

Three Experiences in Video-Conferencing with Native Speakers of Spanish and French¹

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Abstract

Student interactive exchanges with native speakers of a target language may increase learners' self-confidence, production, and oral comprehension in the target language, as well as students' intercultural communicative competence (ICC). One approach to interactive exchanges is video-conferencing (VC). This article discusses three experiences with the use of interactive exchanges with native speakers using video-conferencing tools in target language acquisition in higher education. It outlines how to include VC into the world language curriculum and assesses its benefits and challenges. Additionally, it argues that innovative use of technology

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NECTFL Review—Special Issue, Number 80, December, 2017, pp. 11-43. © 2017 by Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

adheres to the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (W-RSLL, National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project [NSFLEP], 2015), in that it seeks to improve students' communicative and interpersonal skills, intercultural awareness, and linguistic competence. Video-conferencing tools accomplish this by mimicking the immersion experience. Interactive exchanges can expose students to the cultural values associated with the countries or regions of the target language and therefore help them negotiate meaning and process material discussed in class. Using these tools as a supplement to the communicative classroom reinforces the notion that language and culture are not mutually exclusive, but interdependent. The multiple benefits of using VC tools for interactive exchanges with native speakers outweigh the challenges—they are effective pedagogical tools, provided that specific goals and concrete tasks are assigned.

Introduction

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) outlines the interconnectedness of language and culture in the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (W-RSLL) and addresses the need to incorporate them in the language learning classroom and beyond (Phillips & Abbott, 2011; National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (NSFLEP), 2015). These recommendations are grouped in five goal areas known as “the five Cs”: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Communities, and Comparisons, and make use of the three modes of communication (interpretive, interpersonal and presentational). In the context of language learning pedagogy, the five Cs weave language and culture together to transcend the classroom setting, to foster critical reflection, and to develop the 21st century skill set. In addition to these standards, pedagogical theories and teaching practices demonstrate that learning a second language is inextricably linked to the study of its culture (Kramsch, 1993, 1997, 1998; Byrnes, 2002; Lange & Paige, 2003; Risager, 2006, 2007). Brown (2007) states that “one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture. The acquisition of a second language, except for specialized, instrumental acquisition . . . , is also the acquisition of a second culture” (pp. 189-190).

The W-RSLL also refer to the link between language and culture. They specify that students can “use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own” (NSFLEP, 2015). The W-RSLL also postulate that multimedia approaches may be especially useful in building community relations:

School and Global Communities: Learners use the language both within and beyond the classroom to interact and collaborate in their community....

Presentational Communication: Learners present information, concepts, and ideas to inform, explain, persuade, and narrate on a variety of topics using appropriate media and adapting to various audiences of listeners, readers, or viewers. (NSFLEP, 2015)

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for learning and provides multiple advantages, both for teachers and for students (Mullen, Appel & Shanklin, 2009; Wu, Marek, & Chen, 2013; Terhune, 2016). Technology-rich learning present students with the opportunity for flexible, personalized, and meaningful practice as well as authentic use of the target language (TL).

One such appropriate media technique is video-conferencing (O'Rourke & Stickler, 2017), in which regularly scheduled conversations between language learners and native speakers of another language adhere to the 5Cs as well as to a communicative approach to language instruction and learning. This article describes preliminary results of three pilot studies conducted in Spanish and French language classes at three institutions of higher education in the United States. These studies were independent and loosely coordinated. Their objective was to examine the intrinsic link between language and culture and to assess the benefits and challenges of the use of video-conferencing in target language acquisition.

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Video-conferencing

Video-conferencing (VC) falls under the rubric of what O'Rourke and Stickler (2017) referred to as synchronous communication: "dialogic communication that proceeds under conditions of simultaneous presence (co-presence) in a shared communicative space, which may be physical or virtual" (p. 2). It may allow students to practice the four language skills and modes of communication indicated in the W-RSLL. VC has the potential to enhance learning and use of the language beyond the classroom; to shift the focus from the teacher onto the student; to promote intercultural awareness all the while developing linguistic skills; to help students practice evaluation of information and negotiation of meaning while discussing, comparing, and reflecting on cultural customs, practices, and perspectives associated with the learned language; and finally, to foster cross-cultural relationships. The inclusion of VC in language learning offers an authentic real-world experience in an often textbook-driven learning environment, and allows for a contextualized processing of material discussed in class (Norton & McKinnley 2011).

Moreover, in the absence of direct contact with native speakers, virtual contact through VC can require students to make creative use of the target language and move from the basics of understanding language units — be they words, sentences or short paragraphs— to a more personal understanding, in which they negotiate meaning, and become progressively able to produce longer narration on a variety of topics (Clementi & Terrill, 2013). As Adair-Hauck and Donato (2002) have suggested, the native interlocutor "challenges, supports, and finally empowers the learner to

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construct and solve problems on his/her own” (p. 268) while guiding the online conversation.

The applicability and efficacy of VC tools is the topic of current research and literature (O’Dowd & Lewis, 2016; Jager, Kurek & O’Rourke, 2016). Jauregi (2016) has noted the connection between these approaches and social constructivist theories of education, which indicate that encouraging students to step out of their comfort zone promotes effective and long-term learning (Silver, 2011). Though it is generally accepted that these techniques will positively impact the student’s language skills, some research also shows the difficulty and resistance in introducing such methods in traditional educational settings (Howard, 2013).

In order to function best, some structure may be required in the implementation of VC tools. Terhune (2016) reported a study with students of English as a second language (ESL), in which learners used Skype-based conversation in a relatively uncontrolled setting. While high motivation is often assumed in following this type of pedagogical intervention, data in Terhune’s study showed that not all students adapted well to VC and led to the author’s recommendation that future interventions of this type should be more controlled and methodized to include specific goals and assigned tasks.

Methods and Results

This article emerges from the collaboration of three institutions of higher education: X College, College of Y, and Z University. It is the result of three pilot projects that were carried out from 2014 through 2017 in French and Spanish language acquisition classes with students at varied skill levels. All three institutions assessed the use of VC in the language classroom, in its ability to address W-RSL. The two approaches to VC were virtual dual immersion (VDI), and TalkAbroad, a pedagogy-specific proprietary software.

At X College students of Spanish at the advanced low level used VDI twice during the semester. Both at College of Y and at Z University, French students conducted multiple interactive exchanges with native speakers using the TalkAbroad platform. At College of Y, TalkAbroad was used at the intermediate-low level, while at Z University, it was used in grammar and composition courses at the advanced level. Data pertaining to the use, the benefits, and challenges of using VC in the foreign language classroom was gathered through questionnaires which included open-ended and six-point scale questions.

