

Transnational practices of a learning project:

new attempts of learning
in a pandemic situation



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Introduction

Takanori Kawamata

This book deals with the Meisei Summer School Project (MSSP), which was launched in 2002. This project was first planned and executed by Hiromasa Tanaka with 22 students and as a pre-teaching practicum. The MSSP is inspired by the Foreign Language Partnership Project (FLPP) of Hawaii (Davis, 1999).

The MSSP is designed to be a dynamic project that evolves annually—This principle particularly implies the avoidance of constructing a hierarchical system. The nature of a continuous project is that experienced members with greater knowledge instruct and guide new entrants. However, to maintain its function as a learning community, the MSSP made a new introduction in 2004—it evolved into a student-oriented project. Post-graduate students were allowed to assume responsibility as project leaders. The MSSP also began to teach elementary school children in 2004. Given the changes made to the Japanese policy for English-language education since 2001, the MSSP envisaged the importance of elementary schooling in English (Sugiyama, 2016). In this sense, the MSSP in 2004 began using a communicative approach to teach English-medium students studying in grades five and six. In 2005, besides classes offered to elementary or junior high school students, one class for adults became a new challenge. At this time, the MSSP had become an international volunteer project; the Youth Action for Peace (YAP), international non-governmental organisation, as well as its affiliate the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE), collaborated with the MSSP to provide educational opportunities for young students worldwide.

Through their experiences with the MSSP, all participants—both international volunteers and Meisei students—learn, for example, teamwork, leadership, intercultural communication, and risk management. The MSSP does not only provide opportunity for local Japanese children to use English, but it also functions as a learning site where children in general, Meisei students, and international volunteers can acquire a range of abilities and knowledge. Thus, MSSP is a dynamic and discursive project. The holistic educational aspects of MSSP are intertwined. In attempting to achieve the goals of the project, all of the participants have encountered conflicts and problems. By social interaction and negotiation for solving the conflicts, the participants unearth the learning embedded in MSSP.

This book envisions translanguaging practices in the educational setting in pandemic situation in 2020. In the beginning of 2020, COVID-19 have been strong impacted the world in a multiple aspect, such as society, economics, and education. On April 7th, Japanese government issued the state of emergency, it continues until 25th May (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2020). All educational institutions, from elementary to Tertiary education, were prohibited to attend face-to-face class, many of classes were conducted in online platform (Asahi Shinbun, 2020, April 7th). In addition, many of educational institutions were postponed or

cancelled to conduct international mobility program. Even though this pandemic situation, MSSP as an international educational project had conducted in online. Tanaka et al. (2013) argue that the English as a Lingua Franca gives rise to greater interaction and the possibility of project-based learning—that is, how social practice informs students' and children's learning. Especially 2020, under the pandemic situation, this volume is based on a prulivocal research project, that is, various 'voices' are 'heard,' from researchers and students.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has brought about significant rapid change in all over the world. This change affects not only ordinary lifestyle, but also educational settings. Irsara and Gatti in Chapter 1, precisely described the situation in Italy and new attempts to teaching and learning in onlnie platform. They significantly referring to construct epistemological implication of the knowledge. They pointed out that through experiences of MSSP 2020 in online platform, this Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) provides both Bolzen-Bolzano and Meisei students to aware of new knowledge creation process.

Echoing their argument, Valentina Mölk, in Chapter 3, attributes her experience in the middle of pandemic and how she could prospected learning through MSSP 2020. Mölk expanded her perspective toward intercultural communication to foreign language learning. Her narrative is able to envisage readers that new attempt to form great relationship through online interaction. Satomi Ura, Chapter 2, investigates University students and children's social interaction in online platform. Ura have descived both University students and children collaboratively construct the "classroom" in online platform. Ura's unique study of classroom construction reveals that notion of conventional "classroom" does not exsit in online platfrom, rather, both teachers and childlren need to collaborate in order to create new learning site, as the "classroom".

Cristina-Elena Iordachescu, Chapter 4, exemplifies her transborder identity practice. She originally from Romania, studies Meisei University as postgraduate student. Iordachescu engaged several Project-based learning programs in Meisei University, her insights based on her experiences provide great meaning of transborder practice. Iordachescu participated as Meisei University participants in international working site. She indicates embodied transborder identity, not based on nationality or ethnic group. In resonate with Iordachescu's narrative, Kawamata in Chapter 5, examines potential learning opportunity of COIL.

Lastly, the administrators of MSSP would like to express our gratitude to all participants of MSSP 2020. All participants' contributions have been undoubtedly vital in the completion of this work.

English in a multilingual context and beyond:

Broadening horizons during the COVID-19 pandemic

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[Abstract] This report describes the Italian context of the transnational project MSSP2 (*Meisei Summer School Project 2020, Round 2*) and describes challenges and opportunities that arose from it. The report provides a descriptive account of pedagogical principles that endorsed the commitment to the project and presents reflections that arose from the experience. Major approaches to the project were constructivist and collaborative. The report illustrates how a whole network of project participants in the northern Italian region Trentino-South Tyrol cooperated with Japan to actively construct knowledge. The ultimate goal was to keep learning in a challenging time of unprecedented restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The forced online shift was finally exploited as an opportunity to keep developing by digitally spanning transnational boundaries.

