

VIRTUAL EXCHANGES:  
LEVERAGING THE  
POWER OF A  
“PROFESSIONAL  
CONVERSATION  
PARTNER” IN THE  
LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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# OUTLINE

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Types of virtual exchanges

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SPVEs: Examples, features, advantages, criticism

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SPVEs for Language Learning

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SPVEs for Intercultural Learning



# QUESTIONS

How familiar are you with virtual exchanges (VE)?

How familiar are you with service-provider virtual exchanges (SPVEs)?

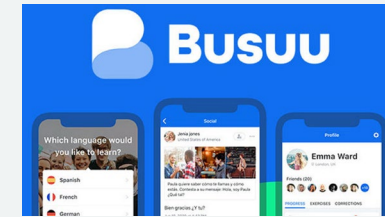


# TYPES OF VIRTUAL EXCHANGES

- E-tandem
- Telecollaboration
- Service-provided virtual exchanges

# E-TANDEM

- Early 1990s: Heir of traditional mail-based pen-pal initiatives
- Exchanges between two speakers of different mother tongues interact to help each other learn their respective languages.
- Usually not in an institutional setting, but...
- Main characteristics: reciprocity, learner autonomy, focus on language learning
- Role of native speaker: provide input and feedback
- They can be:
  - Asynchronous: email, instant messaging and even audio chat
  - Synchronous: text, audio, and video chat
- Companies: Tandem, Bussuu



