Students’ Experiences During Cross-Cultural Video Chat Interactions

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Abstract

This study investigates the perceptions on language proficiency, interest and experience with the target language and culture, benefits of cross-cultural interactions, and level of comfort using technology of intermediate level college Spanish students when participating in online video chats with native speakers of Spanish. Surveys were collected at the beginning and end of the semester and were analyzed to gather information about their experiences. Results of this study suggest that video chats with native speakers may positively influence students’ views of the target language, culture, and Spanish-speaking people and may further their interest about continuing learning. This study provides guidelines, considerations, and recommendations for the successful implementation of video chats with native target language speakers.

Introduction

In many foreign language teaching contexts, it can be very difficult for teachers to provide students with opportunities for authentic interactions with native speakers. However, as technology continues to evolve, more resources to facilitate these interactions are available, including networked technologies with audio and video capabilities (e.g., Skype, Windows Live Messenger, Yahoo! Messenger etc.). There are also many technologies offering the opportunities to speak with native speakers of specific languages, including Language Twin, TalkAbroad, LinguaMeeting, WeSpeke, etc. (Ceo-Francesco, 2015). The goal of these interactions is to educate interculturally competent speakers of a foreign language, ones who possess both communicative competence in the target language in addition to particular skills, values, and knowledge about the culture (Moeller & Nugent, 2014).

Wilkinson et al. (2015) advocate moving culture to the center of our classrooms, as it would launch both students and teachers into a lifelong journey of cultural discovery,
involving new understandings of multiple cultural identities and building intercultural communicative competence. Communication and culture are inseparable; one cannot really understand another culture without having direct access to its language (Duranti, 1997).

Communicating with people abroad online may provide students with the connection to a community of target language speakers and increase their appreciation of their culture. Savignon (1997) noted the importance of learners’ attitudes, experiences, and affective variables in second language learning. Therefore, this study will explore the experiences of students using a synchronous online chat for culture-focused conversation assignments with native speakers. The purpose of this study is to explore the use of this technology with language learners participating in conversations with native speakers of Spanish language, analyze their perceived language proficiency before and after the conversations, analyze their attitude towards Spanish-speaking people, language and culture, and examine their comfort level with the use of technology for language learning.

Review of literature

Several studies have explored language learners’ experiences in text-based synchronous virtual environments (Donaldson & Kötter, 1999; Shih & Yang, 2008; von der Emde, Schenider, & Kötter, 2001). However, not much research has been done on language learners’ experiences and attitudes when using synchronous video chat communication technology to speak with native speakers. Carruthers (2015) explored students' experiences and perceived language learning when participating in synchronous conversations groups via virtual 3-D environment (Second Life) versus face-to-face conversations. Results showed differences in the learner’s perceptions in regard to language proficiency in different skills. Since the conversations were among language learners, a limitation of this study was the lack of cultural context of the conversational activities as well as limited authentic communication.

More recent studies using web-based synchronous video capabilities have focused on comparing text-based and video-based synchronous communication effects on oral proficiency development (Hung & Higgins, 2016; Ko, 2012) and motivation (Freiermuth & Huang, 2012; Terhune, 2016). However, research in this area is limited in regards to the learners’ perceived language proficiency or interest towards the target language and culture. One study examined the effects of participating in a cross-cultural and cross-lingual virtual exchange (synchronous and asynchronous communication, and tasks included both languages and cultures) between students of German in the United States and students of English in Germany, on students’ interest about learning about another culture. The results showed that students’ interest in learning about culture did not change before and after the exchange. Students maintained a high level of interest and believed that learning about the target language culture needs to be part of language courses (Schenker, 2013).

This study seeks to fill a gap in the research by exploring the effects of participating in synchronous video chats with native-speakers on participants’ perceived language proficiency, level of interest and experience in learning about Spanish language and culture, level of comfort when using technology, and the perceived benefits from the cross-cultural experience.
Methodology

For the purpose of the study, students participated in four online video chats of 30 minutes with native Spanish speakers from a variety of countries during a semester of study. The online program utilized for the online conversations was TalkAbroad. This program provides students with 30-minute conversations with trained and supervised conversation partners abroad, using video-conferencing software as the interface for the conversations. Students need a computer, web access, a headset and microphone. Teachers have access to set up a course, post assignments, and listen to the recordings. Students could select their partners and make appointments for the conversations. The program recorded the conversations and kept track of students’ work. Participants were recruited in intermediate courses from three sections of approximately 30 students. Students completed four conversations that aligned with the content of the curriculum that increased in level of difficulty. The first assignment had conversation partners talk about their lives, the second assignment was to describe pictures, the third assignment was about art and culture, and the fourth assignment was about the news.