[Keywords] Global English online; transnationality; social interaction; teacher education

1. The Italian setting of the project

Part of the project MSSP2 (*Meisei Summer School Project 2020, Round 2*) was carried out in the Italian region Trentino-South Tyrol. The European republic of Italy is politically divided into twenty regions, five of which enjoy greater administrative autonomy because of various historical, ethnic, and linguistic reasons. The country stretches itself from the region of Sicily in the south to the most northern region of Trentino-South Tyrol, which borders Switzerland and Austria, and is characterised by its mountainous landscape. Trentino-South Tyrol is one of the Italian regions with special legislative and financial status. The region is formed by the two provinces of Trentino and South Tyrol (Italian *Alto Adige* and German *Südtirol*). The province of South Tyrol belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire before it was annexed to Italy as a result of the First World War. Most inhabitants of this province therefore speak a German variety, which is a local variant of Southern Bavarian. South Tyrol recognises three official languages: German (69.41%), Italian (26.06%), and Ladin (4.53%), which is a Rhaetho-Romance minority language (ASTAT, 2012).

The special legislative status of the region also entails certain flexibility in the development of school curricula. Compulsory schools in South Tyrol differ in their linguistic curricula according to the language group they are associated with. German and Italian primary schools

teach the respective second language from the early stages on and normally take on English as a third or foreign language later in primary school. A number of schools also implement special linguistic programmes, which aim for instance at fostering pupils' English language competence by teaching content through the foreign language English in an integrated way, a well-known approach referred to by the acronym CLIL (*Content and Language Integrated Learning*). Further programmes are concerned with language teaching within a multilingual didactic framework that is commonly known as *Integrated Linguistic Education*, which aims at promoting cross-linguistic awareness by treating languages contemporaneously and exploiting existing commonalities (Irsara, 2017).

South Tyrol hosts the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, which is currently organised into five faculties with various study programmes, among which the Faculty of Education with its five-year master's degree programme in Primary Education, where future pre-school and primary school teachers are educated. The degree programme is divided into a German, an Italian, and a Ladin section, which students decide to enrol on according to the kindergarten or school in which they intend to teach in the future. The curriculum includes subjects related to the fields of pedagogy, psychology, and didactics, with special emphasis on preparing teachers-in-education for a linguistically and culturally heterogeneous school reality. Students are educated in a wide range of subjects, which they might all teach in their future, given the all-round nature of the professional figure of teachers at primary school. Students are therefore also prepared to teach English. In the English classes at university, they learn for instance about English language teaching approaches, lesson planning, children's literature, or storytelling techniques. Finally, their study is also complemented by practical-training experiences at local schools and abroad.

2. Project participants in the Italian region of Trentino-South Tyrol

The great majority of the Italian university students who participated in the MSSP2 project study in the Italian section of the Faculty of Education of the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano. A minority of them attend the German section of the same Faculty. Most student participants live in the province of Trentino and speak Italian as their first language. They learn German and English as additional languages. A minority of student participants live in the province of South-Tyrol and speak a German variety at home. They learn Italian as a second language and English as a third language. A few participants also have some knowledge of other languages, including Japanese in one case. All students are in their upper years of university and are therefore familiar with certain pedagogical, psychological, and didactic concepts. They have also gained some practical experience at kindergarten and primary schools.

The Italian academic staff that participated in the MSSP2 project are teacher educators and linguists who work on topics related to discourse analysis, intercultural communication, contrastive linguistics, language acquisition, and English language teaching, to cite but a few fields of interest. The participating professors were supported in the practical organisational issues by

internship mentors and organisers at the Faculty.

The children who participated in the project are aged between seven and ten and attend different classes at two different primary schools. One school is located in the province of Trentino (in the town of Trento), while the other one is in South Tyrol (in the town of Brunico-Bruneck). The children from Trento speak Italian as their first language and learn German and English at school. Most children from Brunico-Bruneck speak German at home and learn Italian and English at school. A minority of children also speak other languages with their parents, such as Ladin, Slovakian, and Romanian. The young MSSP2 participants are at different levels of English proficiency, but they are all familiar with multilingual practices and with the communicative approach to language learning. English language teachers and headteachers facilitated the contact with the pupils and their parents, who also played a key role. Parents had to give their written consent to the children's participation in the project and they also needed to provide their children with technical support.

3. Challenges and opportunities offered by the project

The Italian unit of MSSP2 started working on the project at a time that was challenging for a number of reasons, not least because of the world-wide spread of COVID-19, which had been gaining ground in Trentino-South Tyrol since the early spring of 2020. The Free University of Bozen-Bolzano abruptly closed their physical doors at the beginning of March 2020, after which months of lockdown and social distancing measures followed. University students therefore spent most of their spring attending online classes, which were demanding for students and lecturers alike. It was clear from the beginning that 'going online' did not necessarily mean 'learning online'. Students needed to go beyond their usual ways of studying and find new opportunities to learn. A new learning opportunity is what MSSP2 offered to students at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano. The process of learning can be defined and understood in several ways. It can be argued that individuals learn most when they construct their knowledge actively, rather than when they simply receive it in a passive way. This is the main tenet of the constructivist theory of learning, which has been defined by Pritchard and Woollard (2010) as a theory that is founded on the idea that "as learners we construct our own understanding of the world around us based on experience as we live and grow" (p. 8). According to this theory, "we select and transform information from past and current knowledge and experience into new personal knowledge and understanding" (p. 8). The Faculty of Education of the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano places great emphasis on empowering learners to create their own knowledge. The Faculty offers students a high number of interactive workshops and promotes internships at local schools and abroad. However, COVID-19 suddenly made face-to-face, hands-on experiences unfeasible for teachers-in-education, who therefore found a new practical-training opportunity in MSSP2. The project invited the students to take an active role by planning, designing, and implementing English language lessons for young learners online.

