stronger emphasis on communicating meaning" (p. 10). In a virtual PLF exchange, students are in the same language learning boat as their communication partners and this condition can help them to feel more confident and comfortable about their English. In this connection, studies by Shehadeh (2001), Oliver (2002) and Sato and Lyster (2007) show that students feel more stressed when interacting with a native speaker because they feel intimidated by their 'perfect' English. In his post-task interview, DE4 talks about the pedagogical lingua franca condition and how it lowered his anxiety:

R: Yes, but maybe would you have preferred to speak to someone who is now a native English speaker.
DE4: Not necessarily.
R: Or did you think it was good that it was someone like you who is also a student of English as a foreign language?
DE4: Yes, I preferred it because otherwise I would probably have been more insecure because the other […] and that's why I liked it.

When we extend our discussion to the TP parameter Language, it becomes evident how the great level of comfort experienced by both NL4 and DE4 facilitates collaborative languaging. DE4's problems with expressing himself manifest themselves on the behavioural dimension in grammatical errors (e.g. "You can also see it with, at the fishes") and pronunciation problems (e.g. "When you open their stomatsch [stomach]"), which make his English sometimes difficult to understand. In the post-task interview, DE4 comments on these problems and says they are mainly caused by his limited lexical repertoire: "Subject words and everyday words […] have not occurred to me and subject words were the worst for me now". To offer support, NL4 rephrases sentences, and gives DE4 time to think and carry out comprehension checks. For instance, when DE4 does not understand NL4's remark concerning how useful note-taking can be, he asks: "What do you mean?". When minor problems arise, for instance not knowing a word, they address the problem, provide and accept support and solve it collaboratively to both their satisfaction:

R: So you could actually solve that [a problem] on the spot?
NL4: Yes.

In the post-task interview, NL4 adds "He [DE4] also helped me if I didn't know something and that is how we finally came to the same conclusion and we could understand each other". Both teachers make similar observations and the Dutch teacher remarks in her interview:

> I think they were paired quite well. I don't know DE4 but when I hear the stories from NL4, I think that NL4 is quite a person who could sort of keep the conversation going. (Dutch teacher)

When trying to make sense of the problems they face, they 'language' (Swain, 2006) themselves through challenging parts of the task. For instance, as evidence in the conversation extract below reveals, NL4 and DE4 analyse and discuss their word finding problem together. While NL4 thinks it is partly because he thinks too fast, DE4 is convinced that his lexical problems have to do with gaps in his topic-related vocabulary:

> DE4: Sometimes my language - how can I say this? - doesn't work how I want it.
> NL4: No, I'm also thinking too fast and speaking, I cannot compare to my thinking speed (laughs). I think it's the same as your problem.
> DE4: It's complicated, because I haven't the right words, I don't know, the right science words, you know what I mean?

It is interesting to observe how both keep making efforts to be understood (e.g. DE4 persists in pronouncing the word 'recognise' correctly and NL4: "Yes, I made an effort, I have to say, that he could understand me"). Concerning the students' attitudinal engagement, two observations are worth mentioning. DE4 wants to express himself but does not manage to do so to his complete satisfaction. Not being able to express himself the way he wants leaves him occasionally frustrated ("Sometimes I want to hit me in the face"). Nevertheless, data reveals that he is overall satisfied with the way he made himself understood and this feeling is shared by his partner (NL4: "He [DE4] has also made himself clearly understood. ...I understood exactly what he meant. Only occasionally a few clues to come up with a word"). This evidence also shows that these two aspects of attitudinal engagement, i.e. being dissatisfied with one's own competence but simultaneously being satisfied with what one has achieved in a limited time, can co-exist. Both students like the fact that they can approach language-related problems collaboratively, and they perceive their team work as "nice". Thus, altogether, evidence reveals a collaborative pattern of peer interaction. But how does the task's technology influence the students' collaborative relationship?

When looking at Technology, introspective evidence reveals that NL4 prefers the warm-up task in BigBlueButton because the video contact made it possible for him to look DE4 in the eyes: "I myself just like to look each other in the eyes - I think that's [...] more personal". By contrast, in the learning station task in the virtual environment, he perceives a lack of authenticity ("... then I have less of a feeling that I am really in discussion with someone"). In the literature on virtual worlds, a lack of perceived authenticity is mentioned quite frequently. Among others,

Deutschmann and Panichi (2009) describe students' negative perceptions of their own and their partner's visual representation via an avatar as a potential challenge of virtually supported distant communication. In this exchange, however, being an avatar does not seem to impact negatively on the students' collaboration and feeling of comfort. Although they cannot see each other, they use language to negotiate and further develop their interpersonal relationship.

Regarding Task Appropriation, evidence reveals some interesting discussions on how to do the task best. While making the task their own, they go beyond the instructions and the topic, e.g. when they discuss the value of note-taking and when they talk freely about topics such as 'geography' and 'their Christmas break plans'. In the post-task interview, NL4 says they talked about all kinds of things and looked for shared interests:

> We also talked about how things are with him there in Germany and just hobbies and all those things that say something about who he is [...] just ask a little bit and look for shared interests. And suppose he also liked running, we talked about that for a while and I like that he did that. (NL4)

In hindsight, both students describe going beyond task instructions as "fun" and say they communicated more because it felt safe to do so (e.g. NL4: "I noticed that I can talk more freely, just more relaxed. That I don't think about what I want to say, but just say what I want").

To sum things up, NL4's collaborative attitude and behaviour help to create a safe learning environment in which both students can experiment freely with the target language. In this exchange, the task engagement and ownership profile is, in particular, determined by both students' strong engagement with Partner Orientation, Communicative Participation, Language and Task Appropriation. This pattern positively influences DE4's learning in terms of overcoming his anxiety to speak and make mistakes. In addition, it was interesting to observe how the pedagogical lingua franca condition raised both students' confidence to participate in collaborative communication.

6.5 | Negative partner influence

NL5 (Female) is a 16-year-old Dutch student of English (CEFR, B2) and her partner DE5 (Male) is a 17-year-old German student of English (CEFR, B1/2). NL5 participates in the TeCoLa project because she wants to improve her pronunciation and practise her fluency. For her, it is important to meet someone from a different national and cultural background and practise a natural conversation. When asked how she feels about participating in an online intercultural project, she replies: "I am not easily insecure about something like this. I talk quite easily". DE5 joins because he wants to improve his fluency for his oral exam, gain "more self-confidence in speaking English in front of other people" and improve his listening skills in terms of "understanding what other people say". Furthermore, for DE5 it is important to carry out the

task in “a friendly, not school-like atmosphere” in which “it’s fine to make mistakes”. If problems arise, he expects them to be language-related, e.g. “missing vocabulary” and “missing grammar rules”. His teacher says about him:

> He is really, really silent and shy in class. I’m not sure why, probably it is because of his language skills because we had an excursion to England and there he was really interested in all the historical aspects. He asked questions and I really got to know him in a totally different way than I knew him from class. And there I was already surprised, so I could imagine in the project it is also a bit different because it is not the typical classroom setting. (DE5)

In preparation for the warm-up task in BigBlueButton (Task 1), the Dutch teacher discussed how to start a conversation in English but NL5 is quite confident she already knows how to do that: “I’m pretty good at that myself, I must say”. However, during the meeting, NL5 notices that it is not easy to keep the conversation going; in the focus group following the warm-up task she remarks:

> The conversation actually went quite smoothly at the beginning. We had quite a few things in common. We both make music in a fanfare and we both play sports and that is quite nice, but at some point we ran out of topics to discuss and then he said “I think we are ready” and then we ended the conversation. (NL5)

Throughout the warm-up task, they use all kinds of strategies to express themselves. For instance, they explain words, use Google translator, and use the webcam to show objects they cannot explain in English (NL5: “He [DE5] didn’t know the English word for his [wind] instrument, so he just picked up his instrument and that’s how we got it”). Both students are relaxed and enjoy getting to know each other. However, when approaching the learning station task in the TeCoLa Virtual World (Task 2), NL5’s positive attitude turns around. NL5 has to hand in two big school assignments around the same time they agree to meet for the learning station task. Instead of postponing, she joins DE5 in the virtual environment but does not pay attention during the technical briefing. When the meeting starts, DE5 asks if they shall go through the instruction on board 1 together: “Should I read it out loud?” but NL5 replies quite bluntly: “I can see it!”. This somewhat negative attitude remains for the entire exchange. Their meeting lasts 24 minutes.

Until the beginning of the 1990s, L2 studies related to issues on engagement were not much concerned with students’ attitudes. In general, we can say that the attitudinal dimension was studied in three more or less related fields of research. To start with, studies on motivation

dominated the scene; they looked at human behaviour in a macro-sense "emphasizing general action tendencies and their relationship with basic motivational influences" (Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000, p. 277). Researchers studied how and why language learning tasks as such differ in their suitability for promoting engagement. At about the same time, research in the field of psychology viewed task completion as an achievement merely determined by students' cognitive abilities. And finally, when looking at L2 research (e.g. Gardner, 1985), emphasis was on examining how students' general attitudes towards the targeted language affected their propensity to engage in L2 learning. From the 1990s onward, under the influence of changing paradigms in the fields of motivation, psychology and education (e.g. Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Williams & Burden, 1997), a new direction emerged which shifted the emphasis from general to situation and task-specific motives. As a result, most L2 engagement studies started to aim at understanding language students' concrete classroom behaviours and task motivation better. This shift also meant that scholars, although still few in number, started taking the affective dimension into account when studying students' engagement in the foreign language classroom. In this section, I will discuss how NL5's negative attitude influences her partner's engagement with the task unfavourably and characterizes both students' task ownership profile in an undesirable way. Special attention will be given to the TP parameters Technology, Topic & Content and Partner Orientation.

NL5's negative attitude manifests itself predominantly in relation to Technology. She does not know how to move her avatar ("Oh...terrible thing") and keeps repeating that some boards do not work or are too slow ("Oh, it's so slow"). Introspective evidence shows she does not like being in the virtual world (e.g. "I don't like playing games…that's not for me") or communicating with an avatar ("In that virtual world you are talking to a puppet"). NL5 does not engage with the technology cognitively because she believes it does not contribute to her learning: "You want to practice your English [...] I don't think that's useful in the virtual world". Her teacher also observed her negative attitude towards the task's technology and remarks in the interview:

> She didn't really like the virtual world. […] She basically told me 'I don't like this, it's a waste of time', so for that part I don't think she was that involved. […] She just said it didn't…she didn't feel like it added anything. She said 'I couldn't see him and it didn't really matter if we talked about it in the virtual world', so she didn't really understand why she had to do it. (Dutch teacher)

NL5's negative attitude, however, is not limited to Technology. With regard to Topic & Content, introspective evidence reveals NL5 does not like the topic either. She feels the topic has already been discussed in detail in other courses: "I now have an R&D [Research & Design] project and then you have to do this too and that was also about recycling and we went further on bricks because plastic has already been dealt with into detail". And would have liked to discuss "more

about the English language and something that is more interesting for our age". In addition, on the behavioural dimension, it can be observed how her indifferent behaviour towards content, e.g. sarcastically commenting on correct answers ("Perfect!"), hinders her from participating in in-depth discussions on waste avoidance. A possible explanation for her behaviour could be that in her own perception the task is too easy. In support of this, introspective evidence on the cognitive and cognitive-attitudinal dimension shows NL5 thinks the topic is "so standard". In addition, she feels that especially "the multiple-choice questions were too easy" and that she "needed more challenge". However, NL5's retrospection of the task being too easy is not consistent with the remarks she makes during task realisation (e.g. "I thought this would be really easy work!"). Moreover, she does not come across as very knowledgeable in the discussions and her topic-related vocabulary seems to be poor. In the post-task interview, DE5 talks about the fact that they should have put more effort into describing difficult words: "Maybe we could have described more", but NL5 explains in her interview that she did not make an effort to use more difficult topic-related vocabulary, simply because she was not interested in discussing waste avoidance:

> If you are interested, you just try harder [...] now I may have used too easy words whereas you want to use those difficult words more [...] Then you don't think so much about your English because you are not interested in it...so then you want to finish it quickly anyway, and then you also don't do your utmost concerning your English. (NL5)

This evidence also quite clearly illustrates how NL5's low cognitive-attitudinal engagement negatively influences her cognitive and subsequently her behavioural engagement. The interaction between these dimensions of engagement can also be found in the interview extract below. Here, NL5 tries to explain how her low cognitive-attitudinal engagement with Topic & Content, i.e. not being interested in the topic, negatively influences her behavioural engagement concerning Communicative Participation:

> NL5: I think [that] if we both were more interested that more would have come out. That it went better.
>
> R: And when you say that more would have come out, you mean that you would have talked more or that you had more ... What exactly do you mean?
>
> NL5: That you would talk more about it [the topic], yes.

When NL5 continues (see the interview extract below), it becomes clear that she is aware of the fact that her low cognitive-attitudinal engagement prevented her from reaching her own

requirements of task success, i.e. practising her conversation skills in preparation for her upcoming oral exam.

> And that you would brainstorm more new ideas and that you keep on coming up with better ideas. That you are longer ... if you are interested you are going to talk longer and communicate more and more and find more new ideas and then you eventually come up with new ideas quite naturally. So then you work it out better. (NL5)

So, the topic of waste avoidance, the way in which the content is displayed on the learning station boards and the tools in the virtual world do not appeal to her. In the post-task interview, she describes the warm-up task as "better" because it was "more efficient". In this connection, however, when asked to reflect on her hasty behaviour during the learning station task, NL5 explains she had other school-related things on her mind and felt time pressure: "I was quite busy with other courses". She then explains that her lack of time made her go "a little faster through it [the task]". Consistently, the Dutch teacher mentions in her interview that she felt NL5 "tended to like the project when there was enough time for it [the warm-up task] and otherwise it [the learning station task] felt sometimes as a bit of a burden".

We know from literature that time pressure induces feelings of stress, and this is what students need to be able to cope with (Ordoñez & Benson, 1997). When students feel stressed, other things such as rapport development are weakened or may even disappear from view entirely (Laney & Loftus, 2013). Consistently, recognizing the feelings of others and tuning into verbal and nonverbal cues becomes extremely difficult. Students who suffer from stress are often so concerned with their own issues such as their planning and goals that they lose sight of what their partners might want, need, think or feel. A total fixation on task completion affects their ability to respond to the situation at hand and makes them less responsive to their partners. Lebrun (2016) argues that "one of the most profound impacts of stress is the comprised ability to see the perspective of others especially 'in the moment' […] empathy is far more difficult to access during stress events" (p. 55). In addition, students who experience stress can become short-tempered, less cooperative and lose interest in participating. The evidence discussed so far reveals how school-related stress impacts unfavourably on NL5's attitudinal engagement. But what about DE5? How do NL5's negative attitude and behaviour influence him and his engagement with the task?

In contrast to his partner, DE5 engages with the topic on the cognitive-attitudinal dimension ("It was an interesting topic for me because I haven't really dealt with it myself yet") and enjoys discussing different perspectives on waste avoidance ("It was even more interesting because you had a second opinion"). From his perspective, the task "was a good challenge" and he is

especially positive about the discussion activities: “I actually thought they were really good because we didn’t always have the same opinion”. With regard to the TeCoLa Virtual World, DE5 says he felt relaxed and really enjoyed doing the task in this “fun environment”:

> I thought that was pretty good in the virtual world. It just seemed friendlier et cetera and also, don’t know how to describe it exactly, but if it were such a silent film presentation, I wouldn’t [...] go into the task as much and it would be a lot - not as relaxed I would say... - so if you had done it in a presentation, it really would not have been so entertaining in some instances. (DE5)

Nevertheless, during task realisation, NL5’s mood influences his involvement. Instead of openly enjoying himself and displaying his interest in the topic or the virtual world, he laughs about her sarcastic jokes and adopts her behaviour. It should be mentioned that DE5 notices that his partner is stressed and wants to finish the task quickly: “She came across a little stressed, so she wanted to deal with the task a bit too fast”. In addition, he also feels that there was “a bit of time pressure in the background”. Instead of addressing NL5’s superficial processing of questions on the boards, he gives in. For instance, when he starts to explain why he has a different opinion, he realises NL5 wants to speed things up and does not continue with his own argument. In terms of making the task his own, this evidence also reveals that, by adapting his task approach to NL5’s, DE5 favours building rapport with his partner above meeting his requirements of task success (i.e. practising his speaking skills). NL5 notices that DE5 “adjusted his behaviour” and mentions that “he also wanted to come up quickly with solutions“. At the same time, however, she wondered if DE5 also felt a time-pressure (“I’m not quite sure if he had that as well”) because he did not try to slow her down. It is interesting that NL5 explains in the post-task-interview that if DE5 had tried to motivate her to participate, it would have likely had a positive effect on their overall engagement:

> Yes, I also think that if he had said “come on, come up with better ideas, keep trying, a little more brainstorming”, that I would have done the same. But because he didn’t do that either, I thought, oh, okay, then just continue so to say. But if he had said “come on, we are doing this, it has to be good”, then I would have done my best more and something better would have come out. So it was a bit from both sides I think. (NL5)

Another negative side effect of stress is that it is difficult for students to accurately recall what happened during a stressful situation. Based on their experiences, students create personal realities of events and this can lead to inaccurate post-task accounts of their behaviour (Laney & Loftus, 2013). In Exchange 5, evidence reveals that NL5 has some distorted perceptions of her

task performance and, more specifically, of the underlying reasons for her negative behaviour and attitude. For instance, when asked why they finished the task quickly, NL5 said it was due to the unclear instructions on the boards "...because we found the assignment so vague, we carried it out quickly". Initially, she did not see her own behaviour and stress-related feelings as a possible underlying cause for the hasty and uninterested manner in which she realised the task. Later in the interview, however, when some examples from the recorded meeting are used to talk about her performance, NL5 shows more awareness of why she behaved the way she did and how it might have impacted negatively on her partner's task performance:

R: Do you feel that your attitude had an effect on your partner's attitude?

NL5: Yes, maybe it did. I was, like I said, I was very busy then because I had to hand in a big project so…yes, I think that that was the reason I hurried a little bit and did not do the task like...yes, that I did not care...that because of that...and maybe he also thought 'Yes, then go through it quickly'.

In hindsight, both students say that they should have taken the task more seriously and spent more time on discussions:

NL5: I think for both of us participating a little more serious.

DE5: So maybe I would go into more detail, because afterwards I noticed things where we might have gone into more detail.

Taking all evidence into consideration, we can conclude that NL5's negative attitude prevents her from seeing the task's relevance and leads to indifferent behaviour. In turn, DE5 does not address his partner's behaviour and submits himself to NL5's control over the task. Consistently, the data analysis reveals how NL5's low attitudinal engagement, in particular, with the TP parameters Topic & Content and Technology impacts unfavourably on her partner's engagement and how he takes ownership of the learning station task. DE5 could have benefited more from this task experience if he had addressed his partner's negative attitude and behaviour. Arguably, then, their task engagement and ownership profiles might have been more desirable for language learning.

6.6 | Positive partner influence

NL6 (Female) is a 17-year-old Dutch student of English (CEFR, C1) and her partner DE6 (Female) is a 17-year-old German student of English (CEFR, C1). NL6 participates in the TeCoLa project because she wants to meet someone from a different national and cultural background and

discuss intercultural topics. For her, it is important to work together in a positive and cooperative atmosphere. In the interview, NL6's teacher says about her:

> She is always thinking about doing volunteer work and when she participated in the programme [TeCoLa Project], she also applied to the United World College because she really liked the international aspect of it and liked to meet people from a different country and talking about these [global] issues and she thought that would really suit her. (Dutch teacher)

DE6 is "motivated to improve [her] English skills" for her oral exam and future purposes. Furthermore, DE6 writes it is important for her to understand and get on well with her exchange partner. In the interview, her teacher describes her as follows:

> DE6 is a very nice young lady […] in class she always does all the tasks, hands in all her homework, learns what you tell her to learn and she was also…I guess she also volunteered for the project because she really wanted to profit from it. She saw this as an opportunity to practise her English. She realised that in class, maybe sometimes, she or the other students are not really focussed and I guess that was why she participated. […] She performed very well in the A-levels so she's a good student. She is the student who you really like as a teacher. (German teacher)

Both students are very enthusiastic about their warm-up task in BigBlueButton (Task 1). They talk for over an hour, add each other on WhatsApp and decide to arrange another video meeting independently from the TeCoLa project. In the post-task focus group following the warm-up task, NL6 comments on the pleasant and cooperative atmosphere during their encounter:

> It went very smoothly from the start...simply talking all the time and if DE6 did not know what to say, I would say something and we went like this, back and forth, all the time. Then it's easy to talk for an hour and yes, I liked that very much. (NL6)

When meeting each other for the learning station task in the TeCoLa Virtual World (Task 2), both students face some technical challenges; NL6's laptop is slow and on DE6's screen the virtual environment is pink. In addition, DE6 cannot see the board content so she uses a separate online document with the contents and the link to the Youtube video *Trashed*. During task realisation, the students discuss the topic of waste avoidance in great detail. They use their personal experiences to enrich the conversation and make the task their own. They are in the TeCoLa Virtual World for 70 minutes and this is considerably longer than the other pairs of students.

The way in which students take task ownership in the communicative classroom is often influenced by their willingness and ability to self-regulate their own learning. However, for students to make a task their own in a manner that enables them to meet their requirements of task success, they also have to feel the right and autonomy to do so. According to Self-determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), the degree to which students perceive themselves as autonomous in a certain learning context facilitates processes of ownership acquisition and determines their task engagement. In addition, students can influence each other's engagement with the task by either facilitating or hindering their partner(s)' autonomous behaviour during task realisation. In section 6.5, we discussed how a student's attitude impacts unfavourably on her partner's engagement. In this section, evidence will reveal how NL6's initially negative attitude concerning some task aspects is successfully countered by her partner's overall positive approach to the learning station task at hand. Referring to the TP parameters Partner Orientation, Technology, Topic & Content, Task Management and Communicative Participation, I will address how DE6 facilitates NL6 to overcome her initial hesitations to carry out the task and join in.