Instruments: Two approaches to VC

Two general VC tools are treated in this article: virtual dual immersion sessions with partner universities, and a pedagogy-specific proprietary software, TalkAbroad. Virtual dual immersion (VDI) is a partner video-conferencing program that takes place in the context of a consortium of US and fourteen different Latin American universities. VDI allows students from two different countries (the US and a Spanish-speaking Latin American country) to conduct linguistic (Spanish/English) and cultural exchanges during regular class time, at no cost. Conversations are not recorded. The main goal of this partnership is

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to help university students practice their linguistic skills in the foreign language (Spanish for the American students and English for the Latin American students) while gaining intercultural awareness.

TalkAbroad is a proprietary online tool providing online exchanges with native speakers of several foreign languages (including French, Spanish, Arabic, German, and Mandarin). Each conversation lasts 30 minutes and is recorded for formative and summative assessment purposes. Conversation partners are screened, hired, and trained. Each partner has an online profile in the TL, allowing students to browse and choose their interlocutor according to country of origin, interests, or availability. Teachers can create assignments for the conversation, post them on the TalkAbroad platform, and make them visible to both students and conversation partners. Additionally, teachers can provide special instructions to the partners that are not visible to students. Through an engaging and encouraging experience with the interlocutor outside of the classroom, “TalkAbroad conversation partners provide a glimpse into the rhythm of everyday life in the target culture” (TalkAbroad, 2017).

Research and Evaluation Questions

While some questions deal with evaluation of the pilot projects in their local settings, the overarching question of the study is to what extent the use of VC tools in diverse settings is efficacious and consistent with the W-RSLL standards. For instance, can we find evidence through the pilot projects of an intrinsic link between language and culture?

Specifically, we ask

1. Do students who participate in language-learning video-conferencing
 - (a) perceive punctuality in VC sessions?
 - (b) report technical problems with the technique?
 - (c) report being nervous during the VC experience?
 - (d) believe that they comprehend the conversation partner?
 - (e) believe that the conversation partner understands them?
2. Following a video-conferencing experience, do student perceptions change with regards to their
 - (a) ability to answer questions in the target language?
 - (b) ability to ask questions in the target language?
 - (c) knowledge about non-European French- and Spanish-speaking countries?
 - (d) knowledge about French/Francophone cultures or the cultures of the Spanish-speaking partner countries?
 - (e) ability to converse in a target language for approximately 20-30 minutes?
3. How do students rate the video-conferencing experience in terms of its capacity to
 - (a) provide practice and consolidation of grammatical skills?
 - (b) develop communicative competence?
 - (c) develop intercultural awareness?

Study 1. Participants. Students from eight different sections of advanced low Spanish (SPAN 2215) participated in the fall of 2016. Participants were first-, second-, third-, and fourth-year students, with varying majors. The majority of the students had taken Spanish in high school. First-year students were placed into this course based on their linguistic competence (e.g., summer advising), AP Exam Score (3), SAT Test Score (between 660-710), or IB Language Exam in Spanish (6/7 higher level). In the first session 107 students participated; 100 in the second.

Measures. Data gathered for this study were extracted from questionnaires distributed to students after each of the two sessions (Appendices A and B). In addition, all 5 course instructors participating in this project were asked, via e-mail, to respond to one open-end question: “Please comment on the added pedagogical value of the VDI sessions and make suggestions for improvement.”

The first section of the questionnaire gathered basic information about the student’s previous experience with VC and the organization and logistics of the VDI session. Questions included: Did the exchange begin on time? Did you experience any technical or connection problems? Was this your second VDI experience? Did you spend an equal amount of time speaking Spanish and English?

The following section gathered specific data about the exchange session conversation in Spanish. This section contained survey questions rated on a six-point scale anchored at “Strongly Disagree” (1) and “Strongly Agree” (6). These questions covered comprehension skills, conversational strategies, general perceptions, and motivation for a second VDI conversation. Items included:

- I understood most of what my exchange partner said in Spanish.
- My conversation partner understood most of what I said in Spanish.
- I had to ask my exchange partner to speak more slowly/repeat what he/she said in Spanish.
- I was able to respond to my partner’s questions and comments.
- The conversation flowed naturally.

The last section contained several open-ended questions with the end goal of evaluating the general experience gained from the language exchange:

- (a) How would you rate the experience overall?
- (b) Did you learn interesting cultural information (e.g. food, traditions, education system, politics) about the country of your exchange partner or new linguistic aspects of Spanish (e.g. new vocabulary, expressions)?
- (c) Did you and your exchange partner compare the culture, politics, or history of the U.S. with that of his/her country?

Additionally, this section offered students the possibility to share comments and constructive criticism for the organization and logistics of future exchange sessions. This section also included two general questions to determine whether the two VDI sessions changed the students’ perceptions about life in their conversation partners’ country (or countries) and, if so, how. Lastly, one question asked about the most valuable aspects of the VDI exchange.

Procedures. Over the course of the semester (fall of 2016), two 50-minute VDI immersion sessions were scheduled during regular class time. Since they involved

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language learners of both languages, Spanish and English, conversation was split into two similar time segments. Spanish learners from X College conversed with their English learner counterparts from the partner universities for 20-25 minutes in Spanish, and then in English for 20-25 minutes.

Prior to the sessions, partner universities were identified and sessions were organized according to respective schedules, number of students, and time-zones. Instructors informed students in advance of the country of origin of their interlocutor. Since VDI sessions took place in the language laboratory during regular class times, students were asked to arrive five minutes prior to their regular class time. This allowed students to prepare for the sessions and to mitigate any technical difficulties.

The conversations were not recorded nor did they cover specific topics. The only instructions given were to converse about common interests and make connections between the cultures of the two participating countries. The preferred mode of conversation was one-on-one conversations, i.e., conversations conducted individually with one student from a partner university. After 20-25 minutes of conversation in Spanish, the instructor indicated the time to switch from Spanish to English. The transition from one language to the other was left up to the students so that it did not abruptly interrupt the flow of conversation. After the two sessions, students were asked to complete a short (approximately 200 words) post-conversation writing assignment.

Though the activity was not graded, participation in the VDI sessions and the completion of the post-conversation writing assignment was mandatory and was considered part of the participation component of the final course grade.

Students completed post-conversation questionnaires, and quantitative data were organized in percent categories. A systematic content analysis was not conducted on the open-end format, or on qualitative data. Therefore, responses can be considered illustrative examples of student perceptions on items such as cultural information.