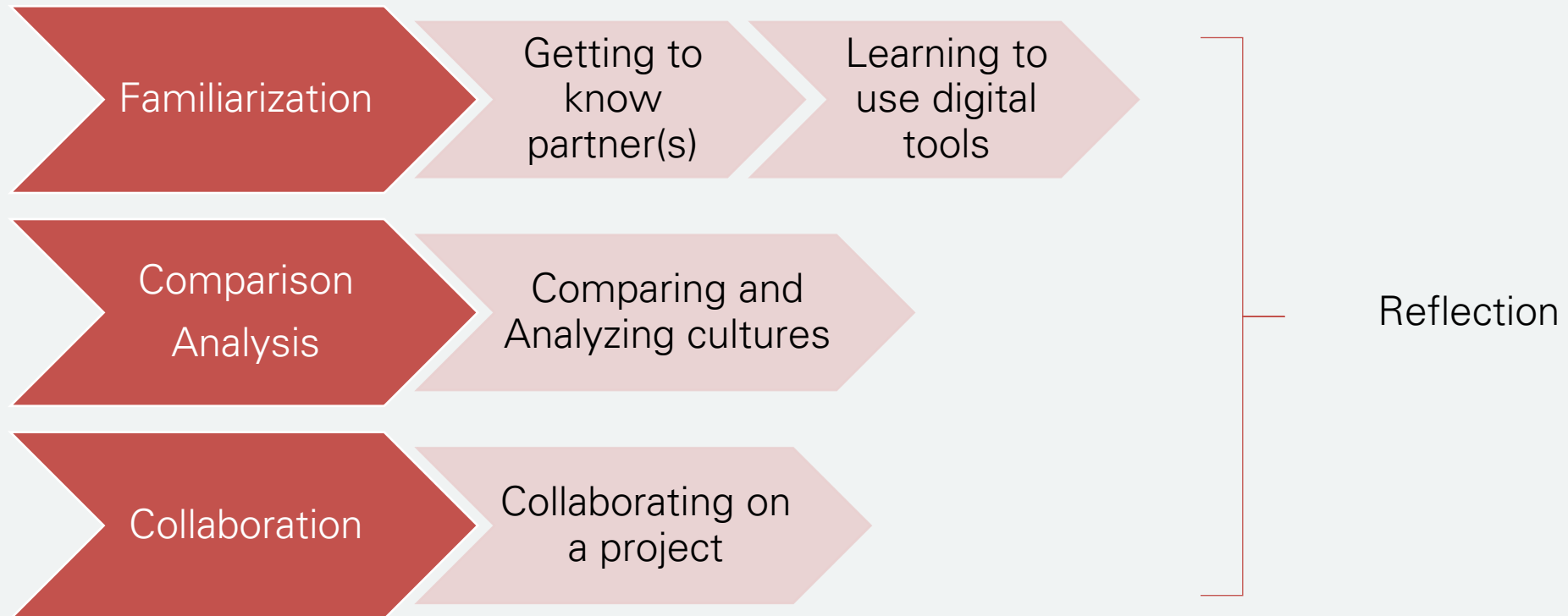


# TELECOLLABORATION



- Late 1990s, early 2000s
- Technology-mediated intercultural exchanges
- Main characteristics: Institutional setting, instructor-guided, collaborative (project-based), focus on intercultural learning and multiliteracies development
- Participation style: Class-to-class, small groups, learner-to-learner
- Modality: Written, audio, video
- Synchronicity: synchronous, asynchronous, a combination
- Progressive Exchange Model: Offers structure and guidance for learning objectives, instructional activities, and assessment tools.

# TELECOLLABORATION



Progressive Exchange Model (O'Dowd & Ware, 2009; O'Dowd & Lewis, 2016 )

# TELECOLLABORATION

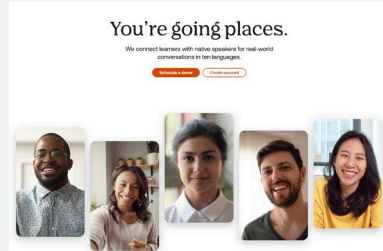
May produce rich and highly rewarding experiences for students and instructors

But there are also concerns to consider:

- Finding a partner instructor or institution
- Time commitment and negotiation between instructors
- Sustainability of the project (e.g., syllabus, institutional cooperation)







# SPVES

Service-provider virtual exchanges

- Mid to late 2000s
- Video-based VEs supplied by for-profit companies
  - Platform
  - Interlocutors
  - Curricula
  - Assessment
  - Sessions' recordings

# QUESTION

Explore one of these websites and write a list of words you would use to describe their services



# COMPANIES HIGHLIGHTS



Authentic cultural conversations

Trained native speakers

Confidence

Intercultural competence

Proficiency

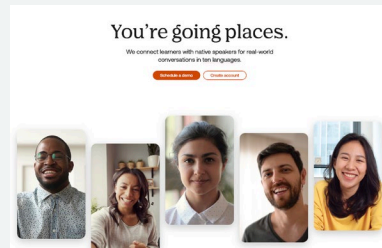


Real-life conversations with **language coaches**

Low anxiety

Beginning levels

Recruitment



**Professional conversation partners**

Conversation practice and cultural exchange

Find confidence



**Native speaking peers**

Authentic conversations

Conversation guides

Language immersion on demand

# ADVANTAGES FOR INSTRUCTORS



- Do not require high levels of logistical and technical involvement on the part of the instructor
- Eliminate the interinstitutional curricular imbalances
- Do not require training students on how to provide appropriate, sensitive feedback to their interlocutor
- Ideal for multi-section courses led by less-experienced instructors
- Available for beginning learners
- Access to recordings

# ADVANTAGES FOR STUDENTS



- Allow students to focus exclusively on the development of their L2 (as they are not required to speak their L1 with their interlocutor)
- Possibility of choosing different or the same partners
- High levels of satisfaction
- Access to recordings

# CRITICISM



Not based on the principles of autonomy and reciprocity



Transactional in nature: Being aware of interlocutor needs and desires (e.g., cultural content, linguistic feedback) is an important part of learning a second language and culture



Despite claims, main focus is on developing language skills



Sessions resemble classroom talk more than natural conversation



Questions so far?

# MODELS OF SPVES



Focus on language learning



Focus on intercultural learning





# SPVES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

What challenges have you had or do you anticipate having if you want to use SPVEs to develop your students' language proficiency?

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Topics, guides, and instructional sequence






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“Professional” conversation partners

SPVES FOR  
LANGUAGE LEARNING

# SPVES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

## Topics, guides, and instructional sequence

 <b>Hobbies</b> Length: 30-minute Conversation Topic (10 minutes) Introduce yourself to your conversation partner and get to know some basic information about each other. Share a little ...	 <b>Daily Routine</b> Length: 30-minute Conversation Topic (10 minutes) Introduce yourself to your conversation partner and get to know some basic information about each other. Share a little ...	 <b>Food</b> Length: 30-minute Conversation Topic (10 minutes) Introduce yourself to your conversation partner and get to know some basic information about each other. Then, share a ...	 <b>Family</b> Length: 30-minute Conversation Topic (10 minutes) Introduce yourself to your conversation partner and get to know some basic information about each other and share a little ...	 <b>Places</b> Length: 30-minute Conversation Topic (10 minutes) Introduce yourself to your conversation partner and get to know some basic information about each other. Also, share a littl...
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(10 minutes) Introduce yourself to your conversation partner and get to know some basic information about each other and share a little about your family. Ask your conversation partner about their family.