What stands out in this exchange is DE6's collaborative and open attitude towards her partner. On the behavioural dimension of Partner Orientation there is a lot of evidence that reveals how she creates a pleasant atmosphere and makes an effort to further develop the rapport they have built during the warm-up task. For instance, when standing in front of the first board, DE6 takes time to apologise for forgetting the last meeting and she asks about NL6's health. She also suggests to wait till NL6's content has properly loaded: "You give me a hint when you are ready, okay?". Although she has to use an online document for reading the board content, DE6 makes an effort to move her avatar simultaneously with NL6's avatar so that they can walk the learning path together. DE6's collaborative behaviour is driven by a genuine interest in her partner, for instance when NL6 enthusiastically mentions she sees a rainbow outside, DE6 asks her to send a photo in SnapChat. In the post-task interview, DE6 remarks that it was easy to collaborate with her partner because they are equally proficient and share the same interests: "You are somehow on the same level and if you then want to speak English, then you have the chance to do it well and you always have topics to talk about". That they are a good match in terms of ability and commitment is supported by NL6 who comments positively on their teamwork: "We were […] really collaborating so according to me it went well from both sides". The pleasant atmosphere DE6 creates, especially at the start position of the learning path, reflects positively on her partner. Even despite some technical start-up problems and NL6's initial reluctance to discuss the topic of waste avoidance, the students carry out the task enthusiastically. With regard to the emotional-attitudinal dimension, introspective evidence shows they like the project and really enjoy collaborating. During the meeting, it can also be

observed that they laugh a lot. DE6 perceives the rapport they have established in the warm-up task as a prerequisite for carrying out the learning station task successfully:

> I also thought it was good that we first met alone [i.e. in BigBlueButton] and could engage ourselves a little in small talk and just got to know each other a bit; I thought that was very good. (DE6)

To understand DE6's reference to meeting alone during the warm-up task, it should be mentioned that they ignored the pre-task instruction to record the conversation in BigBlueButton. In contrast, the learning station task was recorded by a member of the TeCoLa team. What matters for our discussion is that NL6 describes the encounter in BigBlueButton as a natural conversation in which they interchangeably asked questions and shared information about themselves.

> Just keep asking questions and just tell something yourself when there is a silence and if she dances, for example, then I ask which styles she dances and things like that, yes, just mainly ask questions [...] It actually went very naturally. (NL6)

In her study on social presence in the online classroom, Yildiz (2009) found that it is important for students to know what their partner looks like. In addition, he mentions that social interactions are beneficial to building a working relationship. It is interesting to mention that in the learning station task in the TeCoLa Virtual World, the students are confronted with the issue of waste avoidance. Nonetheless, while making the task their own, they show a certain preference for small talk beyond the main topic. For instance, DE6 asks about NL6's birthday party and shares her ideas on having a vegetarian week. NL6 mentions being a big Christmas fan, and they talk about issues such as preparing for their exams, visiting a reunion and meeting friends. Regarding Topic & Content, DE6's cognitive-attitudinal engagement is high. She finds the topic "up-to-date and interesting" and sees the social relevance of discussing a global issue:

> …was really a topic that you could talk about really well and for a long time [...] you could definitely say something about the topic [...] because these are topics that actually affect everyone, especially at our age, it also affects the environment and such. (DE6)

Similar to her classmate NL5 in Exchange 5, NL6 is initially not interested in the topic. In the interview extract below, she explains why the topic did not appeal to her:

> I thought the subject itself was not very interesting [...] I think that whole pollution story is all very disturbing but I just don't find it that interesting to talk about. (NL6)

NL6's low attitudinal engagement with the topic can also be observed on the behavioural dimension when they stand in front of the first board. When DE6 suggests to follow the instructions on Board 1 and talk about "What happens to the things we throw away?", NL6 seems hesitant to do so:

DE6: [...] shouldn't we talk about this question: "What happens to the things we throw away?" (reads from the board out loud)

NL6: Yeah, I guess we should but yeah- (they both laugh).

As the conversation continues (see the conversation extract below), it is interesting to observe how DE6, despite NL6's initial reservations about the topic, ensures her partner's involvement by gently guiding her into the task. After having laughed about NL6's remark, DE6 initiates a serious discussion on trash that triggers her partner's interest. Afterwards, NL6, quite eagerly, joins in and shares information on a news item she came across on Instagram:

DE6: I think it's horrible what happens in the world that there is so much trash and all the stuff in the nature for example. And I think we should stop buying so much things in plastic or stuff because when you produce plastic, it will never get away and so that so it's every time in the world and that's horrible, I think.

NL6: Yeah! I saw a video on Instagram today from a diver. And he jumped into the sea. And he was all around [surrounded by] garbage and plastic. And I was like OMG! This is not- nooo!

Thus, by voicing her sincere concern about the global waste problem, DE6 induces NL6's interest and pushes her to overcome her topic-related challenges. In this respect, it is important to mention that DE6 notices NL6's initial hesitation to discuss the topic. In the interview, she praises the way in which her partner engaged in the conversation: "She is, I guess, open-minded enough to participate…she would have participated even if it [the task] had not helped her". This is in line with evidence from NL6's interview in which she explains that she wanted to keep an open mind to the exchange experience: "It is an experience that I just have to undergo and I'll see what happens". DE6's intervention turns out to be critical since from this point onwards, many in-depth topic-related discussions follow. Literature concerning learner autonomy in general (Lamb, 2007) and language learner autonomy in particular (Little, 2007) reports on situations in which students help each other to become more autonomous. In Exchange 6, DE6 helps NL6 to overcome her topic-related challenges and take charge of the task in a way that fits in with her requirements of task success. By doing so, DE6 not only regulates her own learning but also that of her partner. In turn, it should be emphasized that DE6's action is only successful because

NL6 lets herself be pushed. This shows that exercising autonomy in a communicative context is a dynamic process that presupposes both students' willingness and readiness to participate actively in task realisation. Essentially, NL6 is well-able to contribute to task realisation but she just needs a little push in the right direction. Most likely, her initial hesitation to join had to do with her insecurity concerning the topic ("I didn't know so much about it [topic] so yes, it is a bit more difficult to talk about it"). Nevertheless, she comes across as highly knowledgeable in these discussions. Afterwards, NL6 mentions that she was taken a little aback when being confronted with the topic because she had not followed courses on environmental issues at school. So, most likely, her perception of lacking the knowledge to make a significant contribution to the discussions has to do with her school-oriented conceptualisation of topic knowledge. Discussing a school task topic generally requires a certain kind of knowledge emphasizing, in particular, background information on the topic, its definition and characteristics. Being familiar with waste avoidance in the real world, however, does not necessarily imply that one has this kind of schoolbook knowledge available. During task realisation, mainly inspired by the freedom DE6 takes in adding a personal touch to the topic-related discussion, NL6 realises that it is perfectly fine to use her rather extensive general knowledge to contribute to the conversation: "You always have general knowledge so then you still can talk about it".

NL6's initially low attitudinal task engagement also manifests itself with regard to Technology: "I didn't like that virtual world at all". For instance, on the emotional-attitudinal dimension, she comments that the boards are "so slow!" and "not responding". NL6 also makes sarcastic remarks: "I don't know if it's going to work...I'm really excited!". In addition, introspective evidence reveals that NL6 does not like being unable to see her partner in the virtual world ("I can hear her but, yes, then you are in a virtual world"), which she perceives as a lack of authenticity ("You are looking at a puppet [avatar] in such a fake world. I think that's a bit strange"). In line with this, she describes the warm-up task in BigBlueButton as "slightly more interactive". In the interview extract below, NL6 explains what she meant by this and adds she prefers an environment that resembles communication in the real world:

R: And you say it has to do with interaction. Can you explain what you mean by that?

NL6: Well, yes. Of course I can hear her and I also hear her intonation but I don't know. When I don't see her, or something like that, it feels a little fake because when you are skyping, you are actually talking to someone but then when through a virtual world...then it feels a little fake or something like that.

R: Was it important for you that it would feel real?

NL6: Yes, I think so. Yes, when you are talking with someone and it's like...Yes, I think that's a bit strange.

Similar to her initial lack of interest in the topic, NL6's frustrations with the task's technology and a perceived lack of authenticity in the virtual world could have easily impacted negatively on her overall engagement with the task, as was the case in Exchange 5. However, this does not happen in Exchange 6. As discussed earlier, DE6's collaborative attitude and behaviour prevent NL6 from being drawn into a downward spiral. Despite her own technical problems with the TeCoLa Virtual World, DE6 does not complain about or prompt NL6's negative comments concerning the task's technology. Although she laughs at some of NL6's sarcastic remarks, DE6 consistently redirects NL6's attention to the content on the board and encourages her to participate in the discussions. DE6 succeeds in her efforts and facilitates NL6 to join in. In the interview, NL6 explains how talking about the contents on the boards fuelled her interest:

> Because I don't think it's such an interesting topic...you don't really think about it that much and if you start thinking about it then you will come up with a lot of things and solutions. (NL6)

In addition, NL6 mentions that she "found it interesting to see those differences between her [DE6] and me and make comparisons". NL6 is also aware of her partner's positive influence on the way in which they realised the task:

> R: We're talking about DE6, your partner, did she have a positive contribution to this assignment?
> NL6: Yes, I thought so. Yes!

So, NL6 manages to shake off her negative feelings with the help of her partner. We also can observe that both students want to get a firm grip on task content and understand why a certain answer is correct or incorrect. In the post-task interview, DE6 comments on the way they went about answering the questions:

> We thought that most boards had two correct answers and didn't know exactly what it should be. And I think that then we didn't understand it correctly, but then when you looked at the answers again...then you got it. (DE6)

In addition, DE6 emphasizes it was okay if you did not understand everything. She believes that challenging content invites students to offer assistance.

> It was difficult perhaps when you did not understand everything from the video, but I don't think it's bad, because when it's a bit more difficult, the other person may have understood it so you can help each other out there. (DE6)

This also indicates that collaborative communication was important to DE6. During task realisation, they talk a lot about what could be done to avoid waste in the environment; not knowing that they are supposed to do that at the final board (Board 8). In the post-task interview, DE6 shows awareness of the fact that they go beyond deciding on the multiple choice questions and comments:

> So all the time with the statements, we were negotiating about what could be done to solve the [waste] problem without knowing that there would be another board where we should discuss that. But we definitely did that. I think we then listed two or three different solutions and before that we both said how we did it at home, how we separate garbage and that we try to buy less plastic-wrapped things and things like that. [...] And we have already discussed a lot about it and we both could express our opinion about it. (DE6)

In this connection, it is important to discuss how both students' understanding of the task and its instructions influence the way in which they carry out the task. At the beginning of her interview, NL6 mentions that her main aim was to develop a relationship with DE6:

> R: What was important to you...to carry out this assignment successfully?
> NL6: I think for the biggest part connecting with her [DE6].

Evidence on the cognitive dimension reveals that DE6 clearly sees the task's implications for their own learning. In the interview, she explains what she believes was the goal of the learning station task:

> So we just took the time to discuss things and I think that was the goal of the task, regardless of whether you understood a statement correctly, the main thing was that you talked about it and exchanged opinions. (DE6)

Taking their time to talk things through was important to her: "Actually, we always took our time and discussed things well, is it this or that?". Together the students appropriate the task to fit in with their own requirements of task success. Most instances of the students' engagement with Task Appropriation can be observed at the interface of the TP parameters Task Management and Topic & Content. For instance, at the beginning of the learning path, evidence reveals that they appropriate the task by taking their time to explicitly discuss how they want to go about following the task's instructions and procedures, e.g. they discuss watching the video in silence and how to go about note-taking. As a result, once they start to discuss the statements on the

boards, procedural talk fades to the background and they move from mere compliance with the instructions (NL6: "We are not going to watch the video again") to actual engagement with the content (DE6: "I think we were fully focused on the Virtual World and then forgot about it [filling in the worksheet]"). In addition, they deviate from instructions. In the interview, NL6 explains that they move beyond and deviated from the mere instructions on the boards because they found their own way of carrying out the task:

R: I noticed you did not fill in a worksheet during the assignment and that you were also quite clear about "we are not going to take notes". Can you tell why that was?

NL6: I don't know. It was more like neither of us felt it was really necessary. And yes, I think we were fine with how it went.

What also makes this exchange interesting is how the students successfully link the task with their own experiences. Previous research shows that it is often more important for students to get to know each other than to discuss the task's content (Martin-Beltrán et al., 2016). In Exchange 6, the students also go beyond the mere exchange of topic-related information and discuss many other things such as 'having a cold', 'cleaning after a birthday party', 'music in the Youtube video' and 'climate issues'. In the post-task interview, NL6 comments on these instances in which they are not merely discussing the content on the boards: "In between we are also just chatting and not working all the time". After each thematic shift, however, they quite easily refocus on the content of the subsequent board (e.g. NL6: "Back to the garbage"). On the emotional-attitudinal dimension regarding Task Appropriation, evidence reveals that both are satisfied about the way in which they made the task their own (e.g. DE6: "So I think we did it pretty well"). NL6 adds that talking about other things should be okay:

R: And what did you think about that? That you talked a lot about other things?

NL6: I thought that was okay. It didn't bother me. I think it should be allowed in between.

The way NL6 talks about how they handled the task also indicates that she feels some autonomy is needed and should be allowed to make it their own. On the behavioural dimension of Communicative Participation, we see that much time is spent on extensive in-depth discussions of the topic drawing on their everyday knowledge and experience. For instance, they go beyond discussing the content on the boards when they refer to what has been in the news recently, e.g. stricter regulations and the climate summit in Poland. Furthermore, they search for additional information on the Internet (e.g. NL6: "How long does it take for plastic to go away in the nature?") and compare the Dutch-German situation and regulations. When

doing so, they also use additional tools such as Google Translator and Wikipedia. They even talk about their experiences with chewing gum and exchange opinions about the US president Trump.

It is also worth mentioning that the phenomenon of 'flow' occurred. Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1990) refers to flow representing, as cited in Aubrey (2017, p. 1), "a state of complete involvement and heightened intensity that leads to improved performance on a task". In this exchange, we saw two students who became so engaged with the task that they lost track of time and pushed themselves and each other to 'ultimate engagement' (Philp & Duchesne, 2016).

The richness of the evidence presented in this subchapter shows how students can rather creatively adapt the task to fit in with their own language learning needs. If DE6 had not been so much orientated towards her partner at the beginning of the learning path, and offered consensual and supportive rapport, some problems they encountered might have impacted negatively on task realisation. These findings show how the students' high engagement with Partner Orientation strengthens their overall engagement with the task. More specifically, it was very interesting to observe how DE6's initial intervention at Board 1 made such a positive impact on the students' pattern of task engagement. In fact, this exchange provides foreign language teachers with a 'best practice' example of a pedagogically desirable task ownership profile.

6.7 | Summary and conclusions

In this chapter, the two-layered approach combining the three-dimensional model of task engagement with the TP parameter model was applied to analyse and describe the empirical data of six Dutch-German virtual pair exchanges. The approach was adopted to analyse the participating students' task engagement by exchange across all TP parameters to identify possible patterns of task engagement and ownership. All exchanges were described with regard to those TP parameter constellations that emerged as the most salient ones for understanding task engagement in the specific context of online intercultural foreign language learning.

The 'by exchange' analyses showed that the learning station task was carried out by the students in different ways leading to six varying patterns of task engagement and ownership. In Exchange 1, we saw an ownership profile that was characterized by a lack of topic familiarity. We observed how this negatively influences the way in which the students engaged with the learning station task and, in particular, with the TP parameters Topic & Content and Language. As a result of students' low cognitive engagement with Technology, they did not address their topic and language-related challenges. Arguably, this happened because they were not aware of the communicative strategies they could use to collaboratively address problems in a virtual context where they could not see each other. In Exchange 2, the students' engagement and

ownership profile was influenced by how they adopted a peer scaffolding strategy. By focusing their attention on the TP parameters Task Management, Technology and Partner Orientation, the students mutually scaffolded each other through the challenging parts of the task. In this fashion, they collaboratively managed to carry out a task they could not have completed successfully on their own. In Exchange 3, the ownership profile was shaped by one student's uncollaborative approach to task realisation. The learning station task triggered a school-effect and this led to the stronger student dominating the interaction and ignoring the collaborative value of peer interaction. The students' pattern of task engagement reflected their imbalance and failure to engage with the TP parameters Partner Orientation and Language. In contrast, in Exchange 4, one student's collaborative attitude and behaviour stimulated a safe learning environment in which both students could experiment freely with the target language. The ownership profile was characterized by the students' engagement with the TP parameters Partner Orientation, Language, Communicative Participation and Task Appropriation. This pattern of task engagement arguably contributed to a beneficial ownership profile for foreign language learning in terms of overcoming speaking anxiety and stimulating collaborative communication. In addition, being in a pedagogical lingua franca exchange raised both students' confidence. In Exchange 5, we observed how one student's negative attitude concerning, in particular, Topic & Content and Technology, prevented her from seeing the task's relevance and led to indifferent behaviour. Her negative attitude and behaviour impacted not only on her but also on her partner's task engagement. As he did not address the negativeness but rather went with the flow, both students' pattern of task engagement was characterised by a minimal type of task ownership. In Exchange 6, we observed how the students' high engagement with Partner Orientation strengthened their overall strong engagement with the task and positively influenced her partner to overcome her initially weak disposition towards the task. To a large extent, the students' pattern of task engagement was shaped by the consensual and supportive rapport one student offered the other. In addition, this profile was complemented by students' strong engagement with Task Appropriation which emphasized their high degree of readiness and willingness to make the task their own.

This variety of engagement and ownership profiles raises awareness of what is possible under an online intercultural pedagogical lingua franca condition. Whereas a few students could not exploit the full potential of the task because they did not like it or understand its purpose or did not have the competency to meet their requirements of task success, most students took ownership in a way that served their language learning purposes. All-in-all, two pedagogically desirable task ownership profiles for online intercultural foreign language learning were observed (E4, E6). Two other pair exchanges carried some characteristics that are potentially favourable for foreign language learning, but more engagement with certain task aspects is

necessary to achieve task success in future exchanges (E1, E2). However, there were also two patterns of task engagement and ownership that can be labelled as pedagogically undesirable for foreign language learning. The evidence revealed that it is not likely that these students, when working together in the same pair constellation with the same dynamics in future tasks, will easily achieve task success without pedagogical interventions by the teacher (E3, E5).

What stood out from the data is that when the students carried out the task and made it their own, the quality dimensions closely interacted. The results also show that the three qualities of task engagement can only be exploited for their capacity to guide students to task success when all three are taken into consideration. In other words, there was no task engagement on the cognitive dimension without behavioural and attitudinal engagement, or the other way around. The fact that the data did not always reveal manifestations on each dimension does not mean engagement was not there. It may have been weak, but it was engagement nonetheless. In this connection, the findings revealed a strong upward push from the attitudinal to the cognitive and subsequently to the behavioural dimension (see Figure 7). For instance, we saw that students' initial willingness to carry out the task in terms of wanting to communicate and collaborate, positively influenced their engagement on the cognitive and behavioural dimensions during task realisation. As such, being attitudinally engaged turned out to be a decisive indicator for task engagement. As such, these results show that the affective dimension of engagement deserves more attention than it has received so far in foreign language learning and teaching research.

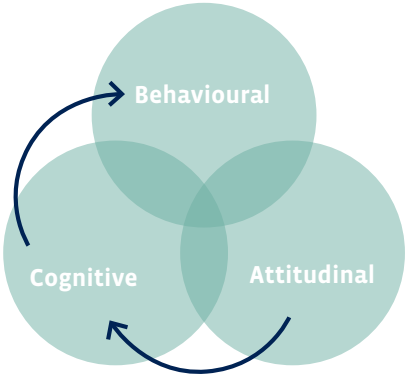


Figure 7 | A visual representation of the 'attitudinal push'.

In this connection, findings underline the importance of having a collaborative mindset. Those exchanges that were characterized as supportive and cooperative revealed more

positive manifestations concerning students' enjoyment and persistence to carry out the task. Furthermore, in the exchanges where students perceived their partner as friendly and non-judgemental, engagement was characterized by more risk-taking behaviour (e.g. discussing insecurities and challenges, feeling more confident, and asking for help). This illustrates the importance of psychological safety which is defined by Edmondson (1999) as the "shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risktaking" (p. 354). In line with previous findings by Zepke and Leach (2010) and Northey et al. (2015), evidence reveals that collaborative work that allows students to build effective peer relationships is extremely valuable to the development of pedagogically desirable patterns of task engagement and ownership.

Findings also reveal that students' task engagement was not necessarily stable throughout task realisation and, in some exchanges, attention rather easily shifted from one task aspect to another. Viewing these research results through a social constructivist lens, we can conclude that task engagement is an episodic construct that is potentially reflective of the reciprocal relationship between students' requirements of task success and the way they are able to and allowed by their partner to take ownership of the task.

Although these students already knew a great deal about how to communicate in English in the physical ELT classroom and collaborate with others, carrying out a complex task in a foreign language with a partner from a different linguacultural background was something most of them had not yet experienced. In addition, the unfamiliar learning environment impacted both positively and negatively on students' task engagement in the virtual PLF communication. To assure that students put the right kind of effort in those TP parameters that help them to meet their requirements of task success, teachers need to pedagogically mentor their students towards desirable patterns of task engagement and ownership before, during and after an exchange. Against this background, focus in the following analysis and discussion chapter is on the study's pedagogical implications.