Results. Table 1 shows the first- and second-session percentage responses to selected questions from the student questionnaire. In accordance with the VDI project goals, the majority of the students conducted both virtual exchanges with a single interlocutor (as opposed to varying interlocutors): 84.1% in the first session and 89.5% in the second.

Table 1. Study 1: Percentage Response to Selected Items in First and Second Sessions

Item	% First Session	% Second Session
Same Student Partner?	84.10	89.50
Did the exchange begin on time?	66.80	68.80
Did you experience any technical or connection problems?	39.40	50.00
Equal amount of time Spanish/English?	64.50	65.60
Nervous throughout (Strongly Agree)	8.40	5.00
Nervous throughout (Strongly Disagree)	9.30	16.00

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I understood most of what my exchange partner said in Spanish (Agree + Strongly Agree)	99.00	98,00
My conversation partner understood most of what I said in Spanish (Agree + Strongly Agree)	97.00	98.00
How would you rate the experience overall?	92.10	99.00

About two thirds of the students indicated that the exchanges occurred punctually both in the first and second sessions. (Anecdotal evidence indicates that the majority of the delays were only a few minutes; the principal causes of delays were differences in class duration of the participating institutions —50 minutes vs. 60 minutes at partner universities— and connection problems). In the second VDI session, half the students confirmed having some sort of technical or connection problem, in comparison with a 39.4% in the first session. Both in sessions 1 and 2 about two thirds of the students reported that equal time was spent speaking the two languages.

In response to the statement “I was nervous throughout the conversation in Spanish” 9.3% responded “Strongly Disagree” in the first session in comparison with the 16% in the second. Conversely, in the first session, 8.4% responded “Strongly Agree” to the statement, in comparison with the 5% in the second session.

Table 1 also shows that the students were nearly unanimous in their perception of their own comprehension and that of the Spanish-speaking interlocutor. The sum of “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” responses accounted for 97% to 99% of all responses in both the first and second sessions.

As for the general experience with VDI, the results of both sessions show that SPAN 2215 students were more satisfied (“Agree”) or much more satisfied (“Strongly Agree”) with the exchange than the students anticipated to be. In the first session, 65% answered “Agree” and 27.1% “Strongly Agree,” whereas in the second session 70% responded “Agree” and 29% “Strongly Agree.” One student indicated being very unsatisfied (“Strongly Disagree”) by the experience of session 2.

Some comments provide qualitative evidence for the exchange of cultural information and the application of language skills:

Student #1: We compared the culture and education systems between our countries [*US and Mexico*], and we talked about the upcoming election here in the US.

Student #2: We talked about the upcoming US election and also about the current political atmosphere of his country [*Mexico*].

Student #3: Skyping with students from Mexico has been a unique opportunity to take the Spanish skills we have learned in the classroom and apply them through conversation. Speaking with students from contrasting cultures was a fun, new experience that has reinforced my interest in Spanish and its culture.

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One of the course instructors specifically emphasized the importance of creating authentic and meaningful conversation, addressing stereotypes and intercultural awareness, and providing opportunity to create new relationships beyond the classroom:

Instructor #1: A fifty-minute session of fun and meaningful conversation is but one of the many valuable aspects of the Virtual Dual Immersion experience. Spanish language oral communication skills are definitely sharpened and reinforced, but also stereotypes are broken, bridges are built and, in many cases, long-lasting relationships are born.

Study 2. Participants. Twenty-six students from two different sections of intermediate French participated in the study in the spring of 2017; 24 provided complete data. FREN 211 is the third semester of a French language and grammar class at College of Y. Participants were predominantly first- and second-year students, with varying majors. Most students had taken French in high school (anywhere between 1 and 4 years) and were either in their first or second semester of French language at the university level.

Measures. A pre-conversation questionnaire provided baseline information about the students' perceived confidence in using linguistic skills and knowledge of Francophone culture (Appendix C). Identical items were presented to the students following their final conversation (Appendix D). Items included:

- (a) I am capable of answering questions in French;
- (b) I am capable of asking questions in French;
- (c) I am aware of French-speaking countries outside of Europe and Canada;
- (d) I believe I know and understand French and Francophone culture;
- (e) I believe I am capable of spending 30 minutes conversing with a native speaker of French.

Items were answered on a six-point scale anchored at the extremes with "Strongly Agree" and "Strongly Disagree." The post-conversations questionnaire also included broad open-end questions.

Procedures. Students were informed in advance of the nature of the upcoming pilot project. In-class preparations began two weeks prior to the first conversation, and consisted of a detailed overview of the program in order to familiarize students with the technology and functioning of the TalkAbroad platform. Students were asked to express their own learning expectations in a short writing assignment prior to the first conversation and the completed a pre-conversations questionnaire.

Approximately a week before each conversation, students received a TalkAbroad assignment with prompts for topics addressed concomitantly in class. Students were encouraged to meet with a teaching assistant in order to prepare initial questions and topics for discussion, following the prompts assigned. Though not required, most students took advantage of this opportunity (especially for the first two conversations).

Class time was allotted to conduct mock TalkAbroad conversations before students experienced the real conversations. The student pairs mimicked the

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conversation they would be having with their TalkAbroad partner, and addressed the questions in the assignments, allowing for a more relaxed setting to converse and practice. After each TalkAbroad conversation students completed a post-conversation questionnaire.

Four individual conversations of 30 minutes took place during the semester, and outside of class period. Students conducted the first three conversations with a classmate (maintaining the same pairs throughout the semester). The final conversation, which counted as the oral final, was conducted individually.

Following each conversation, students participated in a short oral debriefing in class. After all four conversations had been completed, the students responded to a final post-conversation questionnaire, which revisited items from the pre-conversations questionnaire.

Data were organized using SPSS 24. Measures of effect size were hand calculated using summary data provided by SPSS.

Results. Table 2 provides measures of effect size for the observed differences between pre- and post-conversation means. Pre- and post-conversation values of each item were first submitted to the Wilcoxon signed rank test. All differences were in the expected direction, and five of the six analyses were statistically significant. No statistical differences were noted between pre- and post-conversation values of the item concerning perceived ability to ask questions in French.