Participants

A total of 21 students participated in the semester long conversation exchanges. Students were enrolled in Intermediate Spanish courses at a Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. Participants comprised 18 females and 3 males who were at least 18 years of age and native speakers of English.

Data collection

Pre- and post-survey

The initial survey (see Appendix A) was used to obtain general information such as gender, major and minor of study, why participants are learning Spanish (items 1, 5, and 6), language background information (item 3), experience with other languages or cultures through travel/living abroad, family, or friends (items 2 and 4). Likert-scale questions were used to ask about their perceived language proficiency in each of the language skills (item 8), a question about their interest in learning Spanish language and culture (item 9), and their current experience with native Spanish speakers (item 10). The survey also included seven open-ended questions about their attitudes and beliefs about Spanish language and culture (items 11 and 12), expected learning from conversations with native speakers (item 13 and 17), level of comfort with use of technology (items 14 and 15), expectations of the course (item 16), and topics of interest to discuss in the conversations (item 18).

The post-survey (see Appendix B) was given at the end of the semester and included the same items 8 to 18 from the initial survey (items 1-11), a Likert-scale questionnaire with 13 items about their experience during the conversations, and two open-ended questions about what they liked about the conversations (item 12) and what would they change about the conversations (item 13).

Recordings and reflective questionnaires

After each conversation, students had to listen to the recording of the conversation with the native speaker and transcribe at least one page of the conversation. The
goal of this part of the exercise was for students to reflect on their performance and further practice listening and speaking skills. Students answered reflection questions to guide them on how to reflect about their learning (see Appendix C).

Data analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data analyses were conducted on the data obtained from the surveys of the 21 participants for whom complete data were available. No personal or identifiable information was collected. A coding system was utilized to collect, manipulate, and analyze the data. The data obtained from the Likert scale items on the pre- and post-surveys was analyzed with a paired-samples T-test to compare and determine if there was significant difference between the means of the pre- and post-test. The answers from the open-ended questions on the pre- and post-surveys were analyzed qualitatively. The researcher transcribed and coded the answers in order to reveal patterns on the students’ responses.

Results

Language background and areas of study

Participants were asked if they had visited or lived in a Spanish-speaking country: 48% had never visited or lived in a country abroad. Only 19% of students spoke or learned another language besides English or Spanish, and 29% of students expressed having friends or family that are native speakers of Spanish. Students were asked their area of study, including major and minor. Students were from a variety of majors including biology (24%), business (19%), nursing (10%), psychology (9%), undecided (9%), English (9%), Spanish (5%), anthropology (5%), criminal justice (5%), and education (5%). Even though only one student was a Spanish major, thirteen participants (62%) were Spanish minors.

Students were also asked the reason why they study Spanish. The answers were tabulated and grouped in categories including: required for my major/minor, love the Spanish language, love for culture, having a Hispanic heritage or family, desire to help people who speak Spanish, for their future career, and for travel. The response with the highest rate was for their future career (40%) which included comments such as they felt it was important in today’s world, the changing demographics in the U.S., to be more competitive in the job market, desire to help Spanish-speaking people, and because it is essential for a medical career. The second most common was because of their love of the language or culture (26%). Other responses included desire to learn a second language (11%), having a Hispanic heritage (9%), required for their major/minor (8%), and travel (6%).

Language proficiency self-ratings

Participants were asked to rate their language proficiency level in reading, writing, speaking, and listening from 1 (not proficient) to 5 (highly proficient). Results of the paired-samples t-test showed that mean perceived proficiency levels differed approaching the level of significance with \( p < 0.1 \) for speaking before \((M = 2.43, SD = 0.81)\) and after \((M = 2.71, SD = 0.72)\), \( t(20) = -1.83, p = 0.08 \), and reading before \((M = 3.62, SD = 0.74)\) and after \((M = 3.95, SD = 0.59)\), \( t(20) = -1.92, \)
These results suggest that participants felt that they improved mostly in the areas of speaking and reading but there was not much perceived difference in listening or writing.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and t-test Results for Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Pretest M</th>
<th>Pretest SD</th>
<th>Posttest M</th>
<th>Posttest SD</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>95% CI for Mean Difference</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-0.61, 0.04</td>
<td>.57*</td>
<td>-1.83</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-0.44, 0.53</td>
<td>.46*</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-0.69, 0.03</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>-1.92</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-0.53, 0.19</td>
<td>.64*</td>
<td>-0.96</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < 0.5.