CHAPTER 7

Cross-exchange analysis and discussion: insights for pedagogical mentoring

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is seen as one of the key competences in our modern day society. Hence, one of the main goals of foreign language curricula in secondary schools is to educate students who can deal with linguistic and cultural complexity, and successfully take part in communicative exchanges in multicultural contexts. Where the physical foreign language classroom cannot adequately support the kind of authentic intercultural communicative practice that is necessary to foster intercultural language learning, technology can be effectively used to raise intercultural awareness and facilitate ICC development. In this connection, analyses of the data in the present study show us that virtual PLF exchanges offer rich opportunities for students to participate in intercultural communicative practice when they carry out online collaborative tasks with peers from different lingua cultural backgrounds (see Kohn, 2020a). At the same time, we see that simply carrying out tasks under PLF conditions does not mean that all students who participate in intercultural virtual exchange engage in desirable patterns of task engagement and ownership and accordingly develop their ICC as a matter of fact. Findings show that students' learning outcomes do very much depend on the requirements of task success they set for themselves. When these requirements are not guided in a pedagogically desirable way, the effort students put in task realisation may not contribute to the desired learning outcome.

In the previous chapter, findings have been analysed by exchange and we have seen which patterns of task engagement and ownership are possible when students carry out a communicative task during virtual PLF exchanges. The findings revealed a strong upward push from the attitudinal to the cognitive and subsequently to the behavioural dimension. In other words, being attitudinally engaged turned out to be an important indicator for students' cognitive and behavioural engagement. Against this backdrop, the focus in this chapter is on how to get students attitudinally involved and which pedagogical support teachers should provide to strengthen their students' cognitive and behavioural engagement. As pedagogical interventions have more learning effect when they focus on specific task aspects (e.g. 'how to use the technology', 'how to build rapport', or 'how to express oneself in the target language'), teachers plan their most powerful interventions often in relation to those aspects of a task that are deemed particularly relevant in a specific task context. As such, this chapter follows a natural course used by many foreign language teachers when evaluating their students'

task performance and planning subsequent pedagogical interventions. In this connection, it is evident that the pedagogical conclusions in this chapter are discussed in relation to the TP parameters.

The empirical evidence from the six virtual PLF exchanges was analysed from a 'by TP parameter' perspective (research objective 4) with a specific focus on how all six student-pairs engage with each individual TP parameter of the learning station task. These findings offer insights for pedagogical mentoring and lead to recommendations teachers can use when guiding their students towards those patterns of task engagement and ownership that contribute to students' intercultural learning and skills development during intercultural virtual exchange (research objective 5). Guiding questions that are addressed include 'How do the student pairs engage behaviourally, cognitively and attitudinally with each task aspect?' and 'How can foreign language teachers facilitate pedagogical mentoring activities that potentially lead to patterns of task engagement and ownership that are particularly beneficial for intercultural language learning?'.

In section 7.1, focus is on the affordances and challenges of virtual PLF exchanges. In section 7.2, guided by a social constructivist understanding of task processing, a special type of pedagogical mentoring that aims at developing students' language learning autonomy is introduced. Attention goes, in particular, to how teachers can design and implement awareness-raising activities that help students to become aware of their own role and responsibilities in negotiating and working towards meeting their requirements of task success. Both sections provide the conceptual framework for the analysis and discussion of the empirical data by TP parameter in section 7.3. Accordingly, in section 7.3, the two-layered approach was applied to conduct a cross-exchange analysis to find out how students engaged with a certain TP parameter across all exchanges. Following the analysis per TP parameter, I discuss in what ways students' task engagement can be optimised with regard to those task aspects that are characteristic during intercultural virtual exchange. Finally, the chapter ends with a conclusion in which suggestions are made for successful task engagement and ownership (section 7.4).

7.1 | A virtual pedagogical lingua franca exchange

The ability to understand cultures, including one's own, and using this understanding when communicating successfully with people from other cultures has become highly relevant in our modern-day globalised society (e.g. Berns, 2006). From the early 1990s onward, researchers in the field started to encourage intercultural teaching (e.g. Byram & Zarate, 1994; Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993), but it was the Common European Framework of References (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) that paved the way for ICC as a core element of foreign language curricula all over Europe. In a companion volume with new descriptors (Council of Europe, 2018), the

CEFR describes ICC development as one of the primary goals in foreign language education in Europe.

For students to develop ICC, they need access to authentic intercultural communicative practice (Jauregi-Ondarra & De Graaff, 2009; Kohn & Hoffstaedter, 2017). However, up-to-date there is still a gap between communication in the foreign language classroom and communication in the real world. Technology has the potential, at least to some extent, to close this gap and provide students with opportunities for intercultural communicative practice in technology-mediated environments such as synchronous conference rooms (e.g. Skype, Google Hangout and BigBlueButton) and virtual worlds (e.g. Second Life and Opensimulator). These environments provide students with direct and authentic access to other learners of the same target language and, hence, offer an online space for raising intercultural awareness and developing their ICC. However, simply organising technology-mediated encounters between students of different linguacultural backgrounds will not in itself lead to intercultural language learning. For intercultural virtual exchange to be successful, students need to be given pedagogical support, preferably in a blended language learning environment.

In this connection, as argued in Chapter 2, a PLF approach can provide ideal educational conditions for communicative language teaching by raising intercultural awareness and enhancing ICC (also see Kohn, 2020a). It offers a framework for foreign language teachers to pedagogically mentor their students during their intercultural virtual exchanges. A virtual PLF exchange provides teachers with the opportunity to offer tailor-made pedagogical mediation and guidance to students as part of their ordinary language classes; also see Kohn (2016) on blending in-class and online task activities in virtual PLF exchanges (for further information on integrating technology-mediated tasks in the curriculum see González-Lloret and Ortega (2014), and Ware and Kessler (2016) on integrating telecollaboration in the secondary foreign language classroom).

The intercultural virtual exchanges in this study were carried out in PLF constellations as extensions of regular English classroom pedagogy (also see Chapter 3.3 for more information on the TeCoLa project). In the interview extract below, the Dutch teacher comments on how embedding the exchanges in the existing curriculum increased her students' willingness to participate.

> I said 'this could be really useful for your speaking exam at the end of the year', and my students really responded to that. I really had students who applied [for the TeCoLa project] who knew they weren't that good in English and said 'I wanna use this project to prepare for the speaking exam'. We also made sure that the last two tasks sort of were similar to the speaking exam they had to take. So that they could actually prepare the topic [for the oral exam]. (Dutch teacher)

In line with this, several students emphasized the relevance of the exchange in terms of preparing them for their upcoming oral exam. For instance, NL4 said in the interview: "Now is the great opportunity to practice your speaking skills and your vocab". Integrating the exchanges in the existing curriculum was described by the German teacher as "an opportunity for [...] structuring their thoughts because it is very similar to what they are asked to do in the oral communication exam". In addition, he argued that further normalising virtual exchange as a frequently returning activity would most likely contribute to his students' learning:

> I guess it helps much more if it gets normal, if they get used to it. Then, I guess step by step the awkward situations will disappear because it is normal for them. 'It is not the special date and the special meeting and now we have to say something', but it gets normal. I think if we can somehow manage to make them meet more regularly then the students can profit more from it. (German teacher)

Most of the students also stressed the importance of carrying out the task under lingua franca conditions, e.g. DE4: "It was good to have someone completely foreign who doesn't speak your language". This as opposed to the normal classroom setting, where most of the students, if not all, share the same L1 which makes conversations in the target language artificial. They reflected positively on the feeling of authenticity that arose when sharing and discussing possibly diverging perspectives on waste avoidance with their foreign partners, e.g.:

> Above all it was interesting to hear the point of view from other countries from other people my age […] and then to see how Germany might react to it […] to see other perspectives that help to shape your own view. (DE1)

> In itself it was interesting how someone from another country talks about such topics. Let's say, in class, we wouldn't talk about the topic in so much detail. It was definitely much more interesting with my Dutch partner [...] Since the problem is known in every country, it was cool to talk to someone from another country about the problem. That was interesting, so it was really interesting to hear what someone from another country thinks about this problem. (DE3)

> I thought it was interesting to talk about a social problem with someone from another country. Because then you also see the differences between how it is here [in the Netherlands] and how it is there [in Germany] and I found that interesting. And what someone else thinks about it [the waste problem]. I can also learn something from other perspectives on it. (NL4)

> I thought it was interesting to see those differences between her [in Germany] and me [in the Netherlands] and to compare them. (NL6)

Whereas in the face-to-face classroom students tend to switch back to their L1 (e.g. NL4: "We hardly speak any English with each other in class"), this was not possible during the online meetings. Some students said they talked even more English than when they were on a school trip to London (e.g. DE4: "We were in England, so you used to talk to passers-by, […] but never really longer than two minutes") and NL6 said:

> I think we talked for an hour; I didn't expect that at all. And I heard from others that they talked to each other for a long time, so that was actually quite good. (NL6)

Both teachers noticed that their students spent quite some time online. They said in their interviews that the authentic feel of being in a PLF exchange in English stimulated the students to communicate in the target language:

> They were forced to communicate [...] and to talk English which is often in a normal classroom situation too artificial as they always switch to German. (German teacher)

> In class, like if they speak Dutch, everyone understands them [...] here [in the exchanges] they really felt the need to speak English, and it really helped them, they said, with sort of improvising in English. I think that was good. (Dutch teacher)

The data analyses also revealed how the PLF condition increasingly lowered students' communication apprehension and gave them the confidence to communicate more freely than they would normally do during their regular English classes. For instance, the interview extract below shows that being in a PLF constellation lowered DE4's speaking anxiety. More specifically, DE4 explains that talking with another learner of English made him less insecure about his own speaking skills:

R: Would you have preferred to talk to a native speaker of English?
DE4: Not necessarily.
R: Or did you like that it was someone who, like you, was also a learner of English?
DE4: Yes, I preferred that because otherwise I would probably have been more insecure.

Being in a virtual world environment made most students feel more comfortable. For instance, DE5 explains that he spoke more in the TeCoLa Virtual World than in the video conference room BigBlueButton (Task 1). In particular, he communicated more freely in the virtual world because he could not see his partner and his partner could not see him.

> In the virtual world, I found it less of a problem to make mistakes because you, and that might sound strange, you don't see each other. (DE5)

There were also students who felt that participating in the exchange with someone they had not met before would lower their speaking anxiety in future interactions. For instance, NL2 remarked:

> It is, of course, that you have learned to communicate with someone you don't know [...] the next time I meet someone I don't know, it will still be exciting. But then you know how it goes because you were able to practice. (NL2)

It is interesting to note that the confidence some students built during the exchanges was also observable during their final oral exam. For instance, in the interview extract below, the Dutch teacher mentioned that NL2 performed better than expected:

> NL2 is very insecure about her English. Normally she would sort of shut down and she would have to improvise, but she did really well on that part this time around. She just sort of knew she could do it. (Dutch teacher)

In addition, both teachers were positively surprised by their students' oral performance during the final speaking exam that took place approximately 4 weeks after the project had ended. The German teacher mentioned how taking part in the exchange helped one of his students to rise above her expected level during the final exam:

> I guess she [DE1] did a pretty good job in the oral exam [...] her performance throughout the last two years was not as good as it could have been from a content perspective but in the oral exam she managed to organize her arguments [...] I guess the project has helped her as well to speak for an audience, and so she did well, she performed 15 points. It is the best result you can get. (German teacher)

Furthermore, working from their home computers contributed significantly to students' perceived feelings of comfort and created the safe learning environment they needed to discuss their, in particular, language-related challenges. Whereas students said they often felt watched in the face-to-face classroom by their fellow students and their teacher, carrying out the task from home positively impacted on their engagement with the target language (e.g. DE4: "That was pretty good. Well, that you could talk about it [his problems in expressing himself correctly in English] in private"). Some students collaboratively addressed difficult words and phrases and used the L2 to talk about their language-related challenges. In the interview, NL4 explains how he and his partner 'languaged' themselves through challenging content:

> There were a few words that made it difficult for me, but with the help of DE4...that made a difference. Then I described what I meant and then he understood what I meant so with a small detour we finally got there. (NL4)

An additional benefit of carrying out the task collaboratively in an online environment was that the students had easy access to other useful tools such as an online dictionary; and they used them to support their online discussions and keep the conversation going (e.g. NL3: "Some words you do not know, but you have a translation site for that and together you will work it out"). Although the intercultural topic posed some language-related challenges, at the same time, discussing a topic of global relevance was described as very relevant by the majority of the students, e.g.:

> We also had a lot to talk about because these are topics that actually affect everyone, especially at our age, they also affect the environment. (DE6)

How the questions and statements were displayed on the interactive learning station boards created a necessity for students to collaborate and negotiate opinions. The teamwork that was involved raised students' interest and contributed to task relevance, for instance, a student said:

> I thought it was good and also important for the task to do it together, to have this second opinion [...] I actually found it [the task] really good because we didn't always have the same opinion, which surprised me, and then we had to argue why we thought an answer was correct. I think that's probably where we talked the most, I think because there were just these differences of opinion. (DE5)

Doing a task in English and having no other option…I thought that was interesting [...] Just the differences between her and me and see how she would react to things like that [waste avoidance] and I thought that was interesting. (NL6)

The introspective data above reveals that the PLF condition offered ample opportunities for authentic intercultural communication, however, it should be mentioned that it also posed challenges for students. For instance, the fact that they could not fall back on a shared L1 occasionally caused communication breakdowns. Some students possessed the topic knowledge to contribute to in-depth topic-related discussions but could not find the right words and phrases to express themselves in English (e.g. DE2: "In your mother tongue you can just start talking and now you have to think about how to say something). In addition, the lack of topic-related vocabulary had the most impact on those students whose overall language repertoire was insufficient. DE3, in particular, faced difficulties in understanding the board content and his partner's contributions. He also had problems making himself understood. He felt he could not carry out the task the way he wanted to:

R: If it [the exchange] had been in German, it would probably have gone differently, or not?
DE3: Yes, for sure!

The analyses of the recordings show that students' lack of topic-related vocabulary influenced their communicative participation negatively and the students noticed this as well, e.g.:

We could have described more, but we just missed the topic-related vocabulary to do so. That affected the communication. (DE5)

In some cases, this led to students feeling disappointed in their own performance. Their frustration mainly manifested itself in varying degrees on the attitudinal dimension (e.g. DE4: "Sometimes I want to hit me"). One student even confessed that he was only able to complete the task because of his partners' good command of English, e.g. DE3: "I think she can speak English relatively well and I think that's why I managed". Furthermore, in contrast to the students who felt comfortable being an avatar, it should be noted that other students perceived a lack of authenticity in the TeCoLa Virtual World. For instance, NL4 said: "I have less of a feeling that I am really in a discussion with someone" and NL6 said:

Of course I could hear her and I could also hear her intonation, but I don't know. When I don't see her it feels a bit fake because when you are on Skype [TeCoLa Virtual World]. You are really talking to someone, but then when you go through a virtual world it just feels a bit fake. (NL6)

Had the students received more or another kind of pedagogical support, they might have been able to deal with the challenges they faced more successfully and, consequently, to better meet their requirements of task success. But what is necessary in terms of teacher support to, in our case, make students engage with online intercultural communicative tasks in a pedagogically desirable manner?

In Chapter 7.2, I address the type of pedagogical guidance that is suitable for fostering students' ability to engage with the task and make it their own in compliance with their requirements of task success. Pedagogical mentoring will be described as an essential part of organising and implementing successful virtual PLF exchange. This type of guidance aims at making students aware of their own role and responsibilities in negotiating, working towards meeting and evaluating their requirements of task success. In addition, I explain how pedagogical guidance helps students to explore the kind of task they are faced with, how it fits in with the curriculum and what it means for their own learning. Furthermore, I explain in what ways a special kind of mentoring can aim at pedagogically guiding students towards developing a requirement profile that consists of a balanced set of both personal requirements of task success and course requirements.

7.2 | Pedagogical mentoring in intercultural virtual exchange

Recent literature on virtual exchange increasingly focuses on the teacher as a facilitator of online intercultural learning and foreign language skills development. For instance, Müller-Hartmann (2012) argues that "the role of the teacher is crucial in initiating, developing and monitoring telecollaborative exchanges for language learning" (p. 172). Furthermore, O'Dowd (2015) suggests a model of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes foreign language teachers need to demonstrate to successfully carry out virtual exchanges. In particular, he discusses teachers' ability to "support students in discerning and reflecting upon culturally contingent patterns of interaction in follow-up classroom discussions" (p. 10). Most recently, O'Dowd et al. (2019) use the term pedagogical mentoring and define it as "the strategies and techniques that teachers use in their classes to support students' learning during virtual exchange projects" (p. 147). Under the umbrella of pedagogical mentoring, teachers can organise all kinds of activities such as presenting online interaction strategies before the exchange, leading online intercultural discussions and integrating students' online interactions in classroom-based activities. All these activities are highly relevant but where O'Dowd and colleagues particularly focus on getting the virtual exchange done, Kohn (2020a) offers a complementary perspective on pedagogical mentoring in connection with a PLF approach. Kohn argues that pedagogical mentoring has the potential to increase the emancipatory quality of foreign language learning (also see Chapter 2) by making students aware of their requirements of communicative success and of ways in

which they can address the challenges they encounter when learning a language. In line with this, findings in the present study also reveal the need for this special kind of teacher support that helps students to carry out the task in compliance with their requirements of task success.

Evidence in this study revealed that not all students displayed the autonomous behaviour needed to engage with the learning station task in the TeCoLa Virtual World in a pedagogically desirable manner. For instance, some students were unsure which requirements of task success they should pursue or they did not know how to deal with the communicative or collaborative challenges they faced during task realisation. In general, more experienced language learners often have an idea of what 'good language learning' (Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975) is all about and they can act upon it, even in unfamiliar or stressful situations. Less experienced language learners and those who are not used to or less aware of how to behave and learn in student-centred environments may need special guidance in how to carry out tasks in compliance with their requirements of task success. Therefore, it is key that teachers help their students to engage more meaningfully and purposefully with a task by enabling and encouraging them to meet their requirements of task success autonomously.

Being able to take control of one's own learning is important when students collaborate online in a technology-mediated environment with other students they have not met before, and without the teacher being physically present to offer hands-on support. Students who show autonomous behaviour can take charge of their own learning and they are also able to take responsibility for the learning of their peers (Little, 1995). In intercultural virtual exchange, it is important that students do not only take responsibility for meeting their own requirements of task success but can also cater for their partner's language learning needs. In general, autonomous language learners interact more constructively with peers, engage with task content more readily and display a more positive attitude. It should be emphasized, however, that being autonomous is no guarantee for achieving task success. Even students with a high degree of autonomy can make decisions during task realisation that have a negative influence on their own or their partner's performance. Or they neglect to attend to, for instance, issues of task management or the task's technology. Pedagogical mentoring could help students to make better or more informed decisions during task realisation and become aware of those task aspects that need to be attended to. It is essential that students develop language learning autonomy because, ultimately, when they are out there in the real world by themselves, they need to be able to become aware of and pursue their requirements of task success without a teacher there to guide them.

According to a social constructivist understanding of task processing (also see section 4.2), requirements of task success emerge from students' on-going attempts to establish a pedagogically desirable balance between their personal requirements of task success and

the teacher's or the curriculum requirements. From this perspective, task success can only be achieved to the extent that students are able to make the teacher's or curriculum requirements their own. If these processes of negotiation are not effectively guided by the teacher, the effort students put into task realisation will not necessarily lead to the kind of task engagement and ownership that allows them to meet their requirements. In this respect, an essential function of pedagogical mentoring is to help students to discover the task's relevance and suitability for their own language learning needs, purposes and desires. This exploratory phase is important for students to find out for themselves what kind of task they are faced with, how it fits in with the curriculum and what it means for their own learning. By guiding their students' explorations of the task and making insightful how the task can be used for meeting both personal requirements of task success and course requirements, teachers can help them to engage with it in a way that leads to task success. Thus, awareness-raising activities that help students to establish which requirements are relevant to pursue during an exchange are of crucial importance. This special kind of pedagogical mentoring that aims at strengthening students' understanding of the task is an essential part of the PLF approach.