On the one hand, MSSP2 encouraged students' agency and independence. On the other hand, students were not entirely on their own but were guided and supervised in their work by professors and researchers. Direct instructions are in fact not completely dismissed in a constructivist framework, which sees lecturing as pedagogically acceptable in some circumstances, for example when students already possess certain subject knowledge. Hyslop-Margison and Strobel (2008) argue that constructed individual belief is not to be equated with knowledge. They emphasise that "knowledge is most reasonably defined as justified true belief confirmed through some publicly accessible warrant or empirical evidence" (p. 74).

Nowadays, it is generally accepted that "learners make their own sense of their world, but they do so within a *social context*, and through *social interactions*" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 28). The *social constructivist learning theory* highlights "the role of others and all forms of social interaction in the process of constructing knowledge and understanding" (Pritchard & Woollard, 2010, p. 8). University students normally spend a lot of time at the Faculty and like studying together, but the pandemic put a stop to social gatherings. Social distancing and self-isolation were advocated and sometimes imposed in order to curb the spread of the virus. MSSP2 therefore offered university students a unique opportunity to socialise in times when this was not easy. Green (2008) pointed out more than ten years ago that computer-mediated communication "allows populations of people to come together and build a social context that has not heretofore been able to exist" (p. 19). For the great majority of the Italian university students, it was the first time that they cooperated with someone from outside of Europe. Hence, MSSP2 invited the Italian student participants to look beyond European horizons and increase their transcultural awareness by working closely together with Japanese students.

The participating children and their parents also appreciated the transnational dimension of the project. Although most children were already acquainted with multilingual practices in their families and at school, MSSP2 took them beyond familiar ground to a distant and fascinating culture, where also people's physiognomy is different. A number of children reported that they enjoyed being called by name by smiling and encouraging young teachers who lived on the other side of the globe. The group of pupils in Trentino-South Tyrol was heterogeneous, and it is clear that different individuals react in different ways to something that is new or unknown. Constructivists argue that "each person is motivated differently, and will therefore act on his or her environment in ways that are unique" (Brown, 2000, p. 161). However, most university students described the children who attended the online classes with the adjective *curious*, i.e. eager to know, which is a characteristic that is argued to be a valuable activator of learning and thinking. Other positive adjectives that were used to describe the children were *happy*, *interested*, *motivated*, *active*, and *excited*.

Despite their multilingual surrounding, MSSP2 provided the first opportunity for most children to use English in an authentic context. Parents found that their children were fascinated by the fact that they were able to understand teachers from Japan who spoke neither German nor Italian. This showed to them the value of learning English as a global language in order to communicate with people in the world. MSSP2 also confirmed to teachers-in-education the value of

increasing their exposure to global English and its diversity, and the importance of developing their communication strategies in diverse contexts. Some communication strategies often work among speakers of closely related languages, but they might not work among speakers of very different languages. For instance, speakers of Romance languages tend to use Latin-based words when they speak English, and they often take it for granted that these expressions will be understood by their listeners, because of the formal similarity of these expressions in all Latin-derived languages. MSSP2 provided a few examples of how this is not necessarily the case when the interlocutors have very different linguistic backgrounds. Italian students often used English words with Latin roots, such as *potential* (Latin *potentialis*, from *potentia* ‘power’) and *opportunity* (Latin *opportunitatem*). Such words are easy to understand for speakers of Romance languages but can be very difficult for Japanese speakers due to absence of semantic encoding.

On a more critical side, a minority of students found that some pupils seemed *bored*, which encouraged reflection on the side of the student teachers, most of whom felt the need of an appropriate learners’ needs analysis prior to course designing. Perhaps detailed information on the participating pupils could have helped to inform the level and content of the classes offered. However, while careful planning can be perceived as a requisite for successful teaching, within-lesson decisions often can help the implementation and modification of pre-lesson choices and plans. As a matter of fact, most student participants in Trentino-South Tyrol identified *flexibility* as a personal or attitudinal skill which emerged quite relevantly in the teaching practice.

A certain degree of flexibility and compromise was actually also necessary in terms of time management, due to the different time zones between Japan and Italy. Flexibility, responsiveness, and commitment were also required from the Italian students, who had to answer the call for participation in MSSP2 in the middle of August, a traditional holiday time for Italians. The challenge of finding common availability confirmed once more the importance of being adaptable in transnational and multicultural project teams, where not only time zones differ but holiday organisation and work distribution through the year as well. In transnational projects, a plurality of voices needs to be heard, and overall agreements need to be reached. Although the students may have had different cultural and educational backgrounds and varying levels of expertise, they still shared resources and goals. With their diverse set of competences, they were able to problem-solve as a group. MSSP2 has shown how rewarding such an experience can be if collaboration is based on teamwork, mutual respect, and trust.