Table 2. Study 2: Observed Pre- and Post-conversation Effect Sizes (N=24)

Item	Cohen's <i>d</i>
I am capable of answering questions in French	0.48*..
I am capable of asking questions in French	0.16...
I am aware of French-speaking countries outside of Europe and Canada	0.76**
I believe I know and understand French and Francophone culture	0.66**
I believe I am capable of spending 30 minutes conversing with a native speaker of French	0.75**

Note: Cohen's *d* is the standardized difference between the pre-conversation and post-conversation mean values. As such it can be interpreted as the future expected change, as a proportion of the standard deviation, between an untreated control group and a treated experimental group. Reported significance levels are based on the Wilcoxon signed rank test which tests the hypothesis that two dependent samples derive from the same population. Significant results indicate that it is unlikely (expressed as a low probability) that the two dependent samples derive from the same population.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Examples of student comments made in the context of post-conversation questionnaires and volunteered student testimonials include:

Student #1: It gave me a lot more confidence in my French speaking ... prompted me to work harder in the classroom ... it mimicked a real-life scenario.

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Student #2: ...it was beneficial for me to step out of my comfort zone and try to converse with native speakers to improve!

Student #3: I was able to take what I had learned in class and apply it to a real conversation with a native speaker of the language.

Student #4: ... a challenging, but beneficial part of my French education ... These conversations were nerve-racking, but they gave me much more confidence in my French abilities. It was also fun to learn about different Francophone cultures along the way.

Study 3. *Participants.* Students of an advanced grammar and composition course offered at Z University (FREN 3150) participated in the study: 75 students used TalkAbroad; 54 provided usable data. The course is mandatory for all students pursuing a minor or major in French, as well as for all students who desire to take courses at the advanced level. The course pursues two goals: first, the understanding and application of grammatical structures, and second, the practice of oral and written communication.

Measures. Students followed a dialogic approach that focuses on a communicative and contextualized study of grammatical structures concurrent with the PACE model (Adair-Hauck & Donato, 2002): Presentation of the structure, Attention to grammatical features, Co-construction of meaning and cognitivization of linguistic features, Extension of the grammatical structure through a variety of exercises that are diversified, differentiated, and personalized. Measures included students' written reflections and oral presentations as well as end-of-semester numeric evaluation of the video-conferencing experience (Appendix E). In the quantitative component, students rated items on a ten-point scale on which 1 represented that the use of video-conferencing neither helped them practice nor consolidate grammatical structures, and a 10 indicated a very strong effect on the practice and retention of the individual grammatical structures used during the online conversation. The items included:

- (a) Practice and consolidation of grammatical structures while using TalkAbroad;
- (b) Development of communicative competence;
- (c) Development of intercultural awareness and intercultural communicative competence (ICC);
- (d) Overall rating of the program.

Procedures. During the semester, students scheduled four 30-minute individual conversations with Francophone conversation partners using the TalkAbroad platform. All exchanges with native speakers were conducted outside of the regular class time. Students were free to choose their conversation partners without any restrictions. However, grammatical structures, lexical fields and topics were specified for each conversation:

- (a) American vs. the French school system;
- (b) French heritage in the US and abroad;
- (c) American vs. French literary traditions;
- (d) Social problems in the US and in the French-speaking world.

Students were informed in advance of the nature of the conversation. They prepared by completing homework assignments such as simple fill-in-the blank activities, guided questions, and open-ended writing assignments. All assignments focused on the use of lexical fields and grammatical structures related to the topic of discussion and were based on the use of authentic material taken from a broad variety of sources, namely literature, music, recipes, menus.

By way of example, the second topic, French heritage in the US and abroad focused on the study of grammatical structures related to location, measurements, and attributes (Appendix F). Grammatical features were practiced in culturally rich conversations, in which students discovered, discussed, and evaluated possible French heritage of their locale to the one of the hometown of the Francophone speaker (Appendix G). Upon completion of this conversation, students prepared a free writing assignment in which they assessed and reflected upon the French heritage of their hometown, of the university’s location, and of the city of their Francophone interlocutor. Additionally, students were asked to work with two classmates to create a PowerPoint presentation that illustrated, explained, and critically assessed the French heritage in all three places. Both assignments encouraged students to practice and develop their interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational modes of communication, their critical thinking skills, as well as their ICC.

Results. Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations of the principal questions of the study.

Table 3. Study 3: Student Ratings of Video-conferencing in the Context of the Dialogic Approach (N=54)

Item	M	<u>SD</u>
Practice and consolidation of grammatical structures	6.59	1.9
Development of communicative competence	8.30	1.2
Development of intercultural awareness and ICC	8.03	1.4
Overall rating of using TalkAbroad	7.70	1.6

Note: Mean based on ten-point rating scale.

All mean ratings exceed 6 on the scale of 10. The first item, *Practice and consolidation of grammatical structures*, presented the lowest mean rating as well as the greatest variability. In comparison, *Development of communicative competence* revealed the highest mean rating and the lowest variability. The mean rating for *Development of intercultural awareness and ICC* was also in the top half of means observed while the *Overall rating of using TalkAbroad* figured in the bottom half.

Examples of student comments made in the context of the post-conversation questionnaire and volunteered student testimonials include:

Student #1: A great way to practice speaking French and you leave as a more cultured and worldly person.

Student #2: Our discussions taught me about French culture, like foods that are popular in different countries.

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Student #3: It was an interesting and unique way to expand my French knowledge and cultural knowledge of different countries.

Student #4: It was fun thinking on my toes. Some of the topics were interesting to see evolve... It is an amazing tool. All students learning a foreign language should be exposed to first and face-to-face communication.

Discussion

The three pilot projects in higher education employed diverse forms of VC in varying contexts with intermediate to advanced students. The first institution described two VDI sessions in a flexible format (“converse about common interests...”) with a post-conversation writing assignment. The second employed four 30-minute conversations with TalkAbroad in a higher-structure context with substantial preparation, assigned topics, specific tasks, and graded evaluation of each conversation. The third used the dialogic approach with TalkAbroad, very specific assigned topics and also included evaluation. Regardless of formats and structure level, student reactions to their use were generally positive.

The results of the VDI pilot project at X College (Study 1) support the use of VC in language learning and the overall value of this project in regard to increased perceived student confidence. At the level of course administration, classes were not greatly delayed by the use of VDI, and time spent on the two languages was perceived to be equal by most students. Most students were able to converse with a single partner. Some technical problems did occur and, as the data show, a bad Internet connection can still foil all careful preparations and practice. Students perceived that their level of nervousness declined over the sessions and that good comprehension in the conversations was mutual.

College of Y (Study 2) students acknowledged learning specific items of language and having an enhanced sense of the culture of their interlocutors. They also reported increased ability in answering questions (though not in asking them), greater awareness of non-European Francophone countries and cultures, and higher self-efficacy for conversing in the target language. The observed effect sizes imply that, in future projects of a similar nature, one might expect improvements ranging from one-half to three-quarters of a standard deviation on the student perceptions observed.