In the present study, the teachers explained the warming up task in BigBlueButton (Task 1) in detail and organised an in-class activity to discuss and establish those requirements of task success that matched the developmental phase of the individual student and were considered to be relevant in the task context. However, the teachers did not introduce and discuss the other tasks (Tasks 2 and 3) in the same way. The interview extract below reveals that the Dutch teacher felt some of her students would have been more engaged with the learning station task in the TeCoLa Virtual World (Task 2) if she had discussed its relevance for learning in class. More specifically, she refers to Exchange 5 in which NL5 did not understand the task and its potential for her own learning ("I myself thought the task was a little vague. You couldn't talk that much [...] we both thought that was strange"). This negatively influenced how she and her partner carried out the task (see Chapter 6.5). The students neglected, in particular, to discuss the topic in detail or put effort in getting to know each other better. According to the Dutch teacher, certain problems might not have occurred if NL5 had better understood the task. She thinks that discussing the task and its relevance for her students' learning could have contributed to more engaged behaviour during task realisation for some students and NL5 in particular:

> I would do more in-class pre-tasks. So, I did that for the first task and I noticed they quite liked it because then it is more clear to them what they need to do. [...] I only did that once for Task 1, and for Task 2 and 3 not really because there wasn't really enough time, and I think if I had and explained to them why we were doing this and how it could help them, I think some students

> would have been more involved. Maybe then NL5 would have understood why we were doing the virtual world. (Dutch teacher)

In this connection, it should be mentioned that studies in the related field of foreign language learning motivation reveal that students who carry out a task with specific and challenging language learning goals in mind persist longer to achieve them than students who work towards easy and vague goals, provided their goals are attainable (also see Latham & Locke, 2007). In addition, Little (2010) argues that participating in in-class awareness raising activities in the target language is key to foster the metacognitive awareness that is essential for the development of autonomous behaviour. By emphasizing that learner autonomy is "a social-interactive as well as an individual-cognitive phenomenon" (p. 3), Little builds on Van Lier (2008) who states that an activity of agency is always "a social event that does not take place in a void" (p. 164). Hence, to stimulate more focussed participation during task realisation, teachers should design and implement in-class awareness-raising activities in the target language that explicitly address questions such as 'Why do I carry out this task?', 'How does the task contribute to my ICC development?' and 'What knowledge or skills do I need to complete this task successfully?'. The questions students ask themselves are essential for their learning process as they help them to reflect on and modify their beliefs about what good language learning is about. While thinking about and answering questions in classroom-based activities, students not only clarify their own understanding of a task at hand but they also take note of the ideas and views of others. Thus, an outcome of such awareness-raising activities is that students may discover that their perception of a task, and implicitly their perception of what intercultural communication and collaboration is all about, is similar to or differs from their classmates' or teacher's views. Discussing these similarities and differences in class forces students to think about why and for which purpose they learn another language or what it means to participate successfully in authentic communication beyond the foreign language classroom. By doing so, students also gain a richer understanding of the task in the broader pedagogical context of the language course and foreign language learning in general. In this way, rather than imposing pre-set task requirements on their students, teachers allow them to discover which requirements they themselves consider relevant for their own learning. Another outcome of these awareness-raising activities can be that once students have thought about, discussed and established the task's relevance and suitability for their own needs, purposes and preferences, it is easier for them to negotiate shared requirements with their partner. When they have done so, they can focus more purposefully on the collaborative and communicative aspects of the task at hand and possibly collaborate to appropriate the task so that it fits in with their shared requirements of task success. Comparing and contrasting their own understanding

of the task with their teacher and peers while negotiating shared requirements of task success is essential for learning. Studies on effective group work have shown that such collaboration, in particular, between teacher and students is a significant catalyst to learning (Nevin et al., 2009; Shull, 2005).

In best-case scenarios, these in-class and online awareness-raising activities should be presented as an essential part of the language course. They can take the form of, e.g., teacher-led discussions, interactive group or pair discussions, mind maps and worksheets. In her interview, the Dutch teacher stresses the importance of such activities:

> I did that [i.e. guiding the students through awareness-raising activities] from the very beginning, and it was very useful [...] I didn't expect that to be so important. (Dutch teacher)

Initially, these activities are likely to be teacher-led, but the idea is that they evolve into co-operative endeavours between teachers and their students, with a pedagogical focus on teachers gradually encouraging their students in taking on more responsibility for their own learning. The achievement of independence in learning is desirable as it allows and enables students to pursue their requirements of task success in ways and at times that match with their personal needs. It is important that teachers pedagogically guide their students towards developing requirements that consist of a balanced set of both personal requirements of task success and course requirements.

It is equally important to help students to evaluate and reflect upon task success after task completion. In many foreign language classrooms, however, task success is judged by teachers who take their external perspective on task processing. As such, they cannot see what students are thinking and feeling, they base their judgements on what they observe their students do on the outside. For instance, teachers cannot directly observe the cognitive work students engage in when preparing for, carrying out and evaluating an interaction task. In addition, task success is generally determined on the basis of whether or not preset task requirements have been met. Teachers are either not aware of students' personal requirements of task success or do not take them into account. This explains why it can happen that teachers are satisfied with their students' task performance, whereas the students themselves are not. This is a well-known phenomenon particularly in upper-secondary classrooms with more experienced language learners who set ambitious requirements that might go beyond those the teacher had in mind. For instance, the teacher focuses on improving students' vocabulary whereas some of them also want to use the task for improving their fluency. As a result, the teacher is happy and expresses his or her satisfaction, whereas the students themselves do not share their teacher's enthusiasm because they felt they have not yet reached their personal requirements of task success.

According to a social constructivist understanding of task processing, task success should not be solely judged from an external perspective. Students can provide their teacher with insights on what they intend to achieve and what they think needs to be done to carry out the task successfully. Taking the students and their inward reality of the task including their intentions and needs into account is of key importance when evaluating task success. The present study shows that while some students were capable of determining themselves whether or not task success had been achieved, other students had difficulties reflecting on task realisation and their role in it. Therefore, it is important to include reflective activities after task realisation, e.g., one-on-one student-teacher evaluations, group intervision or online reflective portfolios to evaluate if and to what extent students have met their requirements of task success. Post-task awareness-raising activities could be guided by questions such as 'Have you managed to reach your requirements? Why (not)?' and 'Are you satisfied with the way in which you carried out the task?'. It could be equally relevant to let students write a short reflective paragraph on what they have learned, possibly emphasizing ICC features that have been discussed in class or identifying changes in their task perception. In this way, teachers can highlight certain requirements and build on prior experiences. The insights students gain during post-task awareness-raising activities add to their already existing repertoire of communicative competences and can be applied when meeting their requirements of task success in tasks to come. As mentioned before, it is relevant to keep in mind that when conducted in groups, individual awareness-raising activities can contribute to the learning of the group or the class as a whole.

Through pedagogical mentoring, teachers can use these pre- and post-task activities of raising their students' awareness to help them to establish a requirement profile consisting of a balanced set of both personal requirements of task success and course requirements, and to use their requirements when evaluating and reflecting upon task success. The present study has shown that there are students who understand the task and see its relevance for their own or their partner's learning but do not have the knowledge, collaborative skills or proficiency to realise the task in the way they deem most appropriate for successful learning. Students who, for instance, lack the subject knowledge to participate in in-depth discussions on a certain topic are not yet proficient enough to readily engage with their partner's contributions. To accommodate students to achieve task success regardless of the challenges they face during task realisation, additional teacher support to strengthen students' behavioural, cognitive and attitudinal engagement with regard to certain task aspects is needed.

7.3 | Pedagogical mentoring for successful task engagement

In Chapter 6, focus was on the task engagement of the individual student pairs across all seven TP parameters Task Appropriation, Task Management, Technology, Topic & Content,

Language, Communicative Participation, and Partner Orientation. The objective was to analyse and discuss for each student pair how they managed to engage with the task and make it their own. In this section, I change the focus. Drawing on the observations made in Chapter 6, focus is now on each individual TP parameter across all six student pairs. The objective of the 'by TP parameter' analysis is to evaluate the manifestations of task engagement and ownership development observed for a respective TP parameter from a pedagogical perspective. This is done so that pedagogical conclusions in relation to certain task aspects can be better drawn. Guiding questions involve 'Which manifestations can be considered felicitous?' and 'Which ones can be considered non-felicitous?'. In a second step, I will then propose pedagogical mentoring moves suitable for initiating and supporting felicitous and preventing non-felicitous manifestations.

This approach holds implications for the order in which I will describe manifestations on the three complementary dimensions of task engagement. When I observed what the students were doing, what they thought and how they felt in Chapter 6, a strong upward push from the attitudinal to the cognitive and subsequently to the behavioural dimension was noticed. Most students who were attitudinally engaged, either because they liked the task or specific aspects of it, or took it seriously, were also cognitively and behaviourally engaged. In other words, in most exchanges, being attitudinally engaged turned out to be the decisive and driving force behind students' cognitive and behavioural engagement. In this section (Chapter 7.3), the perspective shifts from a 'by exchange' to a 'by TP parameter' perspective with the purpose to study how teachers can get their students attitudinally involved (also see Figure 8 that visualises the conceptual shift in perspective). The focus will be on the pedagogical support teachers should provide to strengthen their students' cognitive engagement by making them understand what a certain task aspect is all about and their behavioural engagement by providing them with opportunities to practise their skills in relation to the task aspect.

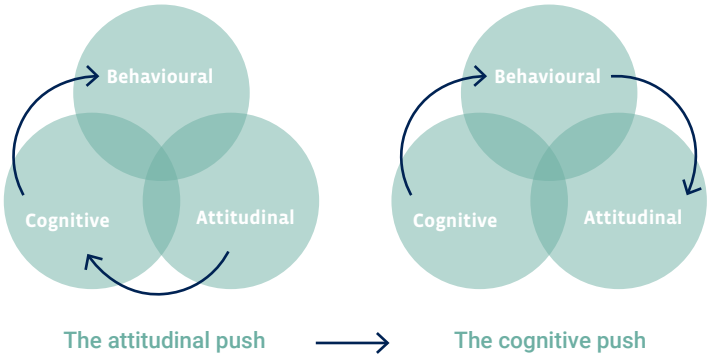


Figure 8 | Visualisation of the shift from an analytical perspective.

Although the data presented and discussed in this section were collected in 3D virtual world exchanges, most of the recommendations for pedagogical mentoring are also deemed applicable to virtual exchanges that take place in other environments as well including, in particular, synchronous video communication in BigBlueButton and asynchronous communicative collaboration on a Padlet digital wall. Another word of attention concerns the discussions of students' engagement with issues that have to do with the task's technology. Whereas under the TP parameter Task Management focus is on setting-up and testing the technology, i.e. what students do to get ready for the exchange, under the TP parameter Technology focus is on manifestations that reveal how students use the respective tools to learn better.

7.3.1 Task Appropriation

The TP parameter Task Appropriation is essential in that it draws attention to the need for students to negotiate a comprehensive requirement profile that combines the requirements given by their teacher with their own needs, purposes and desires. As discussed before, in many ELT classrooms, there is a rather strong focus on getting things right and this can trigger a school effect when students carry out a collaborative task. Depending on how students perceive the task, a strong focus on those issues of task management (e.g. strictly following procedures) that enable students to carry out the task quickly and faultlessly might be a desired goal. This implies that what might be a desirable way of task appropriation in a communicative task might be not suitable in a more form-focused task activity. In line with this, different types of tasks have corresponding felicitous and non-felicitous manifestations of task appropriation. Regardless of the differences, however, both teachers and students need to understand that some approaches to task realisation such as a typical school task approach might clash with more communication-driven approaches to language learning. For instance, in Exchange 3, the school effect came into play resulting in the more proficient partner (NL3) putting all her effort in finishing the task quickly and faultlessly. In her enthusiasm, all her energy went to answering questions correctly, and she lost sight of collaborative communication and her partner's language learning needs. This exchange shows that it is not at all times pedagogically desirable that students solely focus on what they want to achieve with the task and forget about their partner's needs in the process.

In this connection, evidence from the recordings revealed that not all patterns of task engagement and ownership contributed to students' own or their partner's task success. For instance, another student (DE2) put so much effort in focussing on meeting his requirement of 'having fun' that his attention was mainly focused on aspects relating to the TP parameter Technology. He put a lot of effort in operating his avatar and making funny movements with his arms and legs, jumping and dancing, and did not always pay attention to his partner's contributions which led to occasional communication breakdowns.

There were, however, also students who took charge of the task in a way that contributed to task success. In two exchanges, felicitous manifestations revealed themselves when students appropriated the task by going beyond the task instructions and discussing more than was strictly necessary to answer the questions. By doing so they extended the communication activity and experienced more opportunities to practise their skills and work towards meeting their communication-focused requirements of task success. For example, in Exchange 6, the students continued discussing the waste problem and talked freely about topic-related issues, even after they agreed on the correct statement. Both students were cognitively engaged with the task and most of its aspects and understood the communicative purpose of the activities. This was also the case in Exchange 4 where both students' cognitive engagement was evident when they showed awareness of the task's relevance for their own learning. In the interview, DE4 referred to the relevance of practising for the upcoming oral exam ("...with the oral exam in the background"). NL4 added that "...then you practice more of the conversational skills you will need later at university or here at school. Both useful". On both the cognitive-attitudinal and the behavioural level, it was observable that both pairs (Exchange 4 and Exchange 6) had a genuine interest in the topic and that they searched for additional information on the Internet, e.g. NL6: "How long does it take for plastic to go away in nature?". They kept encouraging each other to contribute to the discussions and appropriate the task in such a way that they could all reach task success. The data from the recordings also showed how these students' engagement on the emotional-attitudinal level increased when appropriating the task allowed them to communicate more freely, e.g. they laughed and verbally expressed their joy. This was in line with the data from the interviews. In hindsight, most students described going beyond task instructions as fun and mentioned they were pleased that they managed to carry out the task in their own way, e.g.:

> I noticed that I can talk more freely, just more relaxed. That I don't think about what I want to say, but just say what I want. That was that [...] we also talked well. (DE4)

> I think we did that [carrying out the task in compliance with their requirements] very well. (DE6)

It is interesting to mention that in the exchanges where students felt they completed the task successfully, more felicitous manifestations of students' overall engagement concerning Task Appropriation were observable than in exchanges where students were not satisfied with their performance. In addition, the data of the recordings and the interviews revealed an interesting relationship between the TP parameters Task Appropriation and Task Management. Whereas students' cognitive and behavioural engagement with issues of Task Management was high,

overall engagement concerning Task Appropriation was low and the other way around. For example, both students in Exchange 6 were cognitively very much engaged with appropriating the task to fit in with their own language learning needs and invested so much energy in the communicative aspects of the virtual world that they forgot to engage with issues of Task Management:

> I think we were fully focused on the virtual world and then just forgot about that [filling in the worksheet] on the other side. (DE6)

When discussing non-felicitous manifestations, it seemed as if some students were not aware of how to appropriate the task in a pedagogically desirable way. On the cognitive level, data from the interviews revealed that some students did not fully understand the communicative purpose of the task and just followed task instructions in a narrow sense of answering questions and reducing communication to the bare minimum. Analysis of the interviews also revealed the students' internal struggle with carrying out the task in a school-like manner versus exploiting it for communicative purposes. Other students said they would have wanted to communicate more, but they were or felt not proficient enough to appropriate the task in compliance with their communication-focused requirements of task success. In this connection, the analyses of both performance and introspective data showed how students' behavioural engagement was weakened by their low cognitive engagement in terms of a lack of knowledge of what the task was all about. In addition, it revealed how some wanted to become more behaviourally engaged but experienced a lack of skills. The latter group of students came in a somewhat negative spiral because their low behavioural engagement was combined with low engagement on the emotional-attitudinal level observable in feelings of insecurity and frustration.

In terms of pedagogical mentoring, the activities that have been discussed in Chapter 6.2 are key in raising students' awareness concerning task understanding and its potential for learning. In addition, cognitive engagement can be strengthened when teachers explicitly address what it means to be in charge of the task, and focus in their classroom-based activities on the knowledge and skills students need to make the task their own in a pedagogically responsible way. For instance, depending on the age and educational level of the students, teachers could help their students to become more cognitively and behaviourally engaged by implicitly addressing ways in which students can appropriate the task. One way of doing this could be by approaching a sample task together. Then teachers can discuss what kind of task it is and how it could be used to reach students' requirements of task success. For instance, in an online a-synchronous collaborative writing task (e.g. writing a weblog or wiki) other ways of task appropriation might be relevant or suitable than in a synchronous speaking task (e.g.

exchanging opinions in a conference room). One could assume that paying close attention to spelling and grammar would be more useful to meet one's task requirements in the first type of task than in the second. In the synchronous speaking task it would make more sense to encourage students to move beyond the task instruction by extending the discussion and just talk, regardless of the mistakes they might make. In this way, teachers also raise their students' awareness of different types of tasks and corresponding ways of felicitous and non-felicitous appropriation.

When teachers do not address the different ways in which students can appropriate a task or find ways of incorporating some practise in relevant classroom activities, they run the risk that some students do not know how to work towards reaching task success when they are in the exchange. In addition, their behavioural and attitudinal engagement will remain low. Especially communicative tasks as the ones described in this study provide students with a high degree of freedom. If they do not know how to cope with such tasks, their natural strategy will most likely be to fall back on what they already know. In most cases, that is on how tasks are carried out in the face-to-face classroom where collaborative communication in the L2 is not always foregrounded.

7.3.2 Task Management

How students engage behaviourally, cognitively and attitudinally with issues regarding the TP parameter Task Management which concerns, in particular, preparing for the task or making sure procedures are followed, is strongly influenced by how they see the task. For instance, if students believe the task lends itself to practice fluency, their effort will most likely go to downloading, installing and testing the audio to make sure their partner can hear them. In addition, they may invest time and energy in preparatory activities such as thinking of questions they can ask their partner or looking up specific vocabulary to avoid communication breakdowns. When discussing the students' cognitive involvement, the majority of the students in the present study thought that more information about the task as well as suitable pre-task activities would have helped them to better shape and focus on their requirements of task success during task realisation, e.g.:

> It would have been better if we had received some information beforehand, then maybe it would have gone a little more smoothly with a little preparation, maybe five to ten minutes beforehand to briefly inform yourself about the topic. (DE5)

> I had prepared myself but I had not already...well, there were some difficult words but I had not looked them up in advance. (NL5)

> At the beginning it was a bit of a hurdle to find your way around in order to know where it was going. (DE1)

As the last quote illustrates, some students would have liked more support in understanding the task and its purpose so that they would have been better prepared for the exchange. In those instances, a low understanding of the task led to weak behavioural engagement with certain issues of task management. To further illustrate this, some students did not use the worksheet because they could not find or download it, or became only aware of its relevance after the exchange. For instance, NL4 thought he should have spent more time to familiarize himself with the worksheet before the meeting:

> Actually, it was a good preparation form [worksheet], but I was busy the last few weeks and I forgot about it...so I had prepared too little. (NL4)

Offering support with the aim to help the students to better understand the task was not enough. In addition, there was a perceived need to try things out in advance, preferably with someone who had knowledge on how to set up the technology. Data from the interviews revealed that although most students in this study succeeded in downloading, installing and testing the software for the TeCoLa Virtual World on their own, some felt it would have been good to have someone near to offer technical support during task preparation, e.g.:

> I had quite a lot of trouble downloading this virtual world. I don't know why, but it took me a long time to get this program up and running [...] In the virtual world, always having a contact person [the student refers to her partner] was very good and that was missing when installing the program. (DE1)

Data from the recordings and the interviews showed that once the students had task management issues under control, and thus knew how to prepare for the task and follow the procedures, their attitudinal engagement increased consistently with their behavioural engagement. To give an example, DE6 was highly cognitively engaged and mentioned in her interview that she felt prepared. In addition, DE6 said that she and her partner knew what was expected from them. With regard to the emotional-attitudinal level, data from the recording showed that even when their answer to a question on one of the learning station boards was incorrect, they were enthusiastic about the task and motivated each other to continue, e.g.:

> Okay, next time we will do the right thing and then we were motivated to tackle the next task. (DE6)

In contrast, in cases where students' data revealed they did not understand the purpose of the task and questioned its relevance for their own learning, their low cognitive engagement weakened both their behavioural and attitudinal engagement. For instance, E5 mentioned in the interview that she thought the instructions were not clear and that she did not know what the teacher's intentions were. As a consequence, E5's behavioural and overall attitudinal engagement with issues of task management was low. These non-felicitous manifestations show in particular that giving clear instructions and setting deadlines is important. When students know what is expected from them, they can focus their effort more easily on those preparatory and procedural activities that can contribute to meeting their requirements of task success. When students have the logistics under control (e.g. the technology works, pedagogical task goals and deadlines are clear) they can focus more freely on the communicative and collaborative aspects of the task at hand and appropriate the task to their own language learning needs. This requires teachers to discuss what they want to achieve with a specific task with their partner teacher, agree upon adequate awareness raising activities, and implement tools and materials such as notebooks, worksheets and diaries that are adequate for and in alignment with their pedagogical purposes.

In terms of recommendations for pedagogical mentoring, to strengthen their students' cognitive engagement, teachers should familiarize them with the task's specific technology and show them how to use it in terms of operating it in a pedagogically sensible way. In this respect, it is key that teachers explain the task materials such as the instructions or worksheet in class, and ask deepening questions to check if the students understand what needs to be done and why it is important to do so. This involves checking if students understand the importance of good functioning technology and see the relevance of using supporting materials such as a learner's diary. While doing so, teachers should also address specific procedures students can apply to optimize task performance such as taking notes or using an online dictionary. As the students' behavioural engagement regarding issues of Task Management focuses on the task's logistics, it is important that those students who have not yet developed the organisational competence or technological skills to get ready for a virtual exchange (e.g. arrange a meeting, be on time, know how to operate the avatar) and make the right administrative decisions during task realisation (e.g. take notes, fill in a worksheet) receive pedagogical support. One way of doing so is by providing students with clear handouts on where to find and how to download and install software on their home computer. During the preparation phase, it is important that teachers are available to offer support, either physically at school in the classroom or online through a-synchronous (e.g. WhatsApp, chat or email) and synchronous (e.g. as an avatar in the virtual world) tools of communication. In addition, they can ask those students who are all set for the exchange to help others who have not yet managed to get ready locally in class. Once

everyone has access to the environment, audio and visuals work, and students know where to download and upload their materials (e.g. worksheets, notes or reflective diaries), tailor-made hands-on workshops can help students to further familiarize themselves with the tools and the materials. In the specific setting of the TeCoLa Virtual World, to increase students' behavioural engagement with the contents on the boards, it is essential that teachers tell their students how to use the learning station boards in terms of how to beam on the text and activate the buttons.