4. Conclusion

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic made 2020 a year like no other before in many respects. The entire education system was affected by lockdown regulations in unprecedented ways. Ordinary university and school routines were suddenly disrupted and teaching staff had unexpectedly to find innovative methods and teaching solutions. As in the rest of the world, this also happened at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano and in schools in the northern Italian region

Trentino-South Tyrol. While people had to stay away from others as much as possible and were generally not allowed to leave home, the wish to socially connect with others partly grew even stronger. When online teaching gained currency, it became obvious that digital platforms should serve both social and learning purposes. The online cooperation with Japan in the MSSP2 project therefore offered the Italian participants the opportunity to broaden their social and cultural horizons and to use English in a transnational context, beyond European borders, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Academic professors, internship mentors, children, parents, and school personnel participated in MSSP2. They worked together with Japan to construct knowledge in a collaborative way. Despite a number of challenges the participants had to face, such as time management, MSSP2 was a new learning opportunity for all parties involved, not least because of the multicultural character of the experience. It is hoped that MSSP2 has laid the basis for further cooperation with Japan and provided the groundwork for more in-depth analyses and reflections, which are key to experiential learning.

Note

This article was co-written by the two authors from the beginning to the end. However, to meet the legal requirements of the Italian academy, Maria Cristina Gatti takes responsibility for the abstract and sections 1 and 2. Martina Irsara takes responsibility for sections 3 and 4.

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Face-to-screen Summer School:

A virtual classroom in synthetic interactions

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In this essay I would like to reflect especially on the teaching session which university students and children participants spent together in the virtual classroom. This reflection focuses on interactions between student teachers and children participants followed by the frame of synthetic interaction. Cetina (2021) claims that synthetic situations are copresence in the screen and social interactions are consisted by participants' actions, reactions, mutual adaptation.

Meisei Summer School Project (MSSP) is one of the university courses which was originally designed to teach English to local elementary school children and junior high school students which stated in 2002 (Tanaka & Ogane, 2011). 2020 was the year world suffered from COVID-19 pandemic and many things in social life were changed and developed in different ways. MSSP in 2020 is the one which was innovated along with digital technology and transformed as a version of 2020.

MSSP in 2020 had two online teaching projects, the former teaching session was in August, the latter was in October. As usual, the project accommodated the primary populations, such as Meisei students, international participants, and elementary and junior high school students. However, the online MSSP was a new endeavor for everyone. There would be rich findings which relates to online learning and teaching in 2020.

I participated MSSP as a researcher observed one team from the beginning of the course for four months. I attended most of the team meeting and practices and was one of the members in informal SNS platform conversation. My positionality gave an insider view as a participant observer. Through the first semester students and international volunteers worked together to make syllabus and practice the English class for three months. After the preparation period, the teaching session was held for five days. I observed the team which taught ten-year-old of Japanese and Georgian children.

Virtual high-five

The virtual high-five was seen on the fifth day. The fifth day was the last day of teaching session with participant children. Main purpose of the lesson on the fifth day was revision. In the series of activities, children participants had chances they could use what they learnt in MSSP. When children participant successfully answered questions, naturally student teacher wanted to

give their high-five. Virtual high-fives seemed to be created by all participants with the words, “high five”. This gesture can be seen as synthetic interactions which enhance the learning outcome and unforgettable memory of MSSP for student teachers and children participants. This synthetic interaction represents co-construction of situation in the virtual classroom.

Creating dialogues with children participants

In this section I describe the interactions in the classroom followed by my interpretation which shows one more example of co-constructed classroom dialogues. Participants’ names are fictitious.

Marie was leading the class in this activity. This activity was designed to remember school materials and classroom useful phrase in English.

Marie: Next, I want you to have a book. (She touches a book to show everyone and asks them to have all materials.) A pencil, an eraser, a ruler, and pencil case, and do you have a pen? (While she holds all school materials and shows them.)
..... I hope you guys remember the game what we did on day 2.

Everybody: Yes! (Showing what they are holding.)

Marie: Let’s do it real quick one. Ok? (Everybody does gestures as Marie says.)

Everybody: Yeah!

Marie: Everybody, stand up! Sit down, open a book? Close a book. And pick up the ruler. And put down a ruler. And put down a book. Great job!!

Marie: OK. Now, I want you to... Who wants to do my part? Say stand up, sit down.... pick up the pencil...Who wants to do that? Anyone?

Someone: Koki? Do you want? Koki?

Marie: Raise your hand! If you want to do that, raise your hand! (Marie shows she raises her hand.) (Koki raises his hand.) Great!

Everyone: Yeah!! Great!

Marie: Let’s listen what Koki says. And do the gestures. OK?

Koki: Stand up. Sit down. Book...

Marie: Pick up a book.

Koki: Pick up a book. Pick up a ruler. Pick down a book. Put down a book. Put down a ruler. Ah. Ah. Pick up a pencil case. Open a pencil case. Put in a pencil case....

Marie: Wow, tricky one.

Everyone: Great job! (Praise)

In Marie's demonstration there was not the direction which suggested the participants to open a pencil case and put a pencil in the pencil case. Children participants also contributed to make useful dialogues to demonstrate for other classmates.

In the virtual classroom, it might be easier for participants to contribute to classroom activity. I observed slower temporal pace. In order to avoid overlaps everybody wait to listen to others. When student teachers and children work together, it can be said temporal forms of integration (Cetina, 2009). In online MSSP, participants included student teachers and elementary school children accessed virtual classroom from different places. All participant together to create copresence space. As Knapp (2021) describes the social forms of communication and interaction are enacted by networked infrastructure in new socio-spatial configurations.

