Interface 2021

Bridging the gap between SPN classes and “real world” Spanish through virtual exchange

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Introduction (5 minutes)

* Introduce Presenters
* Introduce the genesis of the VE experience in Lower Division Spanish courses (SPN 1130/1131/2200/2201/2240)
* Introduce Model
  + Drawing on [UFIC’s advocacy for and work on virtual exchange](about:blank), virtual exchange in the Lower Division Spanish Program allows for biweekly interpersonal conversations between UF students and coaches in Spanish-speaking countries through the LinguaMeeting portal.
  + Goals for VE via LM:
    1. to provide opportunities for more free-flowing, organic conversations in Spanish outside the official space of the classroom;
    2. to increase students’ confidence in communicating with native speakers of Spanish;
    3. to build rapport with their language coach (and, in some classes, 1-2 other classmates);
    4. to guide students in comparing and contrasting their cultural products, practices, and perspectives with those of their coach (and, in some classes, 1-2 classmates) to increase their intercultural competence

Overview of Model Components (10 minutes)

* LinguaMeeting conversations are embedded in all Lower Division Spanish courses, but the experiences vary by level (SPN 1130/1131/2200 students have 30-minute conversations in small groups with their coach and 1-2 other students; SPN 2201 students speak with their coach one-on-one for 15 minutes; SPN 2240 students speak individually with their coach for 30 minutes)
* Preparation phase: Students and coaches review the conversation guide to prepare for the conversation, allowing coaches to prepare to scaffold the conversation (structuring the first part of the conversation, having images ready to show for specific words/concepts, etc.) and students to review so they do not go into the conversation “cold.”
  + Encourages students to review vocabulary and grammar for the current chapter so they can use them actively during the conversation;
  + Asks that students consider specific themes (what do they want to know about their coach related to those themes? about any classmates who participate in the conversations? what might they say about themselves?); and
  + Prepares students to discuss cultural products, practices, and perspectives (including social issues like gender discrimination, food insecurity, etc.)
* Attention phase: Students review their notes and/or the video of the conversation on the LinguaMeeting portal to reflect on specific aspects of the conversation, including linguistic (who did they use studied vocab/grammar?), paralinguistic (how did they use gestures or other non-linguistic strategies to make themselves understood?), cultural (what did they learn about the cultural products, practices, and perspectives of their coach and people their coach knows and how does that relate to their cultural products, practices, and perspectives?), and interpersonal (Did they enjoy the experience? Did they feel comfortable and confident at the end of the conversation?).
* Reflection phase: Students write their responses to the reflection questions that were initially included in the guide in the Preparation phase and that they reviewed in the Attention phase. The reflection is due 5 days after the end of the conversation round.
* Feedback to students: LM coaches immediately evaluate each student’s participation in three categories on a scale from 1-3 (9 points total). This is the score students earn for the “Conversación” component. The course instructor reads the written reflection and gives feedback and a score of up to 5 points.
* Results from student feedback: At the end of the semester, we ask students what their top two components of the course are. After a random sampling of 20% of groups in SPN 1130, 1131, 2200, and 2201, …
  + 77 students of a total of 229 listed LM conversations as their favorite component and 89 students listed them as their second favorite component.
  + Of the reasons students why students listed LM conversations in their top two course components, 52.8% said that they helped them build confidence and skills in conversing in Spanish, 15.3% noted that they enjoyed the experience of speaking with a coach in another country (and, in some classes, 1-2 classmates), 10% explained that they learned a lot about life in another country, and 7% said they felt they made a personal connection with their coach.
* Feedback from coordinators in F20: Tasked with troubleshooting issues related to LM conversations, course coordinators saw the need for more accountability on the part of some coaches to review the preparation guide. That led to conversations with LM staff about training LM coaches who work with our students. Course coordinators also indicated that we needed to educate students on our expectations of their conversations on LM (they will NOT be perfect, there may be tech issues and this is how you handle them, your coach and you may have different experiences and opinions so note those differences but don’t evaluate them, etc.). We created a Canvas assignment prior to the first LM conversation round to do so.

Review Principles (2 minutes / transitioning to the activity)

* What goal(s) in your courses – especially related to internationalization, skill building, networking, and/or collaboration - could a virtual exchange help your students achieve?
* What resources or connections do you have access to know or what resources or connections do you need to create a VE?
* How will you guide your students in the Preparation, Attention, and Reflection phases?
* How will you evaluate your students’ performance? How will you seek feedback from your students and other stakeholders? How will feedback drive change?

Activity (23 minutes)

* Brainstorm and take notes as individuals on questions in the Review Principles section above (2-3 minutes)
* Share, brainstorm, and take notes in breakout rooms (2-3 participants in each BR) (8-10 minutes)
* Share with whole group (8-10 minutes)
* Summarize group conversation in 2-3 words

Q&A (5 minutes)