(10 minutes) Find out what a typical family looks like in your partner's country and share what the typical family looks like here in the United States. What are the roles of the different members within each family? Ask your conversation partner what they think constitutes "family". Is it only limited to people who are related? Share what you think as well.

(10 minutes) Ask and share about how the idea of family has changed over the years. What are some of the influences that shape and change the concept of family? Compare and contrast your answers to these questions.

# SPVES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

## Topics, guides, and instructional sequence

### Professor Manual

Sequence code: **Sequence-39**

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#### Overview

5 30-minute conversation

Topics: Family, Food, Sports, Media, Education

- Review: Pre-conversation activities
- Interact: Conversation outlines
- Reflect: Post-conversation activities

Time required to complete sequence: 12,5 hours

# SPVES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

## Pre-conversation activities

Vocabulary

Grammatical  
structures

Fluency  
& Accuracy

Strategic  
competence

### Prepare (45 min)

- Schedule your conversation
  - Remember to schedule at least 36 hours in advance.
- Review
  - Review vocabulary relevant to conversations about families and relationships.
  - Learn at least 10 new words about the topic as well.
- Plan
  - Research the country where your conversation partner lives and investigate what traditional and non-traditional families look like.
  - Using the Interact section as a guide:
    - Write a list of 10 questions you can ask your conversation partner about themselves and their basic thoughts on the topic.
    - Write a list of 10 questions you can ask your conversation partner about the norms in their country/region and how they compare to where you live.
    - Write a list of 5 questions you can ask your conversation partner about any particular stories in the past, how ideas have changed and/or what their ideas about the future are.
  - Avoid questions that elicit a simple one word (yes/no) answer.
  - Think about how you would respond to each of the questions if they were asked to you (prepare for any vocabulary that you might not know).
  - Read through the Interact and Reflect portion of the sequence to help anticipate any other questions you might need to ask of your partner.
- Practice
  - Practice asking and answering your questions out loud. If available, find a partner from class and practice together.
- Consider
  - What are some places that you notice you are having trouble communicating? Are there any new words or structures that you can learn before your conversation?
  - What are some techniques to help navigate a conversation? What sort of phrases would be helpful?

# SPVES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

## Topics, guides, and instructional sequence



Familiarization

(10 minutes) Introduce yourself to your conversation partner and get to know some basic information about each other and share a little about your family. Ask your conversation partner about their family.

Comparison  
& Analysis

(10 minutes) Find out what a typical family looks like in your partner's country and share what the typical family looks like here in the United States. What are the roles of the different members within each family? Ask your conversation partner what they think constitutes "family". Is it only limited to people who are related? Share what you think as well.

(10 minutes) Ask and share about how the idea of family has changed over the years. What are some of the influences that shape and change the concept of family? Compare and contrast your answers to these questions.

# SPVES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

## Post-conversation activities

Comprehensibility  
& Intelligibility

Noticing  
linguistic items

Noticing  
linguistic items

### Reflect (75 minutes)

- Review
  - Download and listen to the audio recording of your conversation.
- Write
  - Overall, how did your conversation go?
  - About what percentage of your partners' speech did you understand?
  - What are three things that you would phrase or say differently after having listened to your conversation?
  - List three interesting things you learned about your conversation partner based on their answers to your questions.
  - Choose the most interesting part of your conversation on the topic of the discussion and transcribe (write in the target language) **8 minutes** of the recording. This will involve listening to the audio a few times. Focus on an area in which your partner was speaking the majority of the time. Write down both what you and your partner said. Be sure to indicate where this portion of the conversation is by indicating the time elapsed at the beginning of your transcription (ie. [2:35] if the section begins 2 minutes and thirty-five seconds into the conversation).
  - What sort of cultural inferences or comparisons can you make about your interaction with your partner? If there is insufficient evidence, what comparisons can you start to make? What information would you need to help draw a conclusion?
  - List five new words you learned from this conversation and provide the context (sentence) where you encountered them.
  - Is there anything else about the language that you noticed?
  - What can you do to better prepare for your next conversation?
- Share with your professor
  - Send your audio recording to your professor by email or through your LMS.
  - Send your writing assignment to your professor by email or through your LMS.