7.3.3 Technology

The TP parameter Technology is about the tools that are used in the virtual exchange and how the students reflect on its usefulness and feel about applying it for their own learning. To be successful, students need to understand the pedagogical relevance of the tools they are using. Especially, as students' feelings of novelty concerning certain tools and environments may eventually ebb away, they need to know how to remain engaged and apply the tools for communicative purposes. Data from the recordings and the interviews revealed that students' cognitive engagement was strong in exchanges where the tools of the learning path were effectively used for communicative purposes. In this connection, students mentioned that a pedagogical advantage of the TeCoLa Virtual World was that content could be visualised on the learning station boards. One student said that reading information on the learning station boards "made it easier [for him] to concentrate on the content" (DE2). Another student mentioned that he valued the fact that the boards presented them with new and more academic language: "the second [task] was really scientific" (DE4). Presenting content on the learning path like this increased students' behavioural engagement as it gave them something to talk about and helped them to engage in discussions rather naturally, e.g.:

> So you had these learning stations which you could work your way along [...] you always had something to talk about. (DE1)

> There [in the TeCoLa Virtual World] we could just somehow talk better. (DE2)

> It's not like you have to make it [the content] up or anything. I think that helps with the smooth, fluent conversation. (NL3)

> It [having the content on the learning station boards] also saved us […] from time to time, if we didn't know what to talk about now. (DE5)

In terms of non-felicitous manifestations, data from another student's interview (DE3) revealed that he felt that the game-like set-up of the learning path lowered his behavioural engagement. The recording revealed that his more proficient partner perceived the tasks on the learning station boards as individual quests. As a result, NL3 was so engaged with quickly answering the questions on the boards that she forgot to include her partner in the answering process and pushed the buttons without consulting DE3. Once she (NL3) pushed the button, DE3 felt there was no going back to a previous board and contribute to the answering process. Data on the emotional-attitudinal level revealed that while some students felt comfortable that they could not see their partner and their partner could not see them, others felt, for the same reasons, not at ease in the virtual environment. Those students who did not enjoy being in the virtual world or were not interested in communicating through an avatar explained they did not like the fact that they were talking to a "puppet". The students who felt they had already established the level of rapport they needed to carry out the task collaboratively, seemed to have less problems with the perceived lack of social presence of their partner. In addition, it was interesting to observe how some students' initial negative feelings concerning communicating with an avatar disappeared when they noticed how they could use the technology for their own learning. For instance, NL2 said she would have preferred to interact with "a real person" but experienced during task realisation that participating as an avatar enabled her to engage with her partner's contributions and the content on the boards in her own private space. This example illustrates the same upward movement we saw under the TP parameter Task Management. NL2 was cognitively and cognitive-attitudinally engaged once she became aware of the opportunities the technology offered and this led to her making efforts to engage with the tools behaviourally. When she noticed that the energy she invested paid off, her emotional-attitudinal engagement increased as well.

Regarding recommendations for strengthening their students' cognitive engagement, teachers' pedagogical mentoring moves should focus on showing students what they can do with the technology that cannot be done in the same efficient or fun way in the face-to-face classroom. Teachers can, for instance, show their students how to exploit the pedagogical potential of Google Translator to translate full sentences more easily, use the screen sharing option in a synchronous conference room to show snapshots and pictures, record and listen back to their conversation (e.g. Google Voice or iTube Studio), build mindmaps on Padlet, make music together (e.g. Notetracks), or create links to OneNote or Google documents to support effective group work.

Students' behavioural engagement can be stimulated when these tools are actually used to try out and refine their technical skills. Especially, the students who are not that familiar with certain technical tools should practise at school or at home with small tasks that help them to

discover the possibilities of the tools they are going to use for the actual exchange and make them more digitally competent. Of course, the technology that is used should be suitable for the pedagogical objectives it serves. For instance, for the purpose of getting-to-know-each other, it is best to first meet in a synchronous environment where students can see each other and get an idea of their partner's home environment while establishing a sense of rapport (also see the TP parameter Partner Orientation). For the purpose of discussing more complex topics where the focus is, for instance, on presenting new and challenging language, teachers might opt for a 3-dimensional environment in which the students interact with the content as avatars.

To strengthen emotional-attitudinal engagement, it is essential that teachers take the effect an environment can have on students' well-being into account. As not all students may feel equally happy in all types of technology-mediated environments, providing them with a choice of tools might be a solution. In addition, it is important to keep in mind that some students might even engage differently with varying elements within one and the same environment. For instance, in the virtual world, some students may perceive sitting around a conference table while discussing a complex topic as nice and authentic, while others experience more fun when carrying out a similar task in a more game-like set-up or in a virtual pub. Therefore, when opting for a virtual environment such as the TeCoLa Virtual World, it is advisable that teachers explore the possibilities of how the interior design can be used for visualising content (e.g. on boards or menus) and try to vary the design across several tasks. In this way, teachers can also raise their students' interest to learn more about a certain tool and try to raise their cognitive-attitudinal engagement.

Less proficient students could in particular profit from the potential of technology. For instance, teachers can show them how they can use Google Translator to support online communication or how they can disappear temporarily in their own private space. Weaker students often need more time to read and process content on the boards before they can contribute to the discussions. Therefore, it is important that teachers tell them that it is okay to discuss the implications of their language-related challenges with their partner (also see TP parameter Language). The teacher can prepare them for such a conversation and give them suggestions on how to explain that they need more processing time. For instance, students could tell their partner that they need more time to watch videos and process content on signs and boards.

7.3.4 Topic & Content

The TP parameter Topic & Content concerns the effort students put into understanding the subject matter and the materials that are used to present it. In the majority of the exchanges, using a topic that resembles the issues students are confronted with during their oral exams helped to increase the students' cognitive and cognitive-attitudinal engagement. In terms of

felicitous manifestations, data from the recordings showed that global issues lend themselves to deep and long discussions and negotiation of opinions. When further observing the effort students invested in Topic & Content, the interdependence of the cognitive and behavioural dimensions manifested itself in that the students who understood the task as a typical school task were very much focussed on just giving the correct answer. They processed the content rather shallowly and did not spend much time on discussing the topic. The students who were not familiar enough with the topic to understand the task content and participate in meaningful topic-related discussions found it challenging to carry out the task. Most students mentioned that they would have liked to have more topic-related knowledge at their disposal during task realisation and that familiarising themselves with the topic before the meeting would have made it easier for them to participate in the conversation, e.g.:

> If you have a few introductory questions in advance or something like that, you can already think about this and then I think it will be easier to keep talking to each other about that subject. Because if you actually don't know anything then you sit there and then you think, 'yes, I don't know anything' but if you've already thought about it then it would be easier to join in (NL1).

The data revealed that students' behavioural engagement was positively influenced by the fact that the topic and part of the content was given. In her interview, the Dutch teacher mentioned that presenting students with pre-arranged content increased the time they spent on discussing it as well as the quality of the conversations:

> They actually talk more to their partners [...] because we give them topics they need to talk about, they learn much more probably vocab, I am not really sure about the grammar part but definitely vocab, and they express themselves because especially with the higher levels, upper secondary [...] it is like they have conversations on a higher level. (Dutch teacher)

Attitudinal engagement was high for those students who participated in meaningful in-depth discussions about the given topic. They said they enjoyed the exchange of experiences and opinions concerning waste. With no exception, all of them mentioned they were especially curious about their partner's foreigner perspective on the matter. When discussing non-felicitous manifestations, most of the students whose data set showed weak engagement with the TP parameter Topic & Content said they were not interested in discussing or learning more about the specific topic at hand. One of the students (NL5) said she grew tired of discussing the same global issues over and over again, since she had discussed the topic in other classes as well. She mentioned that she would have liked to discuss the topic from another, more original

angle, for instance, not discussing waste in relation to plastic but by exploring other materials that damage the planet. Had this student understood the task and its purpose better and made an effort to share her extensive knowledge on the topic with her partner, both her behavioural and attitudinal engagement would most likely have been higher.

In terms of recommendations for pedagogical mentoring, to strengthen cognitive engagement, teachers should familiarize their students with the topic in advance. For instance, by activating their previously acquired knowledge in online mindmaps or by watching a documentary on the topic together in class. It may also work well to choose an every-day topic that students can relate to, have an opinion on and can be enthusiastic about (Kohn & Hoffstaedter, 2017). In addition, they should address which strategies students can use to familiarize themselves with the topic. For instance, by watching informative videos on Youtube, following topic-related discussions in newspapers and blogs, checking topic facts on the Internet, or discussing the topic with friends and family. However, there is a thin line between 'making' students more knowledgeable on the topic and overcharging them with too much subject information. Asking students to reflect on the relevance of the topic and how it is presented in the sources they consulted could be a more effective approach as it also helps them to prepare for the online discussion. To increase students' engagement on the cognitive-attitudinal level, it is advisable to choose topics that match those of the oral exam or to present students with two or three topics from which they can choose. In this way, students who want to prepare for their school test see the relevance of discussing a similar or the same topic in the L2 with a foreign partner. Students who perceive an overkill of certain topics can avoid them and use the task to learn new things about a subject they are less familiar with. According to the learning objectives and learning stage, it also makes sense that teachers strengthen their students' behavioural engagement by having their students practise with a topic they prepared in advance. Once teachers feel their students know how to use their knowledge and can act upon it in a real conversation they can move on to more complex unprepared topics.

7.3.5 Language

As content-knowledge is closely related to content-specific language, the TP parameter Topic & Content is interconnected with the TP parameter Language in that students need access to certain topic-specific vocabulary, phrases and collocations in the target language to process the task content and participate in topic-related conversations. The data in the present study revealed the students' perceived need for specialised vocabulary and phrases. To illustrate this, one student mentioned in his interview that the "discussion tasks were a bit more difficult in terms of language than expected" (DE2). They talked about how to improve on their topic-related vocabulary in advance of the actual exchange. In addition to and closely connected

with support for vocabulary development, students' engagement regarding the TP parameter Language also concerns processes of languaging. In this respect, students' languaging focus was generally on ensuring successful communication.

When discussing felicitous and non-felicitous manifestations, it is interesting to mention that in the few exchanges where manifestations of languaging were found, students were cognitively engaged and saw its relevance for their own and their partner's language learning. In addition, in those exchanges where students did not notice or only partly noticed their own or their partner's weak language-related performance, languaging did not take place. There were also students who were aware of their lack of topic-related vocabulary but they either felt that their linguistic-communicative repertoire was sufficient to complete the task or they did not know what to do. In this connection, it is also interesting to mention that two students did not consider the possibility to discuss language-related issues with their partner. They felt they had to deal with their linguistic-communicative challenges themselves. Overall, it seemed as if some students thought they should not explicitly discuss the target language in a communicative activity. Besides understanding the potential of languaging, students only languaged each other through challenging parts of the task when they felt comfortable to do so.

To optimize their students' cognitive engagement with regard to Language, it is recommended that teachers' pedagogical mentoring moves aim at familiarizing them with the topic-related language that is needed to understand the content and share their knowledge on the topic at hand in the L2. One way of familiarizing students with new vocabulary is by giving them a text or watching a video with relevant words and phrases. But it is also possible to introduce a vocabulary notebook. A vocabulary notebook is a physical or digital notebook students can use to log and arrange new words; see Walters and Bozkurt (2009) and Walters (2015) on how to incorporate a vocabulary notebook in the language classroom (also see the interactive notebooks Lexilize, Quizlitt and EasyDefine. Another possibility is to build associative word webs in the L2 in class or in groups from students' home computers (e.g. Visuwords and Mentimeter). What makes these activities interesting is that they provide students with more knowledge on how to gain a richer lexical repertoire and thus strengthen students' cognitive engagement. At the same time, in a more indirect manner, activities that involve practising with new vocabulary also contribute to reinforcing engagement on the behavioural level. In addition, when students apply their knowledge and feel they are skilled enough to apply the newly gained vocabulary in an actual conversation, their attitudinal engagement can increase accordingly.

In classroom-based activities, especially in upper-secondary education, discussing the learning benefits of languaging and the downside of not addressing language-related issues should be discussed as well. In line with Skehan (2003), students need to be made aware that a focus on form is okay as long as it is done in a communicative context. In this connec-

tion, both cognitive and behavioural engagement can be strengthened by explaining to students what collaborative languaging is all about and by implementing in-class activities to practice languaging activities in pairs. A prerequisite for such activities could be a classroom conversation in which teachers explicitly discuss that it is perfectly fine to address and discuss language-related issues in communication-focused activities such as intercultural virtual exchange. Students need to be told that carrying out a task in an intercultural context allows and enables them to learn new details about the L2 they would normally not learn in the foreign language classroom. This may positively influence students' behavioural engagement concerning, e.g., discussing difficult words, checking comprehension, paraphrasing, repeating difficult words out loud or asking for feedback on their pronunciation. Becoming aware and accepting that it is perfectly fine to language also helps students to become more engaged on the cognitive-attitudinal level.

7.3.6 Communicative Participation

The TP parameter Communicative Participation concerns the time students spend on participating in communication during task realisation. Participating in an intercultural virtual exchange provides ample and rich opportunities for communication. However, being in the TeCoLa Virtual World had a varying effect on students' communicative participation. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 5, a 3-dimensional virtual environment does not provide learners with communicative information such as facial expressions and gestures. Therefore, participating in communicative activities in the face-to-face classroom is different from communicating with an avatar, and not all students can cope with the absence of visual markers in the same way. Data from the present study shows how lacking certain forms of human expression had both positive and negative effects on how students' engaged with the task and made it their own. How students engaged in the communication behaviourally was strongly influenced by their knowledge on how to do that. Those who were cognitively engaged, and understood the task and its communicative purpose made more effort to communicate. In this connection, the Dutch teacher noticed that being able to hold a face-to-face conversation in the students' L1 with someone they know is not the same as interacting with a stranger in a virtual world context:

> I sort of expected them to be able to hold a conversation but it is different online [referring to the virtual world] and it is different with someone you don't know. So, you really need to help them with that, you need to guide them on how to do that. (Dutch teacher)

Here again, data revealed how students' attitudinal engagement pushed engagement on the other dimensions. To illustrate this ascending spiral, the students who understood the relevance

of communicating and participated actively in the conversations either liked to practise their conversational skills or felt it was important to talk. In addition, they were at ease in the virtual environment and felt comfortable with their partner. These felicitous manifestations were positively influenced by the fact that students could set up their own private meeting from their home computer and knew that there were no time limits or classmates present. The attitudinal push was also observable when one student (NL5) mentioned how not being interested in the topic negatively influenced her communicative participation:

> If you are interested you will talk longer and communicate more and more. (NL5)

However, there were also students who wanted to participate in communicative activities and were cognitive-attitudinally engaged but did not have the competences and skills to do so.

To stimulate students' cognitive engagement, it is recommended that pedagogical mentoring aims at discussing effective interactional strategies in class and raises awareness of the importance of speaking. Teachers could address turn taking strategies and explain how they differ in an online situation. Such activities include organising post-exchange reflections that allow students to evaluate their own performance in terms of their communicative participation and think of ways of improving it for future tasks. In the present study, the Dutch teacher designed an in-class pre-task activity on how to carry on an online conversation in English with a partner from a different lingua cultural background. In her interview, she talked about the pre-task activity:

> We had this pre-task and we talked like 'How do you have a normal conversation online?', 'What is the etiquette?', 'What could you do if your partner isn't really talking?', 'What can you do if you don't understand your partner?', and 'What can you do if you don't know a word?'. (Dutch teacher)

As the interview extract above shows, when discussing how to keep an online conversation going, the Dutch teacher also addressed questions such as 'What can you do if you don't understand your partner?', and 'What can you do if you don't know a word?', which all had the purpose of keeping the online conversation going. In line with this, cognitive engagement can stimulate behavioural engagement by letting students explore the relevance of active participation in peer interaction in small groups.

A following step to help students to become more behaviourally and subsequently attitudinally engaged is by practising relevant conversational strategies in class. During such activities, teachers should encourage their students to keep the communication going by taking initiative and adequately responding to their partner's contributions. Practising how to

participate actively in the online conversations is crucial because once students experience in the classroom or in online simulations what they can do to keep the conversation going, the more confident they will be in the actual exchange.

7.3.7 Partner Orientation

The students' engagement with regard to the TP Parameter Partner Orientation revolves around issues that have to do with building a good working relationship. Students who were too focused on their own performance or finishing the task quickly did not display the cooperative behaviour needed to engage with the task in a way that enabled both participants to work towards reaching their communication-focused requirements of task success. Especially when students strictly followed task procedure, focus was on procedural collaboration and less attention went to strengthening their relationship. Data on the cognitive level revealed that NL6 saw the task as an opportunity to "make each other stronger" and that the majority of the students perceived making an authentic connection with their communication partner as a prerequisite for carrying out the task successfully, e.g.:

> If you just get along well with that person, then it seems to me that you can do every task […] that also makes it easier to do the assignment. Just like at school, if you have to do an assignment together with someone you really don't like or don't have a connection with, then things don't work out in the end. (NL1)

This opinion was further confirmed by some students who emphasized that they carried out the task successfully because they felt connected with their partner, e.g.:

> I think partly because I connected with her. (DE6)

As mentioned in connection with the TP parameter Communicative Participation, the data from the interviews revealed that students felt that working from their home computers contributed to the safe learning environment they needed to build rapport in terms of opening up to their partner and sharing personal information. For instance, attitudinal engagement was observable when DE6 mentioned that she liked it that she and her partner were alone in BigBlueButton and that there was time enough to engage in some small talk:

> I also thought it was good that we were alone when we met for the first time [in BigBlueButton] and there was room for a little small talk to get to know each other a little bit. I found that very good. (DE6)

In line with this, DE4 added that it was nice to work from their home computer and that it felt safe to talk about their challenges in a more private setting:

> That [working from your home computer] was pretty good. You could talk about it [their challenges] in private. (DE4)

This was confirmed by the Dutch teacher who felt that being in their home environment increased students' willingness to share and discuss their issues and challenges:

> You would meet your partner when you were at home, and I think that also helped, that they were in a comfortable environment, and you talked about all sorts of things. (Dutch teacher)

In addition, being on an equal footing concerning interests and language proficiency seemed to contribute to students' attitudinal and behavioural engagement as well. Not all students, however, managed to engage with the issues that are central to Partner Orientation, in particular in terms of displaying a cooperative attitude, a certain degree of flexibility and empathetic rapport. Being in a pedagogical lingua franca exchange offers plenty of opportunities for students to engage in collaborative communication, but they need to be aware of the possibilities it offers for their learning. Once aware, they have to feel comfortable enough to be open about their knowledge gaps and ask for and accept support. When discussing non-felicitous manifestations, what stood out in the interview data is that some students said they felt it was difficult to further develop rapport in an environment where they could not see each other, e.g.:

> It's different when you do not see each other. (NL1)

In addition, the students mentioned that rapport was low because they felt they already knew their partner well enough [they referred back to the getting-to-know task: Task 1 in BigBlueButton] and thought the task could be carried out without further investing in their relationship.

Concerning recommendations for pedagogical mentoring, to strengthen students' cognitive engagement, teachers should make their students aware of and offer guidance on how to approach task realisation as a collaborative effort. This involves addressing the importance of being open about their challenges and creating an environment in which their partners dare to discuss their own challenges as well. But it also involves being open to differences in, e.g., proficiency level, communication styles and ideas, and being curious towards intercultural differences. Building a mindmap on the characteristics of a safe learning environment could be an activity teachers could organise to help students to understand the importance of partner

orientation. In this respect, teachers could also organise classroom activities in which students think of and talk about the pedagogical advantages of cooperative behaviour as well as the disadvantages of leadership behaviour that results in uncollaborative behaviour.

To increase students' behavioural engagement, teachers should discuss communicative strategies students use in every-day conversations for building a relationship and act them out in class. During these classroom activities peer scaffolding should be addressed and possibly practised with as well, e.g. in role plays or by observing a recording of students who help each other: "What do they do?" or "What do they say?". In addition, they should organise communicative activities in which students practice to pay attention to what their partner is saying, provide and accept support and feedback, give compliments, and use comprehension checks and production prompts (e.g. 'Am I going too fast?' or 'What do you think?'). As body language is limited in a virtual environment, students' attitudinal engagement can be strengthened when teachers show their students how to build rapport through their avatar. For instance, by expressing verbally how they feel, using other verbal signals. In addition, it is crucial that teachers discuss in class what a collaborative attitude entails and that it involves being open, empathetic and flexible.

7.4 | Conclusion

For teachers to strengthen their students' task engagement and ownership in complex technology- mediated environments, I argue for intercultural virtual exchange to be integrated in regular foreign language pedagogy; also see O'Dowd (2016), and Hauck & MacKinnon (2016) who argue to make it into a recognized and credit-caring activity. More specifically, virtual PLF exchange offers rich opportunities for students to put their communication-focused requirements of task success that evolve around authentic, collaborative and autonomous learning into practice. However, pedagogical mentoring is needed to guide students to successful task engagement and carry out the task in compliance with their requirements of task success. Pedagogical mentoring has been described as an essential part of successful virtual PLF exchange. It primarily aims at making students aware of their own role and responsibilities in negotiating, working towards meeting and evaluating their requirements of task success. In addition, to develop a requirement profile that consists of a balanced set of both personal requirements of task success and course requirements, pedagogical mentoring helps students to explore the kind of task they are faced with, how it fits in with the curriculum and what it means for their own learning.

This chapter has shown that the essential quality that successful students in intercultural virtual exchange have is an active and independent involvement with the task and its aspects. The focus of pedagogical mentoring on active and reflective learning helps students to make

meaning of and question the relevance of the task before task realisation so that engaging with it during and after task realisation contributes to intercultural learning and L2 development. This implies that students who successfully engage with foreign language learning tasks during intercultural virtual exchange are able to:

- understand the task and its potential for learning;
- construct a requirement profile that consists of both personal requirements of task success and course requirements;
- carry out a language learning task in an autonomous way and overcome challenges that prevent them from meeting their requirements of task success;
- monitor and evaluate their own task performance in terms of achieving task success. This involves thinking about how effectively they dealt with challenges and what one could do differently to avoid a potential problem from emerging again or how to deal with it more effectively.