At Z University (Study 3), collected data show highest student ratings in the areas of communicative competence ($M=8.30$, $SD=1.2$) and development of intercultural awareness ($M=8.03$, $SD=1.4$). Open-ended questions from this study provide some additional evidence for student perceptions of (a) confidence in speaking; (b) motivation (“work harder in class”); (c) VC as an effective technique (“beneficial,” “applied to real conversation”); and (d) learning about culture. The high mean value and low standard deviation in regard to both students’ development toward target language competence and intercultural competence supports the argument supported by this article that engaged, interactive, and contextualized learning is conducive to communicative competence and intercultural awareness.

While these pilot projects cannot establish the importance of the study of culture to the study of language, the data suggest that the use of VC in these diverse

settings was associated with students' perceptions of their attainment of greater intercultural understanding of the target language speakers. Both the Common European Framework of Reference and ACTFL (2011) emphasize the importance of intercultural awareness, intercultural skills, or global competence in language teaching in an ever more interconnected and globalized world.

Video-conferencing used in language learning has the potential to enhance the development of ICC in authentic ways. Instructors need to prepare 21st-century students for interaction with people of other cultures and enable them to understand and accept people from different parts of the world as individuals with distinctive perspectives, values, and behaviors. While the results do not suggest that the sole use of VC can render students interculturally competent, the VC sessions in all projects helped students communicate with and understand individuals from other cultures. The implementation of VC in foreign language curriculum allowed for students to engage with native speakers from different countries and provided the opportunity to develop intercultural awareness (by learning more about cultural products, practices and perspectives from the interlocutor's homeland, and fostering a better understanding of their own culture). It also allowed for students to practice their communication skills, i.e., ameliorate their ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Consistent with O'Rourke and Stickler (2017), the use of VC in these studies demonstrated pedagogical utility in target language learning. In the absence of native speakers, technological substitutes helped students and teachers reach the goal of improving global language skills by way of "communicatively purposeful [conversation], building towards proficiency" (Clementi & Terrill, 2013, p. 25), a goal that is consistent with W-RSLL.

A possible three-pronged mechanism for this utility has been suggested by Adair-Hauck and Donato (2002). The partner in the exchange, the native interlocutor, may (a) challenge, (b) support, and (c) empower the VC learner. In response, the learner constructs linguistic solutions. These solutions, as with much learning, require effort ("nerve-wracking" as one student said). This kind of analysis, as pointed out by Jauregi (2016), is consistent with social constructivist theories (Silver, 2011). The student is forced into a zone of proximal linguistic development (I had to "step out of my comfort zone", as another student said). That which can be learned—with a little help—is experienced and solidified.

As Howard (2013) stated, the introduction of new methods and technologies in the classroom is not without some resistance on the part of students. While the mean student ratings of the VC experience are very positive, there are some students for whom the experience was negative. Overall, the main challenge students indicated was of a technical nature, including difficulties with the platform (audiovisual problems and Internet connection). Students also pointed out the difficulty in the

While these pilot projects cannot establish the importance of the study of culture to the study of language, the data suggest that the use of VC in these diverse settings was associated with students' perceptions of their attainment of greater intercultural understanding of the target language speakers.

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time-zone difference with many of the TL countries (for the students of French, only Québécois natives were close in time zone, while students of Spanish were close in time zone with Ecuadorian and Mexican partners), which limited the opportunities to conduct conversations. Neither of these challenges, however, greatly hindered the conversations and students were able to have productive and worthwhile experiences with their different partners. While regional accents were of concern to some instructors, students did not complain extensively about the different varieties they heard. Some regional varieties proved harder to understand (e.g., Québécois), but during the in-class debriefings some students even referred to the regional expressions as being beneficial.

In all three projects the nature and extent of the VC class structure (preparation, assignment of topics, recording, and evaluation of conversations) varied greatly. The increase observed in students' perceived confidence is consistent with Terhune's (2016) findings that creating a structured environment is a factor in determining levels of motivation and engagement (as exemplified by student testimonials). However, it remains unclear if there might exist a critical structure level that determines or conditions VC benefits.

While maintaining the focus on students' development of grammatical understanding, vocabulary, and the correct use of the learned language in oral and written discourse, integration of VC tools in the language curriculum gave all three language courses a new format—one that is characterized by a diversified, contextualized, and communicatively-orientated approach. This approach is based on and incorporates W-RSLL, as it fosters the development of all four language skills and three modes of communication. Students practice their listening and speaking skills during their exchanges. They also develop their reading and writing skills through pre- and post-conversation assignments. When preparing for the conversations or for post-conversation assignments, students employ the interpretive mode of communication. Any exchange with a native speaker of the learned language will inherently represent the use of the interpersonal mode of communication. Finally, post-exchange assignments involving an exposition of gathered elements from the conversations illustrates the use of the presentational mode of communication.

Student testimonials illustrate that language exchanges, such as VDI or TalkAbroad, have the potential to increase student motivation and engagement, as well as a sense of responsibility and accountability. This is especially true when they are asked to collaborate with a classmate to prepare for their conversations, thus fulfilling the interpersonal mode of communication, a part of the Communication standard. Exchanges also have the potential of improving student autonomy, as they require students to utilize their time management skills when scheduling conversations outside of class for TalkAbroad, or having to negotiate the class period split in the VDI sessions. Moreover, the implementation of VC creates a classroom community and an atmosphere that is alive and in which students experience academic and personal growth through personal initiative, self-direction, and collaboration inside and outside of the traditional classroom. When resources are available and a pool of native speakers of the learned language is lacking, it is worth experimenting with VC tools in the TL curriculum.

The findings of the three pilot studies suggest that the use of VC in language learning is a pedagogical approach that can foster students' communicative skills and broaden their intercultural awareness, while following the W-RSLL. VC has the potential to accomplish multiple pedagogical goals. Its use:

- a. can increase students' self-confidence and motivation. Students reported a decreased level of anxiety in latter VC exchanges;
- b. may support the development of intercultural awareness and intercultural communicative competence. Students from the three projects reported perceived progress in both dimensions;
- c. may serve to help consolidate functions and vocabulary learned concomitantly in the classroom. Students expressed a correlation between grammatical functions and lexical fields practiced in the classroom and their use in video-conferencing exchanges with native speakers of the TL;
- d. may improve students' sense of responsibility and accountability. Students reported being engaged throughout the conversations and having to actively participate in directing the conversation.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study suggests that the use of interactive exchanges with native speakers is desirable and advantageous for target language learning. Nevertheless, the three pilot programs described in this article might be seen through a lens of action research in the institutions involved. As such, the results are not rules generalizable to all contexts and situations but rather may serve as guidelines for other institutions considering the use of VC tools.