Synthetic interaction employed Goffman's concept of social interaction (1964). Social interaction is a face-to-face process that consists of actions, reactions, mutual adaptation between two or more individuals (Goffman, 1964). The study suggests that it is important to control interactions. By controlling interaction individual could attempt to control the behavior of the other participants. However, teaching in MSSP is not the concept of controlling the classroom. I observed rather co-construction and co-navigation by student teachers and children. Online MSSP experience provided us different methods of teaching and learning. There are still many fascinating findings. I will continue to explore MSSP.

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A narration of MSSP 2020

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Never in my life could I imagine teaching English to children together with an university in Japan. Nevertheless, I had the opportunity to participate in something like this, unthinkable for me at that time.

If I am honest, I have always been fascinated by the land of the rising sun: Japan. The Japanese culture, its philosophy of life, the balanced contrast between highly modern technologies and old traditions, these are just some of the things that had captivated me so much that I decided to finally fly to Japan for two weeks in April 2019. In these two weeks, my expectations were exceeded, and I didn't get out of amazement: The beautiful nature, the gardens, shrines and temples, the charming food, the polite and respectful people and many other things made my journey more beautiful and enjoyable, more than I expected. So when I finally was back in Italy, I always had wanderlust and a longing to go back to this far away country.

I started learning Japanese by myself and proceeded to participate in a small Japanese course in order to master the language a little and be able to communicate a bit the next time I would go to Japan.

To my excitement, this experience opened up the way for me to work with a Japanese university.

At my university in Bolzano, Italy, we had an English lecture at the beginning of the summer semester of 2020, during which I had mentioned to my professor that I was learning Japanese. As luck would have it, the English professor of this lecture was a member of the Meisei Summer School Project (MSSP) and so, one week after this encounter, I received an e-mail from that very professor. I was asked if I would like to participate in the MSSP where Meisei-University-students and foreign volunteers around the world would teach children from Japan and Georgia English together.

I could hardly believe that I received the opportunity to participate in such a project.

Of course, I agreed with pleasure, and so it happened that 3 days later I attended the Zoom conference of the project.

I was extremely nervous and had no idea what to expect in the online session. But when Professor Kawamata noticed that I was joining the conference, he immediately greeted me in a friendly and open-minded way, so that I instantly felt at ease and lost some built-up tension. He asked me to

briefly introduce myself to the group. After that, he began his lesson with a short overview of that day's program. This helped me a lot to find my way around better and gave me a glimpse of what was to come because if I'm honest, I had no clue at all.

He gave us tips that would henceforth help us plan the lessons and he explained the goals of the course again — all in a very relaxed, friendly and motivating way — which made the whole environment more pleasant.

Afterwards, we went to 3 different subgroups in Zoom, where the already formed teams presented their prepared mock-lessons. In this process, the students who were not part of the group took on the role of the pupils. This was very funny and entertaining, but also instructive because by taking on the role of the pupils, one could experience firsthand which exercise was entertaining and exciting and which could still be developed. After each mock-lesson, there was held a short feedback round, where the participants gave new ideas and constructive criticism to each group.

When the meeting ended, I received an e-mail from our Prof., with all the important information about the project and also my assignment to a group.

When the students of my group were informed that I would be a member from now on, they contacted me via Slack and added me on the other SNS. They invited me to join their Zoom-meeting and of course, I was a bit anxious, but at the same time positively excited to meet my international teammates.

Undoubtedly, all team members were very friendly, they all introduced themselves and explained to me what they had already planned for the 5 lessons. Besides, they immediately integrated me into all the conversations and also into the planned mock-lesson for the next day.

Over the next few weeks, we worked on our lessons and presented them to the whole group once a week. However, due to the fact that our group consisted of students from Japan, Mexico, Hungary, Georgia, Cambodia and Italy, it was not that easy to arrange dates for our weekly meetings. Due to the time difference, some students had to stay up even very late or get up early (for example till midnight or even till 3 am).

But this was not the only obstacle we had to encounter: since this MSSP took place online for the first time due to the Corona Pandemic this year, there were also many difficulties with the Internet connection and general technical problems, including too loud background noise, interrupted internet connections or non-functioning microphones. In addition, due to the viral contact, there was a lack of team building. Since you only had the chance to see one another online in front of a screen, it was not so easy to build up deep connections, which might have been easier with personal contact.

Despite the lack of face to face interaction, we still managed to build up a friendly atmosphere over time. This was very exciting and I wish I had dared to ask more questions to my team-members, because, reflecting on this project, one of the main points was the cultural exchange. But I was too shy and afraid to annoy the others with my questions. So if I had the opportunity to participate in this project again, I would definitely step out of my comfort zone and

learn more about my friends and team-members so that we could build a deeper connection.

Furthermore, it was a pity that not all team-members showed equal commitment and thus the work was not divided equally. Some people didn't show up until the very lessons.

In itself, it was very interesting to see how the different students approached the planning of the lessons. In order to better understand these different approaches, as well as the work in an intercultural team, the university held an intervention workshop: In this workshop, Japanese students were made familiar with western behaviour and in another Zoom-conference the international students were made familiar with Japanese behaviour, with a focus on indirectness.

This workshop made it a lot easier to understand each other better and everyone got a better consciousness of how everyone was behaving, working and communicating in the group.

For the next year although, I would recommend having this workshop relatively at the beginning of the project, so that you understand the group better from the start on.