Interest in language and cultural learning

Students rated their level of interest in learning the Spanish language and discovering about Spanish-speaking cultures from 1 (no interest) to 5 (very interested). Results, presented in Table 2, showed high interest in the initial survey with a 4.52 score on average and some increase to 4.71 on average after participating in the conversations with native speakers. The difference between the pre- and post-survey was not significant. However, their answers varied in distribution when compared with the pre-survey. The most common response from participants in the pre-survey was their interest in learning how to communicate in another language (n = 12) and learning about culture of other countries (n = 11). The rest of the responses mentioned travel (n = 2), connecting with their family or heritage (n = 3), or because they found Spanish learning fun and interesting (n = 2). The post-survey showed similar responses with an increased interest in mentioning travel as a goal (n = 5).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and t-test Results for Interest and Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Pretest M</th>
<th>Pretest SD</th>
<th>Posttest M</th>
<th>Posttest SD</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>95% CI for Mean Difference</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-0.61, 0.04</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>-1.00</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-0.44, 0.53</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>-1.28</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < 0.5.

Students also rated their level of experience and contact with Spanish speakers from 1 (no experience/contact) to 5 (lots of experience/contact). Results in the pre-survey, also shown in Table 2, showed a mean of 2.90 and some increase to 3.24 after participating in the conversations with native speakers. The difference was not statistically significant. Students in general had a low level of experience and contact with native Spanish speakers. They responded that they have contact
with Spanish speakers when visiting Spanish-speaking countries \((n = 5)\), with family \((n = 4)\), teachers \((n = 4)\), friends \((n = 3)\), when going to a Mexican restaurant \((n = 2)\), and at work \((n = 1)\).

**Views about Spanish-speaking people, Spanish language, and culture**

Participants were asked their opinion the Spanish-speaking people, culture, and language in the questionnaire. Answers were tabulated and grouped into themes and frequencies of comments were counted for analysis. Pre-survey responses showed that all of the participants had a generally positive view of Spanish-speaking people, culture, and language. 41% of the comments were about the culture: “the culture is beautiful even though it can be confusing or seen as different”, “beautiful culture, especially South America”, “Spanish culture is more complex than American culture. Each country has its own culture and I like that”. When asked what they thought of the Spanish language, and the ideas or social status they associate with it, 29% commented on the language positively: “beautiful language”, “love how easy and natural Spanish feels”, “they speak very quickly”, “different Spanish speaking countries use different dialects and slang”, “intriguing language filled with passion”; two students commented on the language being challenging: “difficult but challenging language”, “quite challenging to learn but interesting to work with.” 29% \((n = 6)\) of the participants commented about Spanish-speaking people: “more friendly and welcoming than people in the U.S.”, “they are more relaxed people than Americans”, “They are very hardworking and passionate about their heritage”. 14% \((n = 3)\) of participants commented that the language was just interesting, or that they did not have much knowledge about it.

In the same questions on the post-survey, all responses were also positive with 10% \((n = 2)\) of the responses about the culture and 90% \((n = 19)\) commenting on Spanish-speaking people: “They are very nice and understanding. They could tell I was nervous so they tried to make me feel more comfortable”, “They are friendly, polite, and active. Many of the TA partners I had were involved in dancing, Crossfit, biking, etc. I think their culture revolves around family and socializing and less on technology like we focus in America”, “They were friendly and well-educated. I would like to have more contact”, “They are more like us than we like to believe. It just depends on the person as to how they act and choose to express their culture”, “Religious, family-oriented”, “I like learning about the way they live and their culture”, “Enjoy Spanish speaking people. They are super friendly, well-mannered, and family-oriented.” Participants also viewed the Spanish language positively and explicitly stated that language and social status are not connected: “I think that it is a cool language. I admire it a lot. I do not associate language with a social status because that doesn’t make sense”. They described the language as beautiful, complicated, unique, easy to learn. Only two cases related the language to a wealthy and educated class, and two cases associated the language with a lower class or to workers in a restaurant or farm. Some students changed their mind from pre- to post-survey: “I used to think they were of a lower status, but actually I do not think that is true at all. They are just like us if not better.”
Perceived benefits from the cross-cultural experience