As the ultimate goal of foreign language learning education is to raise students who can participate successfully and autonomously in authentic multicultural interactions, the experiences students gain during intercultural virtual exchange help them to develop their ICC and prepare them for real world communication. By showing teachers how they can integrate a virtual PLF exchange in the regular foreign language classroom and guide students when carrying out a task during intercultural virtual exchange in a pedagogically desirable way, I hope to contribute to effective blended language learning programmes that cater for autonomous, collaborative and authentic language learning.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusions and future perspectives

While there is a growing body of work on student engagement in general, a good understanding of students' engagement with tasks in a foreign language learning and teaching context and adequate ways to measure this kind of engagement are missing. Accordingly, researchers who aim at better understanding engagement in the language classroom build their studies, in particular, on insights from student engagement research. As conceptualisations of this more general kind of engagement are mainly based on explorations and quantifications of students' actual time spent at school and their active involvement in school-related learning activities, engagement studies in the language classroom take a similar approach and principally aim at capturing the degree of students' active participation in language learning activities. To date, however, no research attention has been paid to the special kinds of effort necessary for students to engage in the complex process of task realisation in terms of the work that is done when carrying out a task and mastering its content, understanding a task and its purpose, and efforts relating to liking a task and being interested in it. Against this background, scholars argue for research that explores task engagement in all its multidimensionality so that we better understand students' engagement in a task and its influence on foreign language learning.

In section 8.1, the main outcomes of the study are evaluated in relation to the state of the art in the research field. This includes explaining how the three-dimensional model of task engagement and the TP parameter model differ from other models discussed in the research literature. In addition, special attention is paid to how combining the models in a two-layered approach offers an innovative and in-depth approach to engagement research. This is followed by section 8.2 that addresses the limitations of this study and discusses some interesting angles for future research. The chapter ends with an outlook on the role of teacher education in preparing foreign language teachers for the challenges that modern day society places on them, in particular on how teacher education can prepare student-teachers for their role as adaptive language learning experts who are able to implement blended language learning scenarios such as virtual PLF exchange in diverse and rapidly-changing educational contexts (section 8.3).

8.1 | Main conclusions

Most conceptualisations of engagement in the research literature reflect 'learning-by-doing' methodologies that are based on the idea that active participation in classroom activities

leads to learning (Christenson et al., 2012). It should be emphasized that my notion of task engagement extends beyond this every day notion of engagement in terms of being actively involved in carrying out an activity. I argue that collaborative online communication tasks that are used by teachers for the purpose of intercultural foreign language learning require a certain type or quality of involvement. 'Just' being engaged during task performance may not be enough, or even counterproductive. For instance, we have seen in Exchange 3 that one student's (NL3) active behaviour in terms of taking the floor all the time led to an uncooperative type of interaction that prevented both students from developing their ICC in a pedagogically desirable way.

For quite some time, there has been consensus in the L2 literature that conceptualisations of engagement should contain an observable, action-oriented subtype (behavioural) and two internal ones (cognitive and affective), but recently researchers suggest to add a fourth dimension (e.g. Philp & Duchesne, 2016). The social dimension of engagement is described as a type of engagement that relates to students' initiation and maintenance of working relationships with peers. It aims at capturing the social interactions students engage in when carrying out collaborative tasks in communicative foreign language learning contexts. As such, its indicators highly resemble those captured under behavioural engagement. However, although the literature primarily addresses the conceptual overlap between social and behavioural engagement, I argued that how students engage with each other socially also involves and requires the cognitive and affective dimensions. In addition, the literature does not provide a conclusive theoretical justification for adding social engagement as a separate dimension and not doing the same for 'other' types of engagement such as 'agentive' (Reeve, 2012) or 'prosocial' (Fukuda et al., 2021) engagement. In this connection, it is also worth mentioning that the majority of studies on how students engage with language learning tasks aims at capturing students' behavioural, cognitive and attitudinal involvement in task realisation on scales or continua that move from low to high. Although this type of quantification can offer valuable empirical-analytical insights on the level of an isolated dimension, it has not yet offered new insights on the nature and strength of task engagement as a holistic construct that captures the quality of students' involvement during task realisation and the special effort they have to invest when processing a task in a foreign language learning context (research objective 1, see Chapter 4.1).

The focus of this study was on better understanding task engagement, in particular, in virtual pedagogical lingua franca (PLF) communication. For this purpose, task engagement was conceptualised in a three-dimensional model consisting of a behavioural, a cognitive and an attitudinal quality that closely interact when students actually engage in carrying out a task (see Chapter 4.3). The model was informed by a social constructivist understanding of task

processing according to which language learners are the principal agents in charge of making a task their own through individual and collaborative processes of creative construction. From this perspective, students create their own inward reality of a task and use it accordingly for their own language learning needs, wishes and desires. Although creating their own version of the task seems like a rather individualistic endeavor, this process of creative construction does not take place in a void. Without exception, the process of constructing an inward reality of the task is embedded in a broader social and pedagogical context (see Chapter 4.2).

What makes this conceptualisation of task processing innovative is that students can only take ownership of a task by engaging with it in a holistic manner with their minds, hearts and hands. Students can make a task their own in a poor way, for instance, by putting effort in activities that do not contribute to their learning, but they engage with the task and its aspects nonetheless. As such, from a social constructivist perspective on task processing, task ownership and task engagement are intrinsically related, as two sides of the same coin. Whereas previous research primarily describes and measures the dimensions as stand-alone kinds of engagement first and then looks at how they are related, the quality dimensions in my model of task engagement are by their nature intertwined and do not exist in isolation from each other. So, in reference to the mind-heart-hands metaphor, the three constitutive qualities of being engaged are always present and closely interact when students actually carry out a task and make it their own. From this perspective, successful task completion is only achieved when students engage with the task in compliance with their requirements of task success. In best case scenario, students' requirement profile consists of their personal requirements of task success which reflect their underlying assumptions and ideas of what they think and feel is necessary for successful task completion, and the teacher's requirements of task success which reflect, particularly, the preset task and curriculum goals. For instance, a requirement can be to 'speak fluently in the target language'. Then, the task can only be completed successfully when the way in which students engage with it enables them to practice their fluency in a way that contributes to meeting their requirement (research objective 2, see Chapter 4.2, 4.3).

A complementary model of seven task performance (TP) parameters was developed to study how the participating students engaged with varying task elements under virtual PLF conditions (see Chapter 4.4). More specifically, the TP parameters Task Appropriation, Task Management, Technology, Topic & Content, Language, Communicative Participation and Partner Orientation were used to capture students' engagement with those task aspects that are deemed relevant for carrying out tasks in an online intercultural context. As teachers plan their most powerful interventions often in relation to specific task aspects, it is particularly relevant to study task engagement on TP parameter level and draw pedagogical conclusions from the findings. In this connection, a two-layered approach was introduced (see Chapter

4.4). This approach combines the three-dimensional model of task engagement with the TP parameter model and enables researchers to study students' engagement in relation to certain TP parameters through a behavioural, cognitive and attitudinal lens. In other words, a two-layered approach helps researchers to look beyond the learning task as a comprehensive instrument for language learning and focus on the special behavioural, cognitive and attitudinal effort students invest in all kinds of task-related activities. This includes addressing and analysing students' social engagement from a more differentiated perspective under the conceptual umbrella of the TP parameter Partner Orientation.

In this connection, it is interesting to emphasize that using a two-layered approach also addresses some of the shortcomings concerning measurement methods that have been used in previous research. For instance, so far, the behavioural dimension of engagement has mainly been quantified in time spent on-task (e.g. Gettinger & Walter; Mozgalina, 2015; Reeve, 2012). Whereas the measuring of students' engagement through quantity of talk is criticized in the literature because it does not necessarily relate positively to meaningful interaction, capturing the time students spent on communicating on TP parameter level (i.e. under the TP parameter Communicative Participation) effectively addresses this shortcoming. By studying the effort students invest in participating in communicative activities during task realisation through a specific parameter allows researchers to assess the 'value' of the obtained data on the three dimensions of task engagement in relation to the data of other TP parameters that together shape a student's engagement and ownership profile. In this way, research attention is still given to the quantity of talk but its desirability or usefulness for learning is determined in connection with the *quality* of talk that manifests itself in engagement on the level of other TP parameters such as, for instance, Language and Topic & Content. As such, the data that is collected and analysed under the umbrella of the TP parameter Communicative Participation is part of a constellation of data that helps to establish the quality of students' task engagement in the virtual PLF communication.

In line with the above, when analysing which type of indicators are often used to study engagement on the cognitive dimension, it became clear that they are mainly limited to measuring students' communicative competence with regard to the linguistic dimension of communication; e.g. the number of elaborative clauses and negotiation of meaning moves (Lambert & Zhang, 2019). In this connection, applying a two-layered approach enables researchers to study the data from a broader and more comprehensive perspective. By studying students' cognitive engagement on the level of different TP parameters that closely interact with the TP parameter Language, other types of activities that require cognitive engagement besides those that address linguistic-communicative challenges and issues of languaging can be observed as well. Hence, taking a two-layered approach addresses another limitation of

current research by allowing researchers to study students' cognitive engagement beyond their linguistic involvement with the L2. By doing so, research extends its focus on task engagement with other dimensions of communication (e.g. the social and sociocultural dimensions) that are equally important in real world intercultural interactions.

As such, using a two-layered approach to unravel task engagement contributes to a deeper and more differentiated understanding of students' involvement in the creative process of task performance and offers a highly relevant new perspective to the engagement literature and subsequent research in the field of foreign language learning and teaching (research objective 3, see Chapter 4.4). Consequently, the two-layered approach was adopted in this study to analyse the actual data from six intercultural virtual exchanges. More specifically, it was used to analyse the participating students' task engagement (a) by exchange across all TP parameters to identify possible patterns of task engagement and ownership, and (b) by TP parameter across all exchanges to gain insights for pedagogical interventions.

The qualitative analysis of the data 'by exchange' revealed that the task was interpreted and carried out differently by the students, leading to six different patterns of task engagement and ownership (see Chapter 6). The different engagement and ownership profiles raised awareness of what is possible under the given conditions. For instance, findings reveal that being familiar with a topic makes it easier for students to engage with a task in virtual PLF communication. Having general topic knowledge gives them content to talk about, and possessing topic-related vocabulary facilitates not only understanding but also enables students to contribute to topic-related discussions in a meaningful way. Furthermore, we saw that being an avatar that does not have facial expressions can make it difficult to negotiate meaning and address problematic issues. However, at the same time, findings reveal that the semi-anonymity some students perceive in the virtual world can facilitate natural peer scaffolding. This special kind of scaffolding allows students to briefly disappear in their own private space and engage with the task content and their partner's contributions in silence without being watched. It was also interesting to observe that the pattern and roles students adopt during peer interaction did not merely depend on their proficiency level and subsequent pairing but were also influenced by their understanding of the task. For instance, one student's perception of the task triggered a school effect which meant she put all her effort in quickly and faultlessly completing the task at the expense of communication. In line with this, students' ability to profit from peer interaction seemed greatly affected by the social dynamics of pair work. When students felt comfortable they tended to speak more and were more open to receive feedback and correct their own errors. In this connection, we also saw how the PLF condition raised students' confidence to experiment with the target language. In addition, data reveals that students with an uncollaborative or negative attitude are less likely to engage with the task in a pedagogically

desirable manner. A negative attitude prevents them from seeing the task's relevance and this can lead to indifferent behaviour and even impact unfavourably on their partners' task engagement. Yet, it should be emphasized that some students' positive disposition towards the task influenced their partners' engagement in the virtual PLF communication positively.

Overall, the special effort that was invested in the activities that arose from the task depended, in particular, on the students' understanding of the task, how it enabled them and their partner to work towards meeting their requirements of task success, and the degree of teacher's guidance they received. Against this backdrop, the results show that the degree to which students perceive themselves as autonomous language learners and encourage each other to take agency facilitates their processes of ownership acquisition and determines their task engagement in virtual PLF communication. The findings also confirm the dynamic nature and interdependence of the three qualities. In particular, they reveal a strong upward push from the attitudinal to the other two dimensions. So far, the attitudinal dimension has not received much attention in foreign language learning and teaching research but the results in this study show that students' disposition towards a task powerfully influences their cognitive engagement and subsequent behaviour and as such their pattern of task engagement and ownership. However, the students who were attitudinally engaged, either because they liked the task or specific aspects of it, or took it seriously, were also cognitively and behaviourally engaged. In other words, being attitudinally engaged turned out to be a decisive and driving force behind students' overall engagement with the task. This illustrates how the two-layered approach allows researchers to take a more detailed and differentiated look at students' attitudinal engagement in relation to their cognitive and behavioural engagement with a TP parameter (research objective 4, see Chapter 6).

To find out which pedagogical support is needed to get students attitudinally involved and strengthen their task engagement, a 'by TP parameter' analysis was used to investigate which support teachers should provide to strengthen their students' cognitive and behavioural engagement (see Chapter 7). The analysis across all exchanges focused on what students did, thought and felt when engaging with each individual TP parameter. Based on these findings, suggestions were made on how teachers should provide pedagogical support to strengthen their students' cognitive engagement by making them understand what a certain task aspect is all about and their behavioural engagement by providing them with opportunities to practice their skills in relation to the task aspect under discussion. The pedagogical implication section also included a set of criteria that characterize students who successfully engage in virtual PLF communication when carrying out foreign language learning tasks during intercultural virtual exchange. They should be able to 1) understand the task and its potential for learning, 2) construct a requirement profile that consists of both personal requirements of task success

and course requirements, 3) carry out a language learning task on their own and overcome challenges that prevent them from meeting their requirements of task success, and 4) monitor and evaluate their own task performance in terms of achieving task success. However, the findings also revealed that secondary school students most likely need the help of their teacher to meet these criteria (research objective 5, see Chapter 7).

Findings show that intercultural virtual exchange is an innovative tool for putting the principles of CLT into practice and engage students in intercultural language learning. Its smooth implementation, however, should not be taken for granted. Pedagogical mentoring is needed to guide students towards pedagogically desirable patterns of task engagement and ownership that potentially promote intercultural communicative learning. In this connection, a PLF approach and the practice of virtual PLF exchange have been introduced to facilitate students' engagement in real lingua franca communication in pedagogically mentored educational contexts. The goal of applying a PLF approach is to let students experience themselves what it is like to be a real intercultural speaker. From a social constructivist perspective, participating in virtual PLF communication requires the kind of emancipated handling of the language that is necessary for successful language learning, and at the same time, this type of communication provides opportunities to use it.

8.2 | Limitations and further research

The theoretical and methodological choices that have been made throughout the research process were shaped by my inwardly-oriented social constructivist perspective on task processing. Although I believe that building the three-dimensional model of task engagement and TP parameter model on social constructivist ideas of language learning contributed considerably to unraveling task engagement in a complex contemporary foreign language learning context, I also realise that it might be at times challenging for the reader to see through the complexity of the theoretical models and their subsequent implementation in the two-layered approach.

As it is important to exercise caution about how to set-up, collect and interpret observational data in a qualitative study, the choice was made to carry out multiple small-scale case studies that allowed me to take the affordances and challenges of the specific learning context in which the student pairs carried out the task into account. In addition, to strengthen the research results and do justice to the complementary dimensions of task engagement and their interactions, this study combined multiple qualitative methods (also see Davis et al. (2011) on the Multiple Method approach) to collect and analyse the data. The decision to combine varying qualitative methods turned out to be very important because the students' actions alone did not always give an accurate picture of their task engagement. In this connection and in line with

Charmaz' (2006) light version of the Grounded Theory (GT) approach, I purposefully included extracts from the data in the analyses and discussion chapters when reporting on students' task engagement. Although I believe that implementing these extracts helps readers who are not familiar with intercultural virtual exchange and the case-specific circumstances to better understand what the students did, what they thought and how they felt during task realisation, it may give an anecdotal impression, especially to those researchers who are familiar with more quantitative-oriented research reports that include more tables and scales. In this regard, it should be mentioned that there are studies that have tried to measure engagement or related multidimensional constructs such as that of motivation on continua that measure phenomena from low to high or the other way around, e.g. see Zycinska and Januszek, (2019) who use a version of Sharp et al. (2003) Global Motivation Scale (GMS) to measure types of regulation in the self-determination continuum. However, the majority of studies that have applied more quantitative oriented qualitative methods to measure complex phenomena such as engagement, motivation and language learning conclude in their publications that such scales do not do justice to the qualitative data that has been collected (e.g. see Kawabata & Mallet, 2013).

Against the background of exploratory qualitative case study research, it should also be emphasized that instead of testing hypotheses concerning which conditions are necessary to make students engage with and take charge of the task, my main research attention was on understanding task engagement by identifying and analysing possible profiles of task engagement and ownership within the participating students' exchange-specific context. In sticking with the 'cause for an effect' methodology of qualitative case study research (also see Mahoney & Goertz, 2006), taking a multiple case study approach made it possible to identify different factors that influence students' task engagement positively and negatively. Yet, it is important to keep in mind that it was not within the scope of this research project to discuss average effects of students' task engagement on issues that came up during the research process such as speaking anxiety and school-related stress. Although it may certainly be interesting to study such issues from a more quantitative perspective, that would then concern a separate study with its own research objectives and 'effect of cause' methodology.

With regard to the 'cause for an effect' methodology of qualitative case study research mentioned above, it should be emphasized that some issues I encountered across several exchanges were only addressed in one of the case studies. For instance, as the 'school effect' was salient in Exchange 3 (also see Chapter 6.3), it was studied there in relation to NL3 and DE3's task engagement. Studying the effect that traditional school tasks can have on task realisation in a broader context across several exchanges would arguably have revealed more interesting manifestations of the school effect and given deeper insights on its influence on task

engagement. However, it was not an objective of the study to discuss all issues that revealed themselves during data collection across all exchanges. The choice was made to focus the cross-case analysis only on those that were deemed relevant in connection to the pedagogical mentoring activities that are addressed in Chapter 7.

In the light of the school effect tasks can have, a logical extension of this study would be a case study into teachers' perceptions on good language learning and teaching. Although they were discussed in the teacher coaching sessions, it was not within the scope of this study to investigate in detail where teachers based their perceptions on, how these shaped their pedagogical interventions or how they influenced the way in which students engaged with their tasks. Studying foreign language teachers' ideas and assumptions of what good language learning entails and how these perceptions influence their teaching practice and possibly their students' task engagement could provide valuable insights for foreign language learning pedagogy. In particular, in connection with the implementation of a blended language learning approach that requires other type of pedagogical interventions than the ones teachers may be used to in regular classroom-based pedagogy. In addition, a replication of this study could focus more on the role of the teachers in the design, implementation and evaluation of pedagogical mentoring activities. This could, for instance, be done in a study involving more tasks that would allow both researcher and teachers to test the effect of different types of pre- and post-tasks on students' task engagement.

Although the secondary school context leave us with much to be explored, future research may also include setting up studies in other educational settings such as primary and vocational schools where students also have to learn foreign languages. For instance, it may be interesting to capture how less proficient or younger students' engage with tasks under virtual PLF conditions. In this context, studying task engagement in other online environments than low-immersive virtual worlds may lead to interesting insights. In a similar vein, it may be interesting to measure the construct of task engagement in longitudinal studies that specifically aim at mapping students' engagement in and across varying tasks and developmental phases over a longer period of time. This line of research would most likely also lend itself for a larger scale study that addresses other target languages such as Chinese, German, French, Russian or Spanish that can be used as a PLF as well.

When discussing other interesting angles for future research, it should also be mentioned that the model of TP parameters enables researchers to shed light on the complex phenomenon of task engagement, but it could also be used in studies where the focus is on other issues. For instance, in research that investigates what task aspects cause or prevent students' communication apprehension or what challenges students face when realising tasks. In addition, the kind of data that was captured under the conceptual umbrella of task engagement

can also be used in other related research contexts such as a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) context where technology is increasingly used to enhance students' motivation. In this connection, it could also be interesting to study students' task engagement in online intercultural exchange projects that move beyond a mere focus on foreign language learning issues and include research foci such as students' engagement in global citizenship aspects.

Against this background and under the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools may need to rethink existing approaches to internationalization. For many years, physical exchange projects have been the means by which schools aimed at developing their students' global, intercultural, and international competencies (Altbach & De Wit, 2018; Soria & Troisi, 2014). However, especially in the last year, there is increasing awareness of the potential of internationalization-at-home strategies through virtual exchange (Garcia, 2020). Where some researchers argue that virtual exchange is valuable for preparing students for a stay abroad (Lee & Song, 2019), others suggest it could serve as a replacement for physical mobility (Hilliker, 2020), especially for students who do not have the means to participate in exchanges that require them to travel abroad. In this connection, the practice of virtual exchange also caught the attention of policy makers that are interested in innovative and sustainable ways for promoting the development of active global citizenship and digital skills. However, although some good practices of virtual exchange in international mobility programs highlight its potential for internationalization 'abroad', it should be emphasized that there is a need for more research in this area.

To conclude with, although promising, the outcomes of this study are not conclusive and generalizations can only be made tentatively on the basis of six virtual PLF exchanges that took place in only one learning environment. Rather, the findings serve as initial steps in getting a firmer grip on what task engagement is, what it looks like, what triggers or weakens it and how it can lead to learning. Nevertheless, it is important to conclude this section with the remark that despite the fact that it is not possible to draw definite conclusions, the results of this study are rich and identify options for foreign language teachers to experiment with pedagogically.

8.3 | Outlook

The last two decades, a lot has been written on how CLT neglected its original aims of addressing the social and sociocultural dimension of language learning. According to Kramsch (2006) this was due to the fact that foreign language education was "under pressure to show evidence of efficiency and accountability" (p. 250) and Byram (2014) added that teachers had been "too concerned with the instrumental purposes of language teaching for communication" (p. 210). The CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, 2018) made an attempt to address this gap by introducing sociocultural components in foreign language learning and teaching policy documentation.