After this workshop, it was easier to communicate with my team members and we managed to plan better lessons. We were all excited when it was finally time to conduct our prepared lessons with the children.

Overall, we all worked very well together and were a great team, so the kids had fun and learned a lot as well. Surprisingly, the children could speak English better than expected.

The beginning of the lesson was a little bit awkward due to overall silence, waiting for the other kids to join, instead of having a little chit-chat to get to know each other better. This faux pas didn't happen to us the next few sessions because we prepared better and had music playing in the background and also a PowerPoint slide prepared in both languages with the necessary information about starting shortly when everyone has joined the meeting.

As quickly as I had joined this project, the time of parting approached. I was very sad but also glad about the experiences I could make. But the sadness was short-lived, because in September I got the opportunity to participate in the second part of the project, this time only with Japanese and Italian students.

Overall, the schedule was the same as that in the summer: We were assigned to a group and this time we were supposed to prepare 2 lessons.

This time though, we were less scattered in the world, we had more problems with the time difference and the time-management. Therefore we managed to meet only once a week for the meeting and always had to try out the mock-lesson before the group conference on Friday.

Despite that shortage, we managed to plan good lessons.

The theme of the last lesson was Halloween, and some of the children even dressed up.

Thus, these 2 hours of lessons went very well. But even then, some students were absent-minded and rarely spoke or interacted with the group, which was a pity.

All things considered, we worked hard together to teach the children in an entertaining way some important English phrases in order to communicate naturally with their new friends around the world.

Finally, I want to thank everyone for this great experience! Also a great thanks to Prof. Tanaka for gathering around some volunteers who even helped me in their free time to learn some Japanese - therefore also a big thanks to them!

Now that the project is over, I'm looking back at it with a smile and a heavy heart. I'll never forget this project and the kind people I was able to meet as well as the memories we made together.

Being part of Meisei Summer School Project

Cristina-Elena Iordachescu

Meisei University

After I graduated high school and was enrolled at the Transylvania University of Brasov, I heard about Meisei Summer School Project (MSSP) for the first time, from that first moment I wanted to participate and win. I signed up for two years in a row, and unfortunately, luck, as I thought at the time, was not on my side. But I think I wanted far too much to be one of the participants in the project as in 2019, being a student at the master's program at Meisei University I participated in the project. the fact that I enrolled as a university student and not as an international participant gave me much more opportunities and time to learn and enjoy the project longer.

From April 2019, during the MSSP classes I learnt about all the efforts and preparations we have to do; to prepare the lessons, to learn how to teach, and welcome the international participants there were many challenges throughout the project, there were still cultural differences between me and the other members of the group I was part of. but, overcoming all the challenges and shortcomings, the fact that I worked in a team with wonderful students, I can say that I am the luckiest student. from the point of view of a project participant, I can say that it was quite stressful but also exciting at the same time. Time was my biggest problem, but my teammates helped me a lot to overcome this impediment. It was not at all easy to successfully complete each task. As a participant, I learned how to plan my time and prioritize my tasks. But I think my hardest task was to communicate effectively and effectively with people from different cultures compared to mine. Now, when I look back, I realize how much that experience meant to me and how much I learnt about other cultures and myself as well. Even though we didn't have much time to get to know all the participants and communicate enough, we managed to make close friends. The end of the MSSP project in 2019 was unexpectedly exciting for all participants.

In 2020, things have changed due to the pandemic and all the measures that each country has had to take to ensure the safety of its citizens. The online environment did not impede having a new edition of the MSSP project. This time I was no longer in the position of a project participant, but of Student Assistant (SA). This position gave me the wonderful opportunity to help and observe a large part of the participating teams. In 2020, MSSP had new challenges, including adaptation to the online environment, testing the best interactive teaching options for students, and changing the behavior from the face-to-face phase to the digital one. however, the online gave us the chance to expand our horizons and the project had a much larger number of international participants than before which made the lessons much more creative. And the communication

between all participants to be more effective. The SA position gave me the opportunity to interact with many international students and participants. Which from a cultural point of view is a huge advantage for me, to know new cultures and ways of communicating with different people.

Being part of the MSSP project I achieved my goal, and I can say that being part of the project twice so far, were some of the best experiences I have had so far.

COIL as a transborder practice in the pandemic situation in Meisei University

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1. introduction

This paper describes practicing transborder identity of University students' in Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) project. Meisei University was also following the government instruction, all courses held in online by using multiple ITC tools, such as Zoom application, Meisei Learning Management System, and Slack application (Meisei University, 2020). Initially, five mobility programs were cancelled to conduct international mobility program in International Studies Department. Even though this pandemic situation, there is an international educational project had conducted in online. Meisei Summer School Project (MSSP), which is international educational project of Meisei University was initially planning on face-to-face interaction. However, under this circumstance, the project organizers, Professor Hiromasa Tanaka decided that the project will be conducted by using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools. The author, as one of the organizers of MSSP, regarded that this is great opportunity to address new attempt to continue learn something new in limited situation. This descriptive study investigates how students learn through transborder practice by participating COIL project.

2. Conceptual frameworks

Firth & Wagner (2007) have described the English interaction of interlocutors who have different mother tongues, and how they accommodate to each other using appropriate forms and the necessary pragmatic strategies for effective communication. English is used as a shared working language, that is, as a lingua franca, in MSSP. MSSP views English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) as a social practice rather than a teaching approach. Therefore, English is used in an authentic situation and for communicative purposes. Meisei students and international volunteers learn to negotiate meaning to gain mutual understanding.