Students were asked what benefits they expected to obtain from frequent conversations with native speakers of Spanish. In the pre-survey, 86% of the participants (n = 18) responded that they wanted to improve their conversational ability, fluency, and to have the opportunity for real world practice. Other comments included learning about culture (n = 3), improving accent and pronunciation (n = 2) increasing confidence (n = 1), and helping understanding the language and different dialects (n = 1). In the post-survey, all participants commented that the course and the conversation activities met their expectations. Some students’ comments were: “Conversations flows much easier, started thinking in Spanish rather than translating everything”, “I felt much more comfortable speaking by the 3rd session. I think it improved my listening and speaking skills. It also gave a taste of how fast they speak and how different the accents can be”, “New colloquialisms and grammar”, “Got used to speaking and hearing the language instead of just reading and writing”, “the comfort gained for the language being forced to use only Spanish with someone”, “I can understand and speak Spanish better.”

Students also commented on the diversity of accents and countries of origin of their partners: “Well, one thing I learned was that I can better understand Mexican Spanish than Colombian or Costa Rican Spanish. However, more importantly than that, I got to converse with real native speakers on a live webcam and talk to them about their lives and their culture. It was pretty amazing,” “I loved speaking with people from various countries because previously I had only spoke [sic] with people from Mexico.”

Level of comfort with the use of technology

71% (n = 15) of the students felt comfortable with the use of technology and only six students (29%) expressed being somewhat comfortable with technology before the activity. After the conversations, 81% (n = 17) of the students felt comfortable with the use of technology, though six students commented they had technology issues such as sound issues, slow Internet connection, or video lagging. Students commented that this activity was a “great approach for practicing the language” and “more convenient than going to conversation hours on campus.” Technology was seen as a “great tool to connect people around the world”, one student stated: “I think using the Internet is a great way to further students’ knowledge and education. Instead of paying thousands of dollars to take trips to Mexico and talk to native speakers, I can do it right from the comfort of my home. I don't think Internet should ever completely replace schools because it is also important to learn communication, note taking skills, etc. in the classroom. However, technology is a great aide [sic].”

Discussion and summary

This cross-cultural interaction activity investigated (1) a change in the students’ perceived level language proficiency, (2) the level of interest of students participating in conversations with native speakers about the language and culture, (3) the students’ perceived benefits from participating in conversations with native speakers, and (4) the level of comfort of students when using technology to practice language.
The results revealed that although not statistically significantly, their perceived proficiency increased in the area of speaking, reading and writing, and decreased in listening. The perceived improvement in the areas of reading and writing may be a consequence of finishing in an intermediate course in Spanish and not a direct reflection of this activity. The perceived decrease in the listening skills may have been caused by the exposure to a variety of accents or other factors such sound issues. The instructors for the courses were from Spain, Venezuela, and the U.S., however, the online partners were from a variety of countries not including the countries of origin of the instructors. The situation of trying to understand an unfamiliar dialect or accent may have influenced their lower scores in listening skills.

Results showed that, both before and after participation in the conversations, students were highly interested in the language and culture for a variety of reasons. The main reasons were to be able to communicate in a second language and to learn about different cultures. Due to the demographics and the location, students in this institution have very little contact or opportunities to interact with native speakers of Spanish. Therefore, their views about the people, language and culture were limited in the pre-survey. The post-survey responses were more personalized and richer after the experiences with the conversations. Responses moved from focusing on the abstract concepts of language, culture, and general descriptors for Spanish speakers (such as “friendly”, “interesting”, “hardworking,” and “passionate”) towards a more personalized description of Spanish speakers as a consequence of their personal experience.

Students had the opportunity to choose a partner for each conversation activity. Some students picked a different partner from a different country each time, some students picked the same partner for all conversations, and some repeated partners once or twice. Further research may be done to explore if the choice or variation of partners affected their experience.

The level of comfort using the technology was high and students did not have major issues using the program. They enjoyed the opportunity of participating in this experience and had a positive view of using technology as an aid in language learning. Students’ perceived benefits from participating in the experience were the improvement in conversational ability, fluency, and confidence. They also enjoyed learning about the similarities and differences of their life and their conversation partner’s life abroad. They loved being able to speak with people from a variety of countries and experienced different dialects, mannerisms, and accents.