In this study, the use of VC was effective in terms of students' perceived ability to answer questions in the target language. However, it did not seem to be as effective in relation to their perceived ability to *ask* questions in the target language (Table 2). Results suggest that the language students' experience could be augmented by careful scaffolding with regard to the nature of the questions or topics to be addressed during the exchanges and by attentively working with them on generating questions clearly. Language instructors should continue to emphasize question-asking skills in the classroom, and they might develop more concrete tasks involving creating questions for the VC exchanges.

Additionally, in future studies,

- a. it would be helpful to gather data on the origin, nature, and duration of technical problems;
- b. it would be valuable to record all conversations, in order to assess their impact on the overall VC experience. Only two of the institutions in this study recorded conversations for further analysis and evaluation;
- c. it would be interesting to yoke the quality of such conversations to student attitudes about the VC experience. Are the better speakers the students who give the higher ratings? Or could it be that

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- weaker students overestimate their reporting of competence and comprehension?
- d. in the context of VDI, it would be useful to develop a future mechanism that would automatically indicate when the language should switch, ensuring that the session times are divided in the most equitable way possible;
 - e. following Terhune's recommendations, it would be beneficial to provide more structured assignments.

In conclusion, incorporation of interactive exchanges in world language curricula, whether in the classroom or as a complement to communicative teaching, has the potential to provide a diversified and contextualized environment to second language instruction, which in turn might help consolidate functions and vocabulary studied in class. Despite some challenges in planning and implementation, the integration of VDI and TalkAbroad can increase students' self-confidence and motivation, as well as decrease students' level of anxiety. Benefits of using platforms such as VDI or TalkAbroad, accrue both in terms of linguistic and intercultural competence. To ensure the "inter"-cultural element in these exchanges, the experiences should be thoughtfully scaffolded by programs. Moreover, results should be monitored in order to ensure that both the experiences and the learning align with the *World Readiness Standards* and adequately measure student growth.

Note

1. **Ethical Review of Research Involving Humans.** This research is exempt from review by category 1 of 45 CFR 46.101(b):" Categories of Exempt Human Subjects Research. 1. Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (a) research on regular and special education instructional strategies or (b) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula or classroom management methods."

Acknowledgements

We are deeply indebted to Dr. Joseph Conboy, of the Instituto de Educação, Universidade de Lisboa (Portugal), for assistance with data analysis. We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to Cindy Bravo, Director of the Language Laboratory at Boston College, for her help organizing the Virtual Dual Immersion sessions with our AUSJAL partner universities.

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Appendix A (X College)

STUDENT ID: _____

SECTION: _____

Questionnaire: Post-Skype VDI Session #1

I.a. For the following questions, please answer **Yes** or **No** by checking () the appropriate box. If necessary, please explain your response.

1. Did the exchange begin on time?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Comments:
2. Did you experience any technical or connection problems?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Comments:
3. Did you have only one exchange partner?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Comments:
4. Was this your first virtual dual immersion (VDI) experience?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Comments:
5. Did you spend an equal amount of time speaking Spanish and English?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Comments:

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<p>I.b. Now that you have completed the first Skype virtual dual immersion (VDI) exchange, we would appreciate concrete feedback about your experience. Please rate the statements below using the following scale: 6 = Strongly Agree 4/5 = Agree 2/3 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree</p>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
1. I understood most of what my exchange partner said in Spanish.	6	5	4	3	2	1
2. My conversation partner understood most of what I said in Spanish.	6	5	4	3	2	1
3. I had to ask my exchange partner to speak more slowly/repeat what he/she said in Spanish.	6	5	4	3	2	1
4. I was able to respond to my partner's questions and comments; the conversation flowed naturally.	6	5	4	3	2	1
5. While conversing in Spanish, I often needed to pause to think about how to say something.	6	5	4	3	2	1
6. I was nervous throughout the conversation in Spanish.	6	5	4	3	2	1
7. Overall, the Spanish part of the conversation was harder than I anticipated.	6	5	4	3	2	1
8. Overall, the Spanish part of the conversation was more fun than I had anticipated.	6	5	4	3	2	1
9. I am looking forward to the upcoming Skype VDI session.	6	5	4	3	2	1

II. Please answer the following questions regarding your VDI experience.

1. How would you rate the experience overall? Please comment.

2. Did you learn interesting cultural information (e.g. food, traditions, education system, politics) about the country of your exchange partner or new linguistic aspects of Spanish (e.g. new vocabulary, expressions)? Please comment.

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3. Did you and your exchange partner compare the culture, politics, or history of the U.S. with that of his/her country? Please comment.

4. If your answer to questions 2 and 3 was NO, what did you discuss?

5. Please share any constructive criticism/comments you have about this first VDI experience so that we may better organize/plan for the next exchange.

Appendix B (X College)

STUDENT ID: _____

SECTION: _____

Questionnaire: Post-Skype VDI Session #2

Please answer with pen (not pencil)!

I.a. For the following questions, please answer **Yes** or **No** by checking () the appropriate box. If necessary, please explain your response.

1. Did the exchange begin on time?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Comments:
2. Did you experience any technical or connection problems?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Comments:

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3. Did you have only one exchange partner?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Comments:
4. Was this your second virtual dual immersion (VDI) experience?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Comments:
5. Did you spend an equal amount of time speaking Spanish and English?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Comments:

<p>I.b. Now that you have completed the second Skype virtual dual immersion (VDI) exchange, we would appreciate concrete feedback about your experience. Please rate the statements below using the following scale: 6 = Strongly Agree 4/5 = Agree 2/3 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree</p>	Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
1. I understood most of what my exchange partner said in Spanish.	6 5 4 3 2 1
2. My conversation partner understood most of what I said in Spanish.	6 5 4 3 2 1
3. I had to ask my exchange partner to speak more slowly/repeat what he/she said in Spanish.	6 5 4 3 2 1
4. I was able to respond to my partner's questions and comments; the conversation flowed naturally.	6 5 4 3 2 1
5. While conversing in Spanish, I often needed to pause to think about how to say something.	6 5 4 3 2 1
6. I was nervous throughout the conversation in Spanish.	6 5 4 3 2 1
7. Overall, the Spanish part of the conversation was harder than I anticipated.	6 5 4 3 2 1
8. Overall, the Spanish part of the conversation was more fun than I had anticipated.	6 5 4 3 2 1

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<p>I.c. Now that you have completed two VDI exchanges, we would appreciate if you could give us feedback for the future. Please rate the statements below using the following scale: 6 = Strongly Agree 4/5 = Agree 2/3 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree</p>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
1. I would like to participate in exchange sessions in future language classes.	6	5	4	3	2	1
2. I would be interested in participating in voluntary exchange sessions outside of class.	6	5	4	3	2	1
3. I would commit to participating in exchanges outside of class only as an assignment or as an opportunity for extra credit.	6	5	4	3	2	1

II. Please answer the following questions regarding your second VDI experience.

1. How would you rate the experience overall? Please comment.

2. Did you learn interesting cultural information (e.g. food, traditions, education system, politics) about the country of your exchange partner or new linguistic aspects of Spanish (e.g. new vocabulary, expressions)? Please comment.