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Topics, guides, and instructional sequence

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“Professional” conversation partners

SPVES FOR  
LANGUAGE LEARNING



# SPVES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

## “Professional” conversation partners

Conversational partners are trained to:

- Be friendly, patient, encouraging
- Speak slowly, repeat, rephrase, and simplify speech
- Use multimodal resources to help learners understand

### Recommendations

- Formulate follow-up questions
- Abandon a negotiation instance when it expands over several (i.e., three or four) turns without apparent results
- Provide written immediate corrective feedback (e.g., chat, whiteboard)
- Interacting with the same partner promotes negotiation of grammatical structures

# SPVES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

Research shows that SPVEs:

- Increase L2 learners' contact hours with the TL outside of the classroom
- Provide opportunities to receive comprehensible input and modified output
- Foster negotiation of meaning and form, which is believed to be conducive to language learning
- Students perceive SPVEs activities as beneficial for their language development

# SPVES FOR INTERCULTURAL LEARNING

What challenges have you had or do you anticipate having if you want to use SPVEs to develop your students' intercultural knowledge?



SPVES FOR  
INTERCULTURAL  
LEARNING

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Intercultural Learning

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Instructional sequence

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Affordances and challenges of  
SPVEs to promote intercultural  
learning

# INTERCULTURAL LEARNING



Byram (1997)



ACTFL (2011)

# SPVES FOR INTERCULTURAL LEARNING

Let's look again at the instructional sequence about the family



Attitudes

Knowledge  
Comparison  
Critical Analysis

(10 minutes) Introduce yourself to your conversation partner and get to know some basic information about each other and share a little about your family. Ask your conversation partner about their family.

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# SPVES FOR INTERCULTURAL LEARNING

## Pre-conversation activities

Attitude  
Knowledge  
Skills  
  
Comparisons

Skills

## Prepare (45 min)

- Schedule your conversation
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- Review
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# SPVES FOR LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Skills

Knowledge

## Post-conversation activities

Critical cultural awareness

Comparisons

Skills

### Reflect (75 minutes)

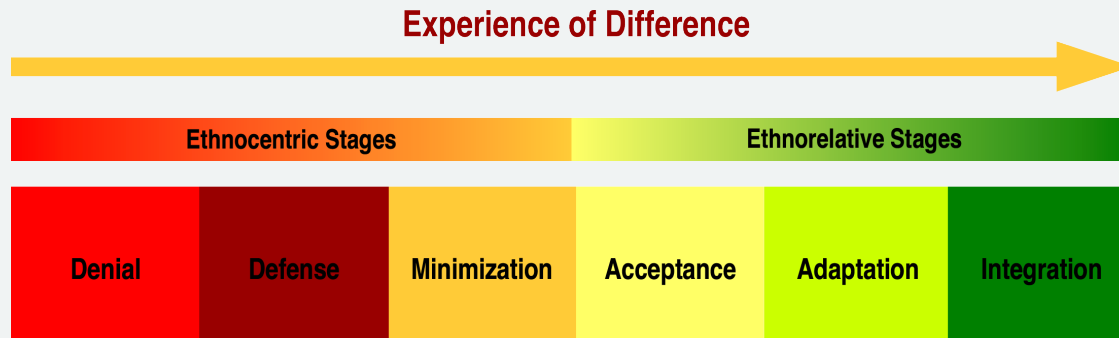
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# SPVES FOR INTERCULTURAL LEARNING

Research shows that SPVEs:

- Provide opportunities for intercultural learning
- BUT can also promote stereotypes and ethnocentric perspectives



Bennet (1986)

## SPVES FOR INTERCULTURAL LEARNING

“We talked predominantly about our interests, education, and sports. [...] I think that the most significant thing to surprise me about the conversation and culture differences, was just **how similar everything seemed to be.**”