Translanguaging is one of the remarkable concepts in the field of applied linguistics, especially bilingual education, and language education (Garcia & Wei, 2014; Canagarajah, 2012). Garcia and Wei (2014) explain that translanguaging deconstructs the dichotomy of first language

and second language, several languages appear in an interaction between different interlocutors. The notion of translanguaging consists that variety of language resources constructs as a certain language system (Garcia & Wei, 2014; Canagarajah, 2012). Canagarajah (2012) also pointed out that users of translanguaging utilize some strategies, such as Envoicing, Recontextualization, Interactional strategies, and Entextualization (p. 80). In resonate with translanguaging as in language educational context, the notion of transborder practice is discuss in applied linguistics. Both translanguaging and transborder practice are shared by “deconstruction of dichotomy”.

Tanaka (2020) points out that “the borders could be constructed according to discreet, individual factors such as nationality, language, gender, age, and field, or a combination of them (p. 5)”. The term “boader” not only refer to physical or visible boundaries, but also include invisible elements, such as way of thinking, belief, and notion of time (Hornberger, 2007; Tanaka, 2020). Considering educational settings, transborder practice will be able to provide that acquire multi-faceted knowledge such as linguistic, intercultural, and global competency.

Many of past research of Project-based learning assumes that face-to-face interaction and physically meet and discuss on certain topics or work (Sugiyama & Matsushita, 2018; Aksela & Haatinen, 2019; Nagata, 2019). However, by an affection of COVID-19, it is hard to meet physically, most of the lectures and educational projects were conducted online at Meisei University. Most of conventional project-based learning project of Meisei University were cancelled. There are many advantages of running the international project because there is no limitation for physical distance, the participants do not need to pay the transportation fees and accommodation fee, they will be able to participate the project more easily.

Many research in the educational context regarding online learning has been adopted two approaches, drill or machinery learning, and blended / flip learning (Warschauer, 1998; Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015; Enfield, 2013, Loneragan, 2016). These approaches have effective regarding learner’s autonomy and lexico-grammatical knowledge. However, there is also limitation of online learning based on dialogues with participants on project-based learning. Autonomous learning and flip learning are tending to be one-way approach, or at least, there is an answer. As much research of project-based learning indicates that one of the project-based learning tasks is problem-solving or how the participants manage the issue in regard to human relation, time management and quality of the task achievement. Therefore, MSSP’s new attempts envisaged to merge with project-based learning in online settings.

3. Research site: Meisei Summer School Project

In 2020, MSSP held on August 2nd to 9th by using Zoom application. MSSP utilize three online application, Zoom, Slack and Google drive. Zoom is used for team meeting, discussion, and actual online lesson. In addition, Slack is used for intra-information sharing, mostly sharing teaching plans and materials. Google drive is an online storage for each teaching team, they recorded online team meeting and actual lesson in August. By advantages of online session, participants are from

various from the world, such as Hungary, Belarus, Italy, Mexico, Wales, Cambodia, Belgium, Romania, Slovakia, and Georgia. Teaching team formed by Meisei students and these international volunteers, around six to seven participants. Japanese Children are not only Tokyo but also different part of Japan, Tochigi prefecture, Kyoto, and Okinawa, southern island of Japan. In addition, by sake of online platform, MSSP in August invited children from Republic of Georgia. One teaching units composes that four Meisei students, six or seven international volunteers, four or five Japanese children, and four or five Georgian children. In regard to consider the time difference, the teaching session started at evening in Japan and morning in Georgia. Teaching team started making lesson plan in June 2020, though using Zoom and Slack. It is convenient for both Meisei students and international volunteers to meet on online based on their free time and posting Slack their teaching ideas, result of discussion, and lesson plan in their channel.

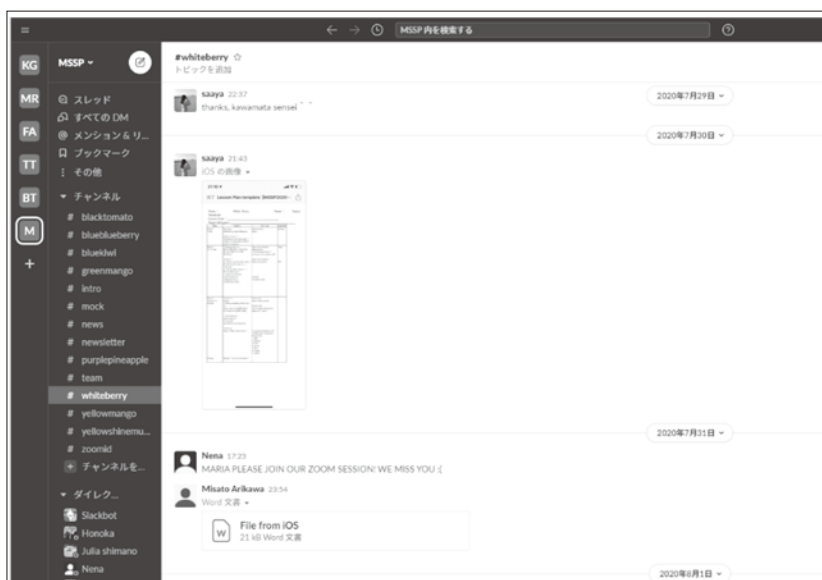


Figure.1 Slack discussion of MSSP2020

By applying a similar platform, MSSP in October invited Italian children by collaborating with Free University of Bozen-Bolzano students as described by Irsara and Gatti in chapter 1.