3. Did you and your exchange partner compare the culture, politics, or history of the U.S. with that of his/her country? Please comment.

4. If your answer to questions 2 and 3 was NO, what did you discuss?

5. Please share any constructive criticism/comments you have about this second VDI experience so that we may better organize/plan for the next exchange.

6. Has the VDI experience (sessions 1 and 2) changed your perception of life in your conversation partners' country (or countries)? If so, how?

7. What were the most valuable aspects of the VDI exchange for you? Please explain.

Appendix C (College of Y)

STUDENT ID: _____

Questionnaire: Interactive Language Learning Exchange

<p>I.a. During this semester, you will participate in an interactive exchange involving conversation with native speakers. We would like to know your expectations about the program. 6 = I Strongly Agree with the affirmation 4/5 = I Agree with the affirmation 2/3 = I Disagree with the affirmation 1 = I Strongly Disagree with the affirmation</p>	-Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
<p>1. The exchange will help me practice my oral skills</p>	6	5	4	3	2	1

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2. The exchange will help me consolidate my oral skills	6	5	4	3	2	1
3. I will have the opportunity to exchange cultural values and increase my understanding of French/Francophone culture	6	5	4	3	2	1
4. I will learn about another culture and its heritage of another culture	6	5	4	3	2	1
5. I am eager to converse with a native speaker of French	6	5	4	3	2	1

I.b. For the following questions, please answer **Yes** or **No** by checking () the appropriate box.

1. Do you consider yourself a heritage speaker* of French?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
2. Have you ever studied in a language immersion school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
3. Have you ever conversed with a native speaker for more than 10 minutes?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
4. Have you ever visited a country/region in which French is spoken?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
5. Will you be engaging with the native speaker with another classmate for the first conversations?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

* A *heritage speaker* is someone who learns (as a child, at home) a language that is a minority language in society.

I.c. Please circle the number that estimates how many semesters you studied

1. Please circle the number that estimates how many semesters, altogether, you studied French before higher education (college/university)	0	1	2	3	4	>4
	semesters					
2. Please circle the number that estimates how many semesters, altogether, you studied French in higher education (college/university)	1	2	3	4	>4	
	semesters					

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<p>II. In this section, we would like to know your opinions about the following affirmations related to your experience in second language learning and your perception of your language level. 6 = I Strongly Agree with the affirmation 4/5 = I Agree with the affirmation 2/3 = I Disagree with the affirmation 1 = I Strongly Disagree with the affirmation</p>	-Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
1. My experience with the French language is mostly written.	6	5	4	3	2	1
2. My experience with the French language is mostly spoken/oral.	6	5	4	3	2	1
3. I understand most of what the teacher says in French.	6	5	4	3	2	1
4. I am capable of answering questions in French.	6	5	4	3	2	1
5. I am capable of asking questions in French.	6	5	4	3	2	1
6. I am aware of French -speaking countries outside of Europe and Canada.	6	5	4	3	2	1
7. I believe I know and understand French and Francophone culture.	6	5	4	3	2	1
8. I believe I am capable of spending 30 minutes conversing with a native speaker of French.	6	5	4	3	2	1

III. In this section, you will answer one open-ended question regarding the interactive exchange experience.

What do you expect to learn from these sessions?

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Appendix D (College of Y)

STUDENT ID: _____

Questionnaire: Post-TalkAbroad #4 (oral final)

<p>I.a. Now that you have completed the <u>fourth</u> TalkAbroad exchange, we would like some more concrete feedback about your experience. We would like to know your opinions about the following affirmations related to your experience.</p> <p>6 = I Strongly Agree with the affirmation 4/5 = I Agree with the affirmation 2/3 = I Disagree with the affirmation 1 = I Strongly Disagree with the affirmation</p>						
	-Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
1. I understood most of what my conversation partner said.	6	5	4	3	2	1
2. My conversation partner understood most of what I said.	6	5	4	3	2	1
3. I had to ask my conversation partner to speak more slowly/repeat.	6	5	4	3	2	1
4. I found that there was a lot of time left after completing the assignment.	6	5	4	3	2	1
5. I listened to my partner and reacted to what he/she said with natural conversation.	6	5	4	3	2	1
6. Overall, the conversation was harder than I anticipated (given the free-flowing nature of it).	6	5	4	3	2	1
7. I think the free-flowing conversation was <u>easier</u> than the assigned topics.	6	5	4	3	2	1
8. I think the free-flowing conversation was <u>more natural</u> than the assigned topics.	6	5	4	3	2	1
9. I wish I had prepared more questions.	6	5	4	3	2	1
10. I was nervous throughout the conversation.	6	5	4	3	2	1
11. There were a lot of moments of silence.	6	5	4	3	2	1
12. I initiated most of the conversation.	6	5	4	3	2	1
13. I learned at least one new thing (new word/new expression, etc) in the <u>French language</u> .	6	5	4	3	2	1

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14. I learned at least one new thing about a <u>Francophone culture</u> .	6	5	4	3	2	1
15. I learned more through the free-flowing conversation than through the previous guided conversations.	6	5	4	3	2	1

<p>I.b. The following questions COMPARE this <u>fourth</u> conversation to the previous conversations. We would like to know your opinions about the following affirmations related to your experience.</p> <p>6 = I Strongly Agree with the affirmation 4/5 = I Agree with the affirmation 2/3 = I Disagree with the affirmation 1 = I Strongly Disagree with the affirmation</p>	-Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
1. I was less nervous going into the third conversation than going into the previous conversations.	6	5	4	3	2	1
2. I felt more confident about my French proficiency level during the third conversation than during the first two conversations.	6	5	4	3	2	1
3. I had an easier time understanding my partner in the third conversation than in the first two conversations.	6	5	4	3	2	1
4. My partner understood me better.	6	5	4	3	2	1
5. The conversation flowed better.	6	5	4	3	2	1
6. I did not rely so much on my notes.	6	5	4	3	2	1

I.c. For the following questions, please answer **Yes** or **No** by checking () the appropriate box.