However, the pedagogical affordances and challenges of contemporary communicative approaches seem to be determined by the extent to which teachers are able to facilitate and mentor the type of authentic collaborative task activities that supports students in their effort of becoming autonomous interculturally communicatively competent users of the language they are learning. However, successfully implementing blended language learning scenarios such as virtual PLF exchange in rapidly-changing and complex foreign language learning contexts requires adequate teacher education. In this final section, I argue that foreign language teacher education, and English language teacher education in particular, should focus more on preparing student-teachers to become adaptive language learning experts who can creatively adapt their teaching to what their teaching context requires of them.

In the educational literature, there is consensus that the principle teacher paradigm used in teacher education is the 'clinician-professional model' (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). This model originated in the late 1990s in the field of health care and has been used in educational research to describe teachers as reflective practitioners who base their pedagogical approaches, choices and interventions on 1) academic literature and theories on how the subject they are teaching is learnt and 2) insights from their own reflective practice; preferably in the form of practitioner's research. In theory, these two key features of the clinician-professional model are reflected in most teacher education curricula and programmes. However, in practice, there is often a gap between the 'ideal' teacher competences this model strives at and the actual nature of the professional activities student-teachers engage in. Although there are courses, projects and tasks that raise student-teachers' awareness to issues such as how languages are learnt and how languages are used in real world communication, primary focus in some teacher education curricula is still on helping student-teachers' in developing their *own* language skills and knowledge and not on how they can support their (future) learners in *their* processes of language learning.

Against this backdrop, I propose that language teacher education should focus more on preparing teachers for the challenges modern day society places on them. This involves guiding student-teachers in becoming 'adaptive experts' (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Van Tartwijk, et al., 2017). In general, adaptive experts are professionals who have developed a positive disposition to flexibility and ongoing learning, as well as to examining, discussing and questioning their own practices, in situations of uncertainty, unpredictability, swift change and complexity (Vogt & Rogalla, 2009). The idea of a type of teachers that can respond well to the demands contemporary society places on them fits in well with the clinician-professional model. In particular, in that being an adaptive expert requires teachers to be able to effectively combine their pedagogical subject knowledge, their methodological knowledge on how to explore their own teaching practice with issues of classroom management. In this connection, I

argue that teacher education should focus on raising 'adaptive language learning experts' which I define as foreign language teachers that are flexible, open towards new ideas and pedagogical approaches and willing to explore their effectiveness in their own teaching practice. At the heart of teachers' adaptive expertise is a rich applied linguistic knowledge base and a capacity to monitor their pedagogical interventions, and evaluate and adapt them in the light of what their learners need and desire to effectively learn language. As such, they are able to successfully implement blended language learning scenarios such as virtual PLF exchange in complex and rapidly changing language learning contexts.

Educating adaptive language learning experts involves setting-up courses and projects that provide student-teachers with a thorough knowledge base on applied linguistic issues with special attention for second language acquisition (SLA) theories. It is important that student-teachers can answer questions concerning *what* knowledge, skills and attitudes foreign language learners need to possess in order to participate successfully in contemporary intercultural communicative settings, *how* they can acquire these knowledge, skills and attitudes, and *why* some learners may be more successful in doing so than others. Having a good understanding of SLA theories, the discussions in the foreign language learning and teaching literature and current developments in the field gives student-teachers criteria to experiment with pedagogically. For instance, as discussed in Chapter 2, there is a growing tendency in the literature that native speakerism should no longer be seen as the only default standard that all English language learners should aspire to imitate. In this connection, some scholars advocate to replace existing pedagogies concerning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) by teaching English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (Kiczkowiak & Lowe, 2019). Although, so far, researchers are not sure how to implement an ELF-oriented approach in the ELT classroom in a pedagogically sound and effective way, the debate is getting stronger and may reach influential policy makers who introduce the idea of ELF teaching in the wider EFL teaching community. For English language teachers to adequately respond to such suggestions and judge their suitability for their own teaching context, they need knowledge on issues concerning the main ideas behind teaching EFL and what ELF communication is all about. Hence, to help student-teachers to make informed decisions in their future teaching practices, language teacher education should offer a variety of applied linguistic classes that address topics such as, for instance, online and intercultural communication, foreign language learning and teaching with technology and the affordances of a PLF approach.

Although the research literature has already provided insights that help teachers to answer a broad variation of the *what*, *how* and *why* questions raised earlier, there is still a lot to be uncovered. Hence, besides discussing SLA literature and theories in class, it is important that student-teachers experiment with different pedagogical approaches, carry out practitioner's

research, share their ideas and experiences including the challenges they encounter with other (student-)teachers and develop their own approaches that cater for effective foreign language learning for *their* students. As such, preparing student-teachers to become adaptive language learning experts requires a kind of pedagogical mentoring that encourages them to apply, test, evaluate and challenge their acquired knowledge and skills in their every-day teaching practice. However, for teachers to experiment with new and innovative approaches and online foreign language learning activities such as a PLF approach and intercultural virtual exchange, they need time and support. For this purpose, it is essential that teacher educators engage closely with primary, secondary and vocational schools in setting-up projects such as the ones introduced in this study, with all the struggles and messiness that may imply. This also includes that teacher educators take up the charge of educating policy makers about what effective foreign language education in today's world is all about.

APPENDIX A

Task 1: Getting to know each other - Prep-task

Name: _____

School: _____

Next week will be the first time that you meet up with your Dutch/German partner. The goal will be to get to know your partner. But how do you get to know your partner? We will explore this today.

What would you like to know about your partner?

And what would you like to tell your partner about yourself?

What motivated you to participate in this online exchange and how do you expect to benefit from it?

What is important for you when you carry out this task?

Do you expect to encounter any challenges or problems?

What are your personal requirements for the communication success for this online exchange. For each of the requirements below, please enter an "x" into the box that best reflects how important it is for your communication with your partner.

For me it is important	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
to speak fluently					
to speak correctly					
to make myself understood					
to understand what my partner wants to say					
to learn something about my partner					
to create a positive and cooperative atmosphere					

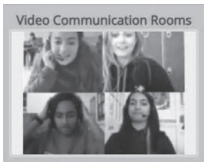
APPENDIX B

Task 1.2: Getting to know each other – Main task

Name: _____

School: _____

This week you will meet your partner for the first time. Your teacher has assigned you a time slot. Make sure you are in BigBlueButton on time, so that you do not keep your partner waiting.

Go to the **TeCoLa Moodle** http://tecola.eu/moodle/ Log in and select "English 8" from the "My Courses" menu Click on "**Video Communication Rooms**" and access your BBB room. **Don't forget to record your session !**	

In the online meeting you will

- exchange information about yourselves and
- discuss why you participate and how you expect to benefit.

Please fill in the worksheet below during or after your meeting.

What did you find out about your partner?

Why does your partner participate in the exchange? How does this differ from your own motivation?

After your meeting, reflect about your communicative interaction with your partner.

Have you managed to do the task the way you wanted to do it?

Did you manage to meet your requirements of communicative success?

I was able	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
to speak fluently					
to speak correctly					
to make myself understood					
to understand what my partner wanted to say					
to learn something about my partner					
to create a positive and cooperative atmosphere					

Which communication problems did you encounter? How did you manage to solve them?

APPENDIX C

"Trashed" - a Learning Path in the TeCoLa Virtual World.
Worksheet and Reflection

Getting ready

Where to go?

- Log into the TeCoLa Virtual World and wait for your partner in the Welcome Area.
- Teleport to Chatterdale.
- Go left after leaving the arrival zone in Chatterdale.
- Turn right at the end of the road and walk or fly to the end of the road.
- The learning path "Trashed" is on the left.
- Follow the instructions on the boards and take notes in the spaces below.

Always work as a team. Help each other whenever you encounter a comprehension problem or if you don't know how to express what you want to say.

During the task activity

Board 1: What happens to the things we throw away?

What do you and your partner think what happens to the things we throw away?

Board 2: The Video - a trailer of the documentary "Trashed"

To watch the video, click on the board and then click the play button in the middle of the board. You can watch the video several times. Help each other to solve comprehension problems.

Boards 3 to 5 present questions about the video

Discuss each question with your partner(s) and decide together what might be the correct answer.

Then one of you clicks the answer choice (A, B, C, or D) you agreed on.

Board 3: How do we handle our waste?

Write down the answer:

Board 4: Are we aware of our waste problem?

Write down the answer:

Board 5: Are chemicals in the environment harmful?

Write down the answer:

Board 6: Will things change for the better?

Write down the answer:

Board 7: Waste separation and recycling

Do you separate waste in your country, community, or family? And how?

In your country, community, or family	In your partner(s) country, community, or family

Are waste separation and recycling the solution? Consider and weigh the pros and cons.

Your opinion	Your partner's opinion

Board 8: What else can we do?

Sit down around the table and discuss the information given on the board.

If recycling alone does not solve the waste problem, so what else can we do?

List five ideas of how to reduce waste.
1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

After the task activity

Are you satisfied with how you and your partner communicated and collaborated with each other?

Think of challenges regarding e.g. understanding and organising what needed to be done, understanding your partner, expressing yourself (words and phrases), fluency, correctness, creating a positive and cooperative atmosphere, task-related knowledge and skills, personal learning preferences, being flexible, working together, or helping each other.

1 (not satisfied)	2	3	4	5 (highly satisfied)

What made your communicative collaboration successful?

Which communication and collaboration related problems came up? And how did you solve them?

Is there anything you would change in future telecollaborations?

Did you do your best when communicating and collaborating with your partner?

1 (never)	2	3	4	5 (always)

What made it easier for you to do your best? What made it more difficult?

Did you notice any differences in your attitudes and performance between tasks 1 and 2?

Yes	No

If YES, which differences? And why?

Did one of the two tasks work better for you? (Why?/Why not?)

APPENDIX D

Task 3: Discussion in BigBlueButton

Name: _____

School: _____

In the week of April 8th, you will meet your partner again. To make sure everything goes smoothly, you:

- pick a day/time for the meeting together with your partner;
- receive a separate hand-out with your discussion topic and further task instructions;
- check beforehand if the technology works. If not, contact your teacher;
- fill in questions 1 of this worksheet before your meeting;
- fill in the remaining questions after the meeting.

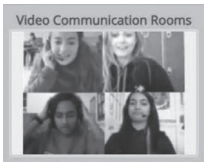
You are free to answer the questions in Dutch or German.

1) What do you think you should especially pay attention to when carrying out the task?

Think of, e.g., following the task procedure; collaborating with your partner; discussing the topic, making yourself understood; helping your partner with comprehension or expression problems.

In this task, I should pay attention to...

For the meeting make sure you are in BBB on time, so that you do not keep your partner waiting!

Go to the **TeCoLa Moodle** http://tecola.eu/moodle/ Log in and select “English 8” from the “My Courses” menu Click on “**Video Communication Rooms**” and access your BBB room. **Don’t forget to record your session !**	

APPENDIX E

After your meeting, reflect on how you carried out the task.

Look back at what you replied to question 1.

2) Is there anything that went particularly well? Why?

3) Is there anything that you could have done better? Do you have any idea why you didn't do it?

4) I was fully engaged in the task.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree

5) In which ways were you engaged? What did you 'do', 'think' or 'feel'?

6) Why were you or weren't you engaged?

I was engaged because I... (e.g., what did you do, think or feel?)	I was not engaged because I … (e.g., what did you not do, think or feel?)

7) I would have been more engaged if...

APPENDIX F

Learning Path “An interesting sport” in the TeCoLa Virtual World

Where to go

- Log into the TeCoLa Virtual World and meet your team members.
- Teleport to Chatterdale.
- Outside the arrival zone, you will see the **Station 1** of your learning path.
- Read the instructions on this board before you go to Station 2.

Use this worksheet to take notes

Station 2: What is your guess and why?

Station 3: Note down information about the sport?

Station 4 and 5: Scoring

Write down which scoring points can be gained:

Sport A:	Sport B:

Station 6: The Video Clip

Theresa Timmons is 23 years old and she talks about the sport she plays as a pastime. Which sport does Theresa play and what does she say about the differences between her sport and the male version of this sport?

(Keywords: hand pass a goal into the net - number of steps with the ball - square ball)

Station 7: The Quiz Chair

Work as a team and discuss your answers before you click!

Reflection:

How did you like the task and what did or didn't you like about it?

Look back at your communicative interaction and talk about what went well and what didn't and what you could have done better.

APPENDIX G

Interview questions students (NL6)

1. What would you say was important for you to carry out the task successfully?

2. When looking back, have you managed to do what you felt was necessary for completing the task successfully? Which challenges have you met?

3. Did these challenges make you change or re-adjust what you felt was important for you to carry out the task successfully?

4. Did you do your very best? Are you satisfied with the way in which you carried out the task? What would you do the same or differently?

5. Would you say your partner was satisfied with how the task activity went?

6. What made the task particularly interesting, or not interesting, for you?
   When watching the recording, I got the idea that you didn't like the environment. Can you share your experiences as an avatar with me?

7. What made the task particularly challenging or easy for you?

8. How would you compare this task to the first task in BBB? Which one did you like best? Which one felt more comfortable? Which one was more helpful for practising your communication skills?

9. Did you feel sufficiently prepared for doing the task? What would be necessary or helpful for you to know or be aware of so that you can do the task successfully and to your satisfaction?

10. You didn't take notes or fill in your worksheet. Why not?

APPENDIX H

Interview questions teachers

1. How do you look back on this project?

2. If you would compare it in more detail with the first exchange, what is the main difference because the first exchange was with the younger students?

3. What according to you was the big difference?

4. What did you do differently than in the second exchange?

5. Why did you participate?

6. How did they do at the exams?

7. You are also involved in other international projects. What to you is the main difference between a physical exchange and this virtual exchange or are there any differences?

8. And from the perspective of language learning, what is the difference according to you between the physical exchange and this exchange?

9. What have you learned from this project?

10. In total, eight of your learners participated in the exchange. How do you look back on their participation? So, what can you tell me about their involvement in the tasks?

11. (Discussion of all the participating students) E.g. what about NL/DEx's involvement?

12. And what would you do differently if you had to do this project again in terms of maybe getting your students even more involved in the tasks?

13. Is there anything else you would like to tell me which might be important?

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NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING

Task engagement bij virtuele pedagogische lingua franca communicatie

In onze hedendaagse meertalige samenleving wordt van opgeleide mensen verwacht dat zij kunnen communiceren in een of meerdere vreemde talen. Kwalitatief hoogstaand vreemdetalenonderwijs, dat jongeren voorbereidt op hoe zij andere talen dan hun moedertaal succesvol kunnen gebruiken in hun toekomstige professionele loopbaan en privéleven, is daarom van cruciaal belang (De Graaff, 2018). Om deze reden bieden de meeste scholen voor voortgezet onderwijs (VO) en een toenemend aantal basisscholen in Europa leerlingen de mogelijkheid om vanaf jonge leeftijd een of meerdere talen naast de eerste schooltaal te leren. Zo werd in 2005 de 'Nieuwe Kaderstrategie voor Meertaligheid' door de Europese Commissie aangenomen, en legde de Europese Raad in 2017 in een akkoord vast dat alle jongeren die in Europa wonen naast hun moedertaal in ten minste twee andere talen moeten kunnen communiceren (www.obessu.org).

Het opleiden van jongeren tot communicatief competente gebruikers van de doeltaal in diverse internationale communicatieve contexten heeft consequenties voor de manier waarop deze taal moeten worden 'geleerd' op VO scholen. Echter, waar in theorie een interculturele communicatieve oriëntatie verankerd zou moeten zijn in de meeste vreemdetalencurricula in het reguliere VO (zie ook CEFR, 2001, 2018), valt het in de praktijk op dat veel activiteiten in het vreemdetalenklaslokaal zich nog voornamelijk richten op de betreffende doeltaalcultuur. Ook zijn communicatieoefeningen vaak gebaseerd op hoe moedertaalsprekers de taal gebruiken. Helaas helpt deze eenzijdige benadering, die weinig tot geen rekening houdt met de manier waarop de doeltaal wordt gebruikt in interculturele communicatie door niet-moedertaalsprekers, leerlingen niet om hun interculturele communicatieve competenties (ICC) verder te ontwikkelen. Het ontbreekt leerlingen in het reguliere VO dan ook met name aan de sociale en socioculturele kennis, vaardigheden en attitudes die nodig zijn om in hun latere leven succesvol te kunnen communiceren met zowel native als niet-native sprekers van de taal die zij leren. In deze context is er de afgelopen jaren vooral kritiek geuit op de manier waarop het communicatieve taalonderwijs zijn oorspronkelijke doelstellingen heeft verwaarloosd. Volgens Kramsch (2006) was dit te wijten aan het feit dat het vreemdetalenonderwijs "onder druk stond om bewijs van efficiëntie en verantwoordelijkheid te tonen" (p. 250). Byram (2014) voegde eraan toe dat leraren "te bezorgd waren over de instrumentele doeleinden van taalonderwijs voor communicatie" (p. 210).

Tegen deze achtergrond is het van belang dat er meer aandacht uitgaat naar het ontwikkelen en uitproberen van vakdidactische aanpakken die leerlingen in staat stellen om hun ICC op een effectieve manier te ontwikkelen tijdens de vreemdetaalles. In dit verband is het vooral belangrijk dat leerlingen hun productieve vaardigheden kunnen oefenen in een authentieke context en op deze manier kunnen ervaren hoe het is om te communiceren met mensen die niet dezelfde moedertaal als zijzelf spreken. In de praktijk zien wij echter dat authentieke taalactiviteiten die leerlingen kunnen helpen om hun ICC verder te ontwikkelen, lastig te realiseren zijn in de fysieke klassikale taalles. Gelukkig bieden online leeromgevingen een oplossing voor dit probleem en beschikken steeds meer docenten over ICT-toepassingen die zij kunnen inzetten om hun leerlingen buiten de fysieke grenzen van hun vaklokaal te laten samenwerken met non-native speakers van de taal die zij doceren. Op deze manier biedt technologie mogelijkheden om de drie basisprincipes van communicatief taalonderwijs te integreren in de vreemdetaalles (Kohn, 2009), dat wil zeggen autonomie, samenwerken en authenticiteit (zie ook Wolf, 1994).

In dit kader organiseren steeds meer VO scholen online interculturele uitwisselingen met partnerscholen in het buitenland. Vreemdetaaldocenten verkennen op deze manier hoe virtuele uitwisselingsprojecten kunnen bijdragen aan het interculturele bewustzijn en de ICC ontwikkeling van hun leerlingen (Nuffic, 2020). Tijdens een online interculturele uitwisseling werken leerlingen in tweetallen of kleine groepen met buitenlandse leeftijdsgenoten samen aan communicatieve opdrachten in de doeltaal (O'Dowd, 2018). De interculturele activiteiten die docenten organiseren als onderdeel van de reguliere vreemdetaalles, worden in online leeromgevingen zoals MS Teams, BigBlueButton, Padlet of Second life uitgevoerd. Om leerlingen aan te zetten tot zinvolle communicatie in de doeltaal wordt hierbij vaak een taakgestuurde aanpak gehanteerd (Van den Branden, 2016). De aanname is dat het inzetten van een taakgestuurde aanpak leidt tot authentieke communicatie die kan bijdragen aan de ontwikkeling van ICC. Echter, tot op heden is er nog weinig informatie beschikbaar over hoe leerlingen online taaltaken uitvoeren en over de onderliggende factoren die hun betrokkenheid bij de taak (*task engagement*) beïnvloeden.

Hoewel er al veel is gepubliceerd over *student engagement* (zie ook Christenson et al., 2012; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012), weten we nog maar weinig van task engagement. Daarnaast ontbreken adequate manieren om de betrokkenheid van leerlingen tijdens het uitvoeren van taalleeropdrachten in kaart te brengen. Daar komt bij dat internationaal onderzoek veelal voortbouwt op inzichten die zijn opgedaan tijdens studies naar student engagement. Onderzoeken naar deze vorm van engagement zijn voornamelijk gebaseerd op het bestuderen van de tijd die jongeren al dan niet op school doorbrengen en hun actieve participatie tijdens het uitvoeren van schoolopdrachten. Dit verklaart waarom veel engagementstudies die plaatsvinden in een vreemdetaalleercontext zich voornamelijk richten op de mate waarin leerlingen actief

bezig zijn tijdens taalleeractiviteiten. Tot op heden is er echter weinig aandacht besteed aan de speciale inspanning die nodig is om daadwerkelijk tot het leren van taal te komen. Met andere woorden: wat is er nodig om tot taalontwikkeling te komen in termen van het soort inspanningen dat moet worden geleverd bij het uitvoeren van een communicatieve taaltaak in de vreemdetaal en bij het beheersen van de inhoud ervan, het begrijpen van de taak en het doel ervan, en de moeite die moet worden gedaan om de taak leuk of interessant te vinden? Ondanks pogingen van een aantal onderzoekers om task engagement prominenter op de internationale onderzoekagenda te krijgen (bijvoorbeeld Oga-Baldwin, 2019; Philp en Duchesne, 2016), is het onderzoeksveld er als zodanig nog niet in geslaagd om het begrip task engagement in het vreemdetalenklaslokaal eenduidig te conceptualiseren en empirisch te valideren, laat staan in een online interculturele leeromgeving.