**Recommendations for future implementation**

It was observed that many students had difficulty starting the conversations, transitioning from topics, and asking questions. Students would quickly greet their partner and move to a question related to the assignment. This is not a natural practice with native speakers; usually greetings and farewells take longer than in the American culture. Students also jumped quickly from one question to the other without using transition words or follow-up questions. It is important that teachers planning to implement these activities prepare students in advance with the linguistic tools they need to be able to greet and transition throughout the conversation. Also, teachers could
Students' Experiences during Cross-Cultural Video Chat Interactions

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For each activity, students were instructed to prepare in advance for the conversations by reading about the related topic and preparing questions ahead. In the first conversation, the goal was for students to describe, compare, and contrast their life with the life of a partner abroad. Students who prepared in advance were able to keep the conversation flowing; on the other hand, unprepared students used more time to complete the assignment and the native-speaker partner took over the activity by asking most of the questions. Since the assignment was just speaking and a reflection questionnaire, there was not a clear goal of cultural learning from the partner. Future implementation should set clear cultural goals for each conversation and require students to not only reflect on their learning but also report a summary of their partner’s answers.

The TalkAbroad software also presented some course management limitations. At the time of this research, instructors had no control in regards to adding/dropping students from a class, resetting or rescheduling conversations, choosing the length of the conversations, and there was not an area for providing feedback or grading within the interface. Additional functionality has since been added to the TalkAbroad platform.

Finally, when students were asked what would they change about the conversations, most of them thought that 30 minutes was too long. After analyzing the recordings, it was observed that students finished the assignments in less than 30 minutes, ranging from 10-20 minutes. Future implementation should consider more goals for each conversation to provide material for longer conversations, and starting with shorter conversations at the beginning of the semester and increasing them in length of time as students become more familiar with the system and more comfortable speaking.

Limitations

Limitations of the present study include a sample size too small to make this study generalizable to the population. Tasks given to the students could have been more detailed and could have guided the student to learn more about the culture. There is also need for improvement in the survey questions that align with the ACTFL proficiency guidelines in order to provide more concrete data. The Likert scale did not provide descriptions for each proficiency level, which may have influenced students' accuracy in self-assessing their level. Another limitation was the self-reported data, although the researcher took measures to avoid biases such as anonymous coding of data and not using personally-identifiable information. However, there is always room for human error due to unconscious cultural biases, attribution, or exaggeration. More research using both qualitative and quantitative methods could provide more information valuable to language learners and teachers to better implement new technologies in effective ways.

Conclusion

Participating in this video chat cross-cultural exchange may have influenced students’ interest in learning not only the Spanish language but also about the people and the culture. Students’ experiences communicating with native
speakers gave them the opportunity to discover more than just language. They became aware of the diversity of accents, dialects, and countries where Spanish is spoken. They also recognized the similarities and differences in daily life, food, celebrations, pastimes, family values, cultural activities, etc. between themselves and people living abroad.

The cross-cultural interactions provided students an opportunity to experience cultural products, practices, and perspectives (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). They looked at products shown by the partners abroad, like pictures of their family, pets, trips, etc., they learned about their partner’s practices (celebrations, daily life, work, school, hobbies, etc.), and the underlying perspectives. This type of activity as a central goal in a language class can be used to encourage communication, make comparisons, connect with communities of native speakers, and make connections in professional fields. Using the World-Readiness Standards as a framework to design activities with native speakers is a great opportunity available nowadays with technology. As Moeller and Nugent (2014) and Wilkinson et al. (2015) advocate, culture has to be at the center of our classrooms in order to promote students’ lifelong journey of cultural discovery with the goal of becoming interculturally competent foreign language speakers.

As technology continues to evolve, more resources are available for teachers and language learners to communicate with people abroad. Communicating with people abroad online can provide students with the connection to a community of target language speakers and increase their appreciation of their own culture. As the online video chatting is a relatively new technology, there has been little empirical research exploring this medium of communication in the area of foreign language pedagogy as an option for online courses, distance learning, and/or as a supplement to language courses. This study provided a model for language teachers for future implementation in their classes, and an innovative way to provide opportunities for language learners to participate in various meaningful conversations with native speakers of a target language to not only help them develop their communication skills, but also to gain a more personal and richer view of the target language cultures and communities.