1. Did you meet with the TA before your <u>fourth</u> TalkAbroad conversation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Individually <input type="checkbox"/> In group
2. Did you bring written notes to the <u>fourth</u> conversation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	I depended on my notes: <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all <input type="checkbox"/> At the beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Throughout

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3. Did you read your notes rather than converse with your partner?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
4. Did you use one of the available spaces on campus for the TalkAbroad conversations?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
5. Did you talk to the same partner as in conversation #3?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<p>I.d. During this semester, you participated in an interactive exchange involving conversation with native speakers. We would like to know your reactions to the program.</p> <p>6 = I Strongly Agree with the affirmation 4/5 = I Agree with the affirmation 2/3 = I Disagree with the affirmation 1 = I Strongly Disagree with the affirmation</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">-Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree</p>	
1. The exchange helped me practice my oral skills	6 5 4 3 2 1	
2. The exchange helped me consolidate my oral skills	6 5 4 3 2 1	
3. I had the opportunity to exchange cultural values and increase my understanding of French/Francophone culture	6 5 4 3 2 1	
4. I learned about another culture and its heritage of another culture	6 5 4 3 2 1	
5. I was eager throughout to converse with a native speaker of French	6 5 4 3 2 1	
<p>II. In this section, we would like to know your opinions about the following affirmations related to your experience in second language learning and your perception of your language level.</p> <p>6 = I Strongly Agree with the affirmation 4/5 = I Agree with the affirmation 2/3 = I Disagree with the affirmation 1 = I Strongly Disagree with the affirmation</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">-Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree</p>	
1. My experience with the French language is mostly written.	6 5 4 3 2 1	
2. My experience with the French language is mostly spoken/oral.	6 5 4 3 2 1	

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3. I understand most of what the teacher says in French.	6	5	4	3	2	1
4. I am capable of answering questions in French.	6	5	4	3	2	1
5. I am capable of asking questions in French.	6	5	4	3	2	1
6. I am aware of French-speaking countries outside of Europe and Canada.	6	5	4	3	2	1
7. I believe I know and understand French and Francophone culture.	6	5	4	3	2	1
8. I believe I am capable of spending 30 minutes conversing with a native speaker of French.	6	5	4	3	2	1

III. In this section, you will answer three open-ended questions regarding the interactive exchange experience you've had.

1. How would you rate this conversation overall? Please comment.

2. How would you rate the TalkAbroad experience overall this semester? Please comment.

3. Please share any constructive criticism/comments you have about this conversation
so we may better organize/plan for upcoming semesters.

Appendix E (Z University)

Student evaluation of TalkAbroad, Z University

1. In how far did the conversations with the native speaker on TalkAbroad help you practice and consolidate the grammatical features and structures learned in class? Please provide a rating on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 represents the lowest and 10 the highest rating.

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

2. In how far did the use of TalkAbroad help you develop your communicative skills and your overall knowledge of the French language? Please provide a rating on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 represents the lowest and 10 the highest rating.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

3. On a scale from 1 to 10, please rate how the individual conversations with the native speaker have increased your intercultural awareness and intercultural communicative competence.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

4. How is your overall rating of the use of TalkAbroad in this grammar class? 1 represents the lowest and 10 the highest rating.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Appendix F (Z University)

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La Nouvelle-Orléans et son patrimoine français

FÉV	M	03	Ch 22 pp. 242-265; Les Prépositions <i>Le Vieux Carré: Attractions touristiques et musées</i>
	V	05	Ch 13 pp. 129-143; Les noms et les articles + idioms 'à table' <i>La cuisine française et louisianaise</i>

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L	08	<i>LES VACANCES DE MARDI GRAS</i>
M	10	Ch 22 pp. 242-265; Les Prépositions Ch 13 pp. 129-143; Les noms et les articles + expressions idomatique : 'à table' <i>Les restaurants de la ville: français, louisianais et américains</i>
V	12	Ch 22 pp. 242-265; Les Prépositions Ch 17 pp. 170-188; Les Adjectifs + Comparaison et superlatif <i>Comparaison des restaurants en ville</i>
<hr/>		
L	15	Ch 15 pp.150-159 ; Les Adjectifs possessifs et démonstratifs Ch 17 pp. 170-188; Les Adjectifs + Comparaison et superlatif <i>Comparaison des cuisines ; mes repas préférés</i>
M	17	Ch 15 pp.150-159 ; Les Adjectifs possessifs et démonstratif <i>Les meilleures recettes, repas et restaurants</i>
V	19	Ch 23 pp. 269-281; Les Pronoms relatifs <i>Quelques chefs français</i>
<hr/>		
L	22	Ch 23 pp. 269-281; Les Pronoms relatifs
M	24	Révision pour l'examen
V	26	Exam II

*** **Entre le lundi 22 et le vendredi 26 février** : Participez à une deuxième conversation avec votre interlocuteur francophone sur **TalkAbroad**. **Puis, écrivez votre deuxième rédaction.**

Appendix G (Z University)

« La Nouvelle-Orléans et son patrimoine français »

Theme: « Nouvelle-Orléans: Its cuisine, restaurants, and French heritage »

Second conversation with your TalkAbroad conversation partner.

In order to prepare for this second conversation, please prepare your set of questions in order to being able to discuss the following points:

1. Geographical characteristics of both cities: Where are New Orleans and the city of your interlocutor located? In which country is the city of your

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interlocutor located? What are the characteristics of country, region, and city of your interlocutor?

2. French heritage of both cities: What constitutes the French heritage of our city and region as well as the city, region, and country of your interlocutor? How does the French heritage manifest itself in architecture, monuments, and cultural activities?

Cuisine: What are the characteristics of Louisiana cuisine? What are its typical and cultural dishes? Which ingredients do you use in order to prepare them? Which traditional and culturally representative dishes do we find in your interlocutor's country? How are they prepared? What are its ingredients? What is the most important meal of the day? Which dishes are prepared for festive occasions, for example Christmas, Easter, holidays, weddings, etc.? In how far does the cuisine in his/her country and in our city show French influences. How does the cuisine of your own city compare to the cuisine here in Louisiana and the one of your interlocutor?

3. **Grammatical structures to be practiced:** Conjugation of verbs in the present tense; idiomatic expressions « *avoir* », « *être* », « *prendre* » et « *faire* »; interrogative sentences; use of definite, indefinite, and partitive articles in affirmative and negative sentences; expressions of quantity; prepositions; use of adjectives; formulation of comparative and superlative statements.