Door task engagement in een authentieke eigentijdse leeromgeving te verkennen, te identificeren met welke deelaspecten van een taaltaak leerlingen zich bezighouden (bijvoorbeeld het onderwerp, hun partner of de technologie), en te onderzoeken wat task engagement belemmert en vergemakkelijkt, kunnen docenten de taakbetrokkenheid van hun leerlingen versterken en zo het leren van een vreemde taal leuker, interessanter en effectiever maken. Daarnaast is onderzoek naar task engagement belangrijk voor het beoordelen van de effectiviteit van vakdidactische aanpakken, zoals bijvoorbeeld het inzetten van online interculturele uitwisselingen als onderdeel van een breder blended language learning-scenario. Bovendien kunnen docenten de inzichten die zij opdoen gebruiken om hun leerlingen nog beter te begeleiden in hun taalverwervingsproces. In de woorden van Dörnyei (2019, p. 56): “Een van de belangrijkste uitdagingen bij het toepassen van een taaldidactiek is het vinden van manieren om voldoende betrokkenheid bij leerlingen te garanderen, zonder welke de aanpak niet kan slagen”.

Dit promotieonderzoek is tot stand gekomen in samenwerking met het Erasmus+ TeCoLa project (www.tecola.eu). Het richtte zich op het in kaart brengen van task engagement tijdens virtuele pedagogische lingua franca (PLF) communicatie; een vorm van online interactie die tot stand komt als leerlingen de doeltaal gebruiken om te communiceren met buitenlandse leerlingen in een schoolse taalleercontext. Voor dit doeleinde hebben leerlingen spreekopdrachten uitgevoerd die deel uitmaakten van een online interculturele uitwisseling in de virtuelewereldomgeving van het TeCoLa project.

Allereerst is er gekeken naar wat de literatuur ons vertelt over task engagement. Het onderzoek heeft zich daarbij voornamelijk gericht op het beantwoorden van vragen als: ‘Hoe wordt task engagement in een taalleercontext gedefinieerd?’ en ‘Hoe is task engagement tot op heden in kaart gebracht?’. Hieruit kunnen we concluderen dat een valide conceptualisering van engagement in ieder geval een waarneembaar, actiegericht subtype (gedrag) en twee

interne dimensies (te weten: cognitief en affectief) moet bevatten. Verder is het ook interessant om te vermelden dat de meeste engagementstudies erop gericht zijn de betrokkenheid van leerlingen vast te leggen op beoordelingsschalen die van lage naar hoge betrokkenheid gaan. Kwantificering van engagement kan waardevolle empirisch-analytische inzichten bieden op het niveau van een geïsoleerde dimensie. Echter, deze methodologische aanpak heeft nog niet geleid tot inzichten die substantieel bijdragen aan het beter begrijpen van task engagement in een vreemdetaalleercontext of vakdidactische aanpakken die de taakbetrokkenheid van leerlingen op een positieve manier kunnen beïnvloeden (zie hoofdstuk 4.1).

Tegen deze achtergrond is task engagement in deze studie geconceptualiseerd in een driedimensionaal model dat bestaat uit een gedrags-, een cognitieve en een affectieve kwaliteit (zie hoofdstuk 4.3). Deze kwaliteiten werken nauw op elkaar in wanneer leerlingen daadwerkelijk samen aan een taaltaak werken. Het ontwikkelde model is gebaseerd op een sociaal-constructivistisch begrip van taakverwerking (*task processing*), volgens welke taalleerders zelf de belangrijkste actoren zijn die verantwoordelijk zijn voor het zich eigen maken van een opdracht door middel van individuele en collaboratieve processen van creatieve constructie; zie ook Kohns (2018a, 2020a) sociaal-constructivistisch model van taalleren (zie hoofdstuk 2.5 en 4.2). Vanuit dit perspectief creëren leerlingen hun eigen perceptie van de taak die zij voorgeschoteld krijgen, op basis van hun eerdere ervaringen met taalleeropdrachten en ideeën over wat er van hen wordt verwacht in de taalles. Denk bijvoorbeeld aan leerlingen die geconfronteerd worden met een briefopdracht. Afhankelijk van hoe zij 'geleerd' hebben om een brief te schrijven, zal de ene leerling vooral bezig zijn met het letterlijk vertalen van zinnen van het Nederlands naar bijvoorbeeld het Engels of Duits en streven naar grammaticale correctheid, terwijl een andere leerling meer gericht is op het overbrengen van een boodschap en minder waarde hecht aan het al dan niet foutloos schrijven. Hoewel het uitvoeren van een opdracht vanuit een sociaal-constructivistisch perspectief een nogal individuele onderneming lijkt, vindt het proces van creatieve taakconstructie net als andere taalleerprocessen plaats in een bredere sociale en pedagogische context. Zo heeft een leerling tijdens het uitvoeren van een spreekopdracht ook te maken met de percepties, leerbehoeften en/of voorkeuren van hun partner en de eisen die de docent aan de uitwisseling stelt.

Waar eerdere studies de dimensies van engagement benaderen als op zichzelf staande vormen van engagement en vervolgens bekijken hoe ze met elkaar samenhangen, zijn de kwaliteitsdimensies in ons model van nature met elkaar verweven en bestaan ze niet los van elkaar. De drie constitutieve kwaliteiten van behavioural, cognitive en attitudinal engagement zijn nauw met elkaar verbonden wanneer leerlingen daadwerkelijk een taak uitvoeren en zich deze eigen maken. Dit is gebaseerd op het sociaal-constructivistische idee dat een opdracht alleen succesvol kan worden afgerond, d.w.z. het process van creatieve taakcontructie, als leerlingen

met zowel hun handen, hoofd als hart betrokken zijn bij de taak die zij uitvoeren en dit doen in overeenstemming met hun taakgerelateerde leerdoelen. Persoonlijke leerdoelen weerspiegelen onderliggende ideeën over wat leerlingen denken dat nodig is om een opdracht succesvol uit te voeren, en de richtlijnen die docenten formuleren, weerspiegelen leerdoelen zoals deze zijn opgenomen in het leerplan of curriculum. 'Vloeiend spreken in de doeltaal' kan bijvoorbeeld een leerdoel zijn. Dan kan de taak alleen met succes worden voltooid als de leerlingen daadwerkelijk tot een gesprek zijn gekomen waarin ze aan hun leerdoel hebben kunnen werken.

Wat deze sociaal-constructivistische conceptualisering van task processing vernieuwend maakt, is dat leerlingen hun eigenaarschap erkennen door simpelweg de taak uit te voeren. Doordat zij controle hebben over de manier waarop de opdracht uitgevoerd wordt, is er altijd sprake is van engagement. Waar in de literatuur veelal wordt gesproken over een lage of hoge mate van betrokkenheid, gaat ons model in op de kwaliteit van task engagement, dus de manier waarop een taak wordt uitgevoerd. Natuurlijk is het mogelijk dat leerlingen zichzelf verliezen in activiteiten die niet bijdragen aan hun persoonlijke taalverwervingsproces; desalniettemin verdiepen zij zich in de taak. Als zodanig zijn het nemen van eigenaarschap over de taak (*task ownership*) en task engagement vanuit een sociaal-constructivistisch perspectief intrinsiek met elkaar verbonden, als twee kanten van dezelfde medaille.

Docenten plannen hun meest krachtige vakdidactische interventies in relatie tot specifieke onderdelen van een taak. Daarom is een complementair model van zeven taakprestatie-parameters (*TP-parameters*) ontwikkeld (zie hoofdstuk 4.4). Dit model is gebruikt om te bestuderen hoe leerlingen omgaan met verschillende aspecten van een taaltaak onder virtuele pedagogische lingua franca (PLF)-condities. Meer specifiek zijn de parameters 'Taak Management', 'Technologie', 'Onderwerp & Inhoud', 'Taal', 'Communicatieve Participatie', 'Partneroriëntatie' en '*Task Appropriation*' gebruikt om de betrokkenheid van leerlingen bij verschillende taakaspecten vast te leggen. In dit verband is ook een 'tweelaagse benadering' geïntroduceerd. Deze methodologische benadering combineert het driedimensionale model van task engagement met het TP-parametermodel en stelt onderzoekers in staat om de betrokkenheid van leerlingen met betrekking tot bepaalde TP-parameters te bestuderen door een gedrags-, een cognitieve en een attitude-lens. Met andere woorden: deze tweelaagse benadering helpt onderzoekers om zich te concentreren op de speciale inspanningen die leerlingen verrichten tijdens het uitvoeren van allerlei taakgerelateerde activiteiten. Het bestuderen van task engagement met betrekking tot bijvoorbeeld 'het onderwerp van de taak' of 'de technologie' maakt het mogelijk om vakdidactische interventies op te zetten die leerlingen helpen zich te richten op die activiteiten die zinvol zijn om de taal op een effectieve manier te leren. Als zodanig biedt het gebruik van de tweelaagse benadering een relevant en nieuw perspectief voor onderzoek naar task engagement.

Aan de casusstudie in dit promotieonderzoek namen twaalf leerlingen in tweetallen (DE-NL) deel; zij waren tussen de zestien en achttien jaar oud (ERK A2-C1), volgden het reguliere VO in Duitsland en Nederland en sloten zich vrijwillig met hun docenten aan bij het TeCoLa project. Zij namen deel aan de online interculturele uitwisselingen om hun mondelinge interactievaardigheden en ICC te ontwikkelen, maar gaven voornamelijk aan te willen ervaren hoe het zou zijn om samen te werken met leeftijdsgenoten uit een ander land. De TeCoLa-activiteiten waaraan de leerlingen deelnamen kunnen het beste worden beschreven als verlengstukken van hun reguliere Engelse taallessen. Zo vonden de technische briefings, voorbereidende activiteiten en evaluaties plaats tijdens de verplichte Engelse lessen, terwijl de online ontmoetingen via eigen laptops in de avonduren werden gepland. Tijdens de uitwisselingen gebruikten de leerlingen Engels als de PLF (Kohn, 2018a). De opdrachten die voor dit onderzoek werden ontworpen stimuleerden samenwerkend leren en nodigden de leerlingen uit elkaar beter te leren kennen terwijl ze met elkaar onderwerpen bespraken vanuit een intercultureel perspectief.

In een verkennende kwalitatieve casusstudie (zie hoofdstuk 5) bestaande uit zes online interculturele uitwisselingen die plaats vonden in de TeCoLa Virtuele Wereld, werd de tweelaagse aanpak gebruikt om de task engagement van de deelnemende leerlingen in kaart te brengen. Dat wil zeggen dat de empirische data die afkomstig waren van de video-opnames van de uitwisselingen, de semigestructureerde interviews en de reflectieve werkbladen zowel met behulp van het driedimensionale model van task engagement als het TP-parametermodel zijn geanalyseerd. Om precies te zijn werden de data geanalyseerd per uitwisseling (zie hoofdstuk 6) en per TP-parameter (zie hoofdstuk 7). Met betrekking tot de analyse per uitwisseling werden de data van alle TP-parameters bekeken om mogelijke patronen van task engagement te identificeren. Aanvullend werden de data van alle zes de uitwisselingen per TP-parameter bestudeerd om meer inzicht te krijgen in de vakdidactische interventies die docenten kunnen opzetten om de task engagement van hun leerlingen te versterken.

De kwalitatieve analyse van de data per uitwisseling bracht aan het licht dat de opdracht die werd uitgevoerd in de TeCoLa Virtuele Wereld, door de deelnemende leerling-koppels op verschillende manieren werd geïnterpreteerd en uitgevoerd. Dat leidde tot zes verschillende patronen van task engagement (zie hoofdstuk 6). Deze verschillende engagementprofielen laten zien wat er onder virtuele PLF omstandigheden mogelijk is. Zo wijzen de data bijvoorbeeld uit dat de mate waarin leerlingen bekend waren met een onderwerp, het makkelijker of juist moeilijker maakte om erover in het Engels in gesprek te gaan met hun partner. Bovendien zagen we dat een grote woordenschat met betrekking tot het onderwerp hen hielp om op een zinvolle manier bij te dragen aan discussies en het beantwoorden van vragen. Verder zagen we dat het voor sommige leerlingen lastig was om zich als een avatar (een driedimensionale weergave van zichzelf maar dan zonder gezichtsuitdrukking) duidelijk uit te drukken in de doeltaal, te begrijpen

wat hun partner bedoelde en problematische kwesties aan te pakken. Echter, tegelijkertijd zien we ook dat de semi-anonimiteit die sommige leerlingen in de virtuele wereld ervaren, hun task engagement op de cognitieve dimensie versterkte. Doordat ze in de omgeving rondliepen als avatar konden leerlingen in hun eigen virtuele privéruimte verdwijnen en zich in stilte richten op het begrijpen van de Engelse tekst op de 'digitale borden' en wat hun partner zei, zonder zich bekeken te voelen. Het was ook interessant om te zien dat de rollen die leerlingen aannamen tijdens de online ontmoetingen, niet alleen afhingen van hun taalvaardigheid, maar ook werden beïnvloed door hun interpretatie van de opdracht. Zo trad bij één koppel het zogenaamde 'schooleffect' op (Hoffstaedter & Kohn, 2019), wat betekende dat de leerlingen zich ten koste van de communicatie helemaal richtten op het snel en foutloos afronden van de taak. Daarbij komt in dit onderzoek ook naar voren dat leerlingen met een niet-coöperatieve of negatieve houding minder geneigd waren om de opdracht op een manier uit te voeren die vakdidactisch wenselijk was. Hun negatieve houding weerhield hen ervan het nut van de opdracht in te zien; dit leidde tot onverschillig gedrag en beïnvloedde ook de task engagement van hun partners. Echter, in dit kader moet ook worden benadrukt dat de constructieve houding van sommige leerlingen ten aanzien van de opdracht, hun partners task engagement juist positief beïnvloedde. Bovendien was de mate waarin leerlingen leken te profiteren van de interactie, sterk beïnvloed door hun sociale dynamiek. Wanneer leerlingen zich op hun gemak voelden, spraken ze meer en stonden ze meer open voor feedback en het corrigeren van hun eigen taalfouten. In dit verband zagen we ook hoe het samenwerken met andere 'taalleerders' de leerlingen het zelfvertrouwen gaf om met de doeltaal te experimenteren.

De speciale inspanningen die werden geïnvesteerd tijdens het uitvoeren van de activiteiten die uit de taak voortvloeiden, werden bepaald door hoe de leerlingen de taakinstructies oppakten, door hoe de opdracht hen en hun partner in staat stelde te werken aan hun leerdoelen, en door de begeleiding die ze ontvingen van hun docent. Tegen deze achtergrond laten de resultaten zien dat de mate waarin leerlingen zichzelf als autonome taalleerders zagen of elkaar aanmoedigden om de opdracht naar eigen inzicht uit te voeren, hun gevoel van task ownership vergrootte en daarmee ook hun task engagement op een positieve manier beïnvloedde. De bevindingen bevestigen ook het dynamische karakter en de onderlinge verbondenheid van de drie kwaliteiten van task engagement. Zo werd duidelijk dat de leerlingen die task engagement lieten zien op de attitudinale dimensie - hetzij omdat ze de taak of specifieke onderdelen ervan leuk vonden, hetzij omdat ze die serieus namen - ook task engagement lieten zien op de cognitive en behavioural dimension. Met andere woorden: attitudinal engagement bleek een beslissende en drijvende kracht achter de algehele betrokkenheid van leerlingen bij de taak.

Om erachter te komen welke vakdidactische interventies nodig zijn om de task engagement van leerlingen met betrekking tot de attitudinal dimension te versterken, is ook een analyse

per TP-parameter uitgevoerd, die inzicht geeft in welke ondersteuning leraren kunnen bieden om task engagement op de andere dimensies te versterken (hoofdstuk 7). Deze analyse was gericht op wat leerlingen deden, dachten en voelden bij het uitvoeren van TP-parameter-gerelateerde activiteiten. Op basis van deze bevindingen zijn suggesties gedaan over hoe docenten vakdidactische ondersteuning kunnen bieden om de cognitieve dimensie van engagement te versterken door aan leerlingen uit te leggen waarom het uitvoeren van bepaalde activiteiten belangrijk is voor hun taalontwikkeling. Verdere suggesties hadden betrekking op het versterken van behavioural engagement middels het oefenen van bepaalde vaardigheden. Hieruit vloeide ook een reeks criteria voort die kenmerkend zijn voor leerlingen die zich op een succesvolle manier hebben beziggehouden met activiteiten die in potentie kunnen leiden tot het leren van Engels. Leerlingen moeten in staat zijn om 1) de taak en het leerpotentieel ervan te begrijpen, 2) een taaldoelenprofiel op te stellen dat bestaat uit zowel persoonlijke taakgerelateerde leerdoelen als leerplandoelen, 3) uitdagingen te overwinnen die succesvolle uitvoering van de taak kunnen belemmeren, en 4) hun eigen taakprestaties te monitoren en evalueren in relatie tot het behalen van hun taaldoelenprofiel. Echter, de bevindingen wezen ook uit dat leerlingen in het VO enige vorm van hulp van hun docent nodig hebben om aan deze criteria te voldoen.

Op basis van de onderzoeksuitkomsten en onder invloed van de COVID-19-pandemie is het aan te raden dat scholen voor voortgezet onderwijs hun bestaande benaderingen van internationalisering heroverwegen. Jarenlang waren fysieke uitwisselingsprojecten het middel waarmee scholen de mondiale, internationale en interculturele competenties van hun leerlingen wilden ontwikkelen (Altbach & De Wit, 2018; Soria & Troisi, 2014). Echter, de bevindingen van dit onderzoek tonen aan dat online interculturele uitwisseling een veelbelovende activiteit is om de principes van communicatief taalonderwijs in de praktijk te brengen. De uitvoering ervan mag echter niet als vanzelfsprekend worden beschouwd. Lang niet alle leerlingen weten hoe ze zich moeten gedragen tijdens online interculturele ontmoetingen of zijn onbekend met strategieën die ze kunnen gebruiken om hun ICC in de doeltaal te versterken. Authentieke interculturele communicatie moet daarom plaatsvinden in een didactisch begeleide omgeving (O'Dowd et al., 2019), bij voorkeur in een leeromgeving die ruimte biedt aan leerlingen om hun doeltalen te ontwikkelen op een manier waar zij zich prettig bij voelen. Adequate begeleiding is nodig om leerlingen te begeleiden naar patronen van task engagement die de ontwikkeling van ICC bevorderen. In dit verband hebben we een pedagogische lingua franca (PLF) aanpak geïntroduceerd (zie hoofdstuk 2 en 7) die leerlingen voorbereidt op lingua franca-communicatie en voorziet in ondersteunende activiteiten die uitgevoerd kunnen worden tijdens de vreemde-taalles, bij voorkeur in combinatie met een online interculturele uitwisseling. Op deze manier kunnen leerlingen op een vakdidactisch verantwoorde manier binnen de context van de

vreemdetaalles ervaren hoe het is om een interculturele spreker te zijn. Concluderend stellen we dat dit onderzoek task engagement op een inzichtelijke manier in kaart heeft gebracht in een online interculturele leeromgeving en vreemdetalendocenten waardevolle aanknopingspunten biedt om didactisch mee te experimenteren.

About the author

Linda Gijsen (1978) studied English Language and Literature at the University of Nijmegen from 2000 to 2003. In 2004, she graduated cum laude from the Radboud Teachers Academy (the former ILS). During her studies and after obtaining her teaching degree, Linda taught English in pre-vocational education (2000-2002), secondary education (2002-2007), teacher education (2007-present) and was the programme coordinator of the Master of Education in English at Fontys University of Applied Sciences in Tilburg (2007-April 2021). Currently, Linda combines her job as a lecturer and teacher educator at Fontys with that of senior researcher in the Multilingualism & Education research group at the Centre of Expertise for Learning & Innovation (University of Applied Sciences Utrecht). Her research interests include the use of technology in the foreign language classroom, task engagement in pedagogical lingua franca communication during intercultural virtual exchange, and the challenges foreign language teachers face in multilingual teaching contexts and how they can cope with them in a pedagogically sound way.

For the past twelve years, Linda has been participating in research groups concerned with the use of technology in contemporary educational language learning and teaching contexts, and international research projects such as the European project TILA (www.tila.eu) and the Erasmus+ project TeCoLa (www.tecola.eu). In addition, Linda set up several intercultural virtual exchange projects with foreign universities for her own master students and their secondary school students. Against this background, she studied the affordances of telecollaborative practices for foreign language learning and English Language Teaching (ELT) in particular from a task-based language learning and teaching perspective. Accordingly, Linda presented the outcomes of her research projects at national and international conferences and educational events (e.g. Canada, Germany, Ireland, Finland, Spain) and published several related papers (see below). In 2019, Linda registered as an external doctoral candidate at the University of Utrecht and finalised her PhD study on task engagement in virtual pedagogical lingua franca communication in the summer of 2021.

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Task engagement in virtual pedagogical lingua franca communication

Engagement has become a key issue in educational literature. Over the last decades, several attempts have been made to develop theoretical models that help researchers and teachers to better understand task engagement and what it means for learning. However, to improve everyday research and teaching, we need more information on how students engage with their tasks in authentic contemporary educational settings.

Against this background, this PhD study offers theoretical and empirical insights in secondary school students' task engagement in virtual pedagogical lingua franca (PLF) communication. More specifically, it offers a window on how English language learning students carry out tasks and make them their own when communicating and collaborating with peers from other countries while using English as a pedagogical lingua franca during intercultural virtual exchange. In particular, the study introduces a two-layered approach that researchers can use to study task engagement in a more differentiated way. Furthermore, it provides foreign language teachers with insights on how to design and implement pedagogical interventions that potentially strengthen their students' task engagement in virtual PLF communication. The results of the study show that virtual PLF communication offers a promising playground for putting the key principles of communicative language teaching into practice and, as such, promotes the kind of naturalistic interaction that is beneficial for L2 development and intercultural learning.

The study is of interest to a broad range of educational professionals including researchers aiming to understand task engagement in an authentic contemporary language learning context, foreign language teachers looking for ways to pedagogically mentor their students towards desirable patterns of task engagement and ownership, as well as international officers and educational managers wishing to explore the possibilities of blended language learning.

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