References


Appendix A

TalkAbroad Pre-Survey

1. Gender: Male _____ Female _____

2. Have you ever visited or lived in any countries outside the United States?
   Yes _____ No _____ If Yes, was it a Spanish speaking country? Yes _____
   No _____

3. Do you speak any languages other than English? Yes _____ No _____ If Yes,
   please specify: _____________________________

4. Do you have friends or family that are native speakers of Spanish?  Yes ____
   No____
   If yes, explain:

5. Area of study (If you are also working on a minor or a double major, please
   select your primary area/major of study) Major: ____________ Minor:

6. Why are you studying Spanish?

7. How long have you been studying Spanish?

8. How would you describe your language proficiency in Spanish?
   Not proficient (1) - Highly proficient (5)

   Speaking   1  2  3  4  5
   Reading    1  2  3  4  5
   Writing    1  2  3  4  5
   Listening  1  2  3  4  5

9. How would you rate your interest in learning the Spanish language and
   discovering about Spanish-speaking cultures?
   No interest (1) - Very interested (5)

   Explain:

10. How would you describe your experience of and contact with Spanish
    speakers?
    No experience/contact (1) - Lots of experience/contact (5)

    Explain:

11. What do you think of Spanish speaking people and culture? Describe any
    ideas or opinions that you have about them.

12. What do you think of the Spanish language? What ideas or social status do
    you associate with it?

13. What kind of benefits do you expect to obtain from having frequent
    conversations with native speakers of Spanish?

14. Are you comfortable using technology such as the Internet and computers
    with audio and video?

15. What do you think about the use of computer and Internet technology in
    language learning?

16. What are your expectations of this course?
17. How do you think the use of online conversations with native speakers can help to fulfill your expectations on this course?
18. What topics do you think would be interesting to discuss on these conversations? Please suggest topics.

Appendix B
TalkAbroad Post-Survey

1. How would you describe your language proficiency in Spanish?

\[ \begin{array}{cccccc}
\text{Not proficient (1) -----Highly proficient (5)} \\
\text{Speaking} & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
\text{Reading} & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
\text{Writing} & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
\text{Listening} & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
\end{array} \]

2. How would you rate your interest in learning the Spanish language and discovering about Spanish-speaking cultures?

\[ \begin{array}{cccccc}
\text{No interest (1) - Very interested (5)} \\
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
\end{array} \]

Explain:

3. How would you describe your experience of and contact with Spanish speakers?

\[ \begin{array}{cccccc}
\text{No experience/contact (1) - Lots of experience/contact (5)} \\
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
\end{array} \]

Explain:

4. What do you think of Spanish speaking people and culture? Describe any ideas or opinions that you have about them.

5. What do you think of the Spanish language? What ideas or social status do you associate with it?

6. What kind of benefits did you obtain from having frequent conversations with native speakers of Spanish?

7. Were you comfortable using the technology (Internet and computers with audio and video)? Did you experience any issues? If so explain.

8. What do you think about the use of computer and Internet technology in language learning?

9. Were your expectations of this course met?

10. How do you think the use of online conversations with native speakers helped to fulfill your expectations on this course?

11. What topics you discuss on these conversations? Do you have any suggestions?

12. What did you like about the conversations?
What would you change about the conversations?
Appendix C

TalkAbroad Assignments

TALKABROAD ASSIGNMENT #1 MI VIDA DUE 9/15

Objective: Students will ask and answer questions about their daily life. Students will describe, compare and contrast their life with the life of a partner abroad. The following questions might be used as guidelines for your conversation. Prepare 10-15 questions ahead of time to keep the conversation flowing. Be polite. You may ask how to say a word in Spanish: Por favor, ¿Cómo se dice... en español?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample questions</th>
<th>En Español…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Greet someone and introduce yourself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Where are you from?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What time is it there?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How is the weather there?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What languages do you speak?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Do you work or go to school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What are your hobbies?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Describe your city</td>
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<td>9. Describe your daily routine</td>
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<td>10. Describe your daily meals.</td>
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TALKABROAD ASSIGNMENT #2 FOTOS DUE 10/13

Objective: Students will ask and answer questions when presented with pictures. Students and partners will bring at least five pictures of their city, places they have visited, activities they like to do, or celebrations (weddings, birthdays, etc.) and take turns asking questions about the pictures.

TALKABROAD ASSIGNMENT #3 ARTE Y CULTURA DUE 11/10

Objective: Students will talk about movies, TV shows, music, theater, or other popular culture activities. Prepare 10-15 questions about these topics. Also, be prepared to answer questions about this topic.

TALKABROAD ASSIGNMENT #4 NOTICIAS DUE 12/8

Objective: Students will talk about current events in the news. Students and partners will talk about what is going on in their communities. Students should read their newspaper or news online ahead of time. Be prepared to talk about at least five events.

Reflection Questions: Read the script of your conversation, answer the following questions:
1. How well were you able to communicate with your partners? Why?
2. What was your conversation about?
3. What words/expressions you did not know or understand? Provide examples.
4. What new words/expressions/symbols did you learn from this experience?