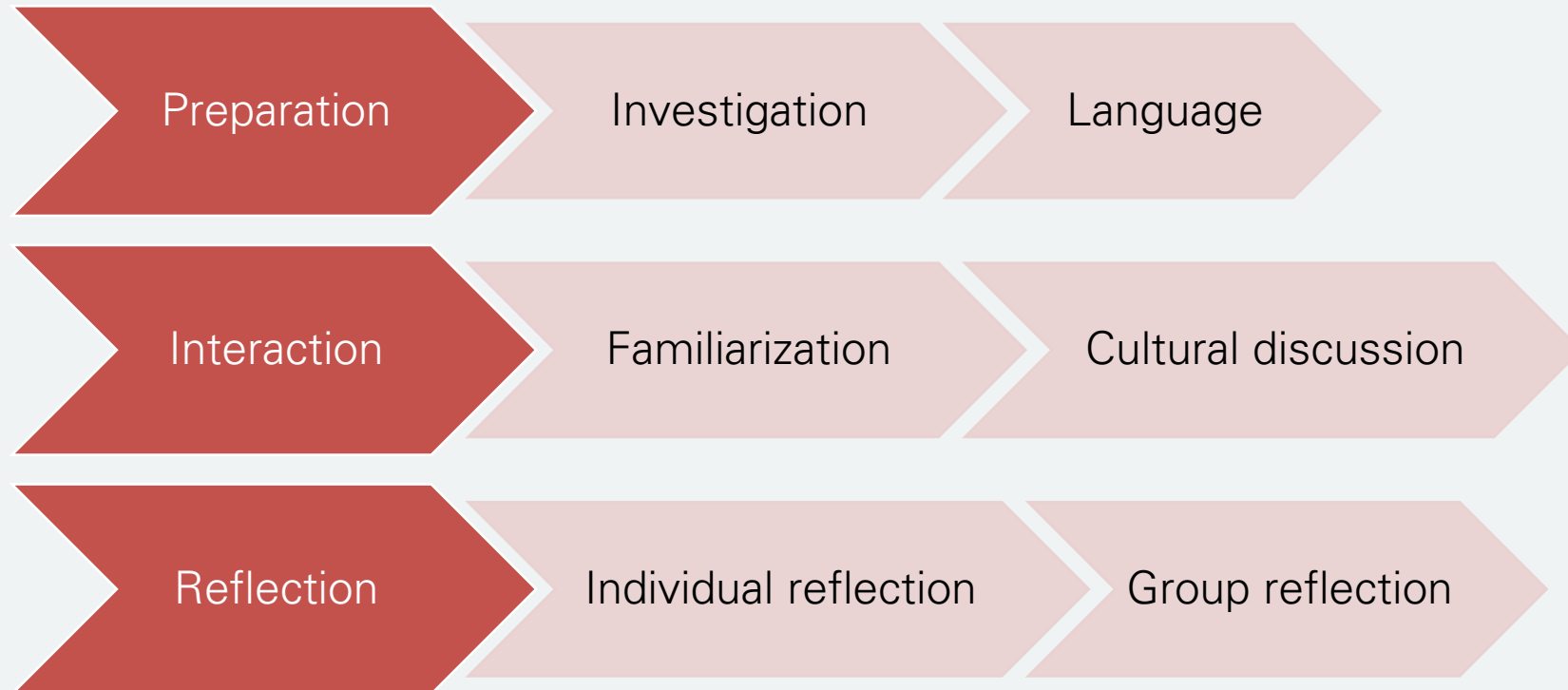
“College life is extremely different which was cool for me to hear. **College is definitely more of an American thing** is what I've learned from being exposed to different cultures, Nallely also mentioned that she knows a lot of people who if they want to go to college from Mexico, usually attend school in the U.S.”

“I was surprised to learn that many Mexicans do not know the history of Independence Day in Mexico. It is surprising because **Independence Day is important for all free countries, so people should know how they received their freedom.**”

“Same sex marriage is not legal in her country which **wasn't surprising to me, considering the United States just made it officially legal not that long ago.**”

# INTERCULTURAL LEARNING

Suggested instructional sequence: Progressive exchange model for SPVEs





Questions?

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