4. Data collection

In this descriptive study, the author collected two different qualitative data, two students' reflection reports, and individual interviews. Reflection reports is all Meisei students submit their reflection after the two session of MSSP, August and October. Meisei students hand in by November 2020, they have reflected what they have learn and how did they feel when they are participating in the Zoom meeting and lesson planning. All participants names are pseudonym.

5. Analysis

The reflection reports and individual interviews indicate that awareness of transborder identities. Tanaka (2020) argues that process of bordering practices in MSSP that awareness of English as a Lingua Franca could change MSSP discourse. Ami had an opportunity to exchange their language, it triggers transborder identities by practice of English as a Lingua Franca.

I was really nervous before the team meeting started. I like English, but I don't have much confidence to speak English. At that day (2nd August), Viktoria and Erik and I are exchange our language. We speak very random, mixed with English, Russian, Belarusian, and Japanese, but it was really fun. After that, I have a little confidence to speak English, a little (Ami, interview, 29th September 2020).

In my team, there were some team members who don't have confidence to speak English. I totally could understand them, so I tried to speak easy English and speak slowly to make them understand the conversations. And I think that worked. Also, there were a student I can argue with in good way. When I disagree with her opinion, I tried to say the reason why I thought so softly not to be awkward. (Asami, reflection reports, November 20th, 2019)

Ami had a strong idea of the ideal speaker of English before she participated in MSSP. However, she interacts with international participants, she realized the notion of practicing English as a Lingua Franca. Asami tried to use some strategies in ELF context. She figured out that she needs to some strategies to convey her message properly, she attempted to give reasoning in order to avoid direct confrontation in the team discussion.



Figure.2 mock lesson of MSSP2020

Miho compares her experience on August and October MSSP. She had more confidence to speak out her opinion, but also stimulate her interest to speak people who has different background.

Even if I wanted to say something in April, I was afraid to convey it in English, so I couldn't speak for myself. However, I was happy when my opinion was conveyed in English while I was working on the team for the actual performance in August. At this time, the international volunteers praised me for trying harder to communicate in English than I did in the beginning. Through this experience, I was able to get rid of the feeling that I had to speak English correctly. In October, I was able to have a smoother conversation with Italian students than in April. However, there were times when I couldn't explain in detail in English when there was a difference between Japanese and Italians. I wanted to acquire English ability to respect each other's opinions when they differed. I think I was able to change my nervousness. I had the opportunity to interact with many foreigners for the first time, so I want to make use of this opportunity to improve my English ability (Miho, reflection reports, November 20th, 2019)

Miho realized her improvement of English language, but also to expand emotional aspect of interact with her teammates. Both Asami and Miho mentioned that their extended cognition (Atkinson, 2010) constructs a good relationship with their teammates. Interview data also indicates that their learning goes beyond the dichotomies of online/offline.

I have decided I will participate MSSP again. This was very great moment in my 1st semester, I do not feel any discontent for MSSP because I have practiced a lot to use English and thinking so many things, materials, children. It was like online study abroad. (Ami, interview, 29th September 2020).

I like face-to-face class , but in team meeting, online is better for me. I can check the dictionary soon and I can show the pictures when I cannot say the word in English. I didn't feel struggle of online class so far. I can text to Vika immediately, she also replying me in Instagram. (Rumika, interview, 23rd September 2020).

They have managed online discussion of teaching plans and teaching rehearsals by utilizing several online applications. For Meisei students, they need to get along with ITC tools to communicate with international participants. Once they could manage these tools, they could go beyond the dichotomy of online/offline platforms.

By these transborder practices, extended cognition for international team members, utilizing ICT tools, Meisei students could manage COIL project successfully.

6. Further research

This study needs to more data collection and analysis, however, platform is not issued to learn something new from the situation. Online platform will be able to ubiquitous to relate and connect

each other, the epistemology of knowledge and transborder space (Hornberger, 2007) will be able to foster learning even in pandemic situation.

In addition, the COIL project has much potential in the aftermath of the pandemic situation. Quite a few educational institutions realized that there is more opportunity to collaborate with international projects by using ICT tools. For instance, the State University of New York fostering COIL project for all over the world, they promoted through the website for meeting different educational institution's learning opportunity (The SUNY COIL Global Network, 2021). Likewise, in Japan, Kansai University has started the COIL project in 2014, they have expanded their partnership, even in a pandemic situation, they provided students various COIL projects to learn the language and different competencies (Kansai University, 2021).

The author would like to point out that COIL is not only the solution of continuous learning in a pandemic situation. For instance, in the MSSP situation, there was a lack of opportunity to provide learning situations by the digital divide. Some participants, especially children, could not participate in MSSP 2020 because of their device and Wi-Fi situation. The author got an email that the child and parents would like to participate, but they don't have enough situation, eventually, they gave up participating in MSSP2020. The child was a participant of 2019 when MSSP was the face-to-face platform. MSSP is a great opportunity for children as well to practice EFL, however, it is not intended to create a digital divide among children. It is important to attempt a new approach to holistic learning and overcome it in relation to socio-economic issues.

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Transnational practices of a learning project: new attempts of learning in a pandemic situation

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