Enhancing Student L2 Oral Proficiency with TalkAbroad

2019 Annual WAFLT Conference
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Technology & Pedagogy:
Computer-Assisted Language Learning Tools

FluentU
Duolingo
YouTube
HelloTalk
Dream Virtual Assistants in a FL Classroom

Pen pals or video pals… Flipgrid – Earlier Attempts

- Pros and Cons:
  - Intimidation
  - Cultural unawareness
  - Unavailability/ time conflicts
  - Inappropriate requests about personal info
  - No gains for the speakers or not enough preparedness
TalkAbroad Pilot at UWSP

Conversation practice with native speakers
Spanish, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Arabic, and Japanese

French Courses, Spring 2019
German Courses, Spring 2019
Spanish Courses, Fall 2019

https://talkabroad.com/

Speaking Partners = Native Speakers from different countries

For French, 20 speakers from 5 different counties, 5 from Canada, 5 from France, 1 – Ivory Coast, 3 – Morocco, 6 – Tunisia, but the partners change from semester to semester depending on their availability or work/ study demands.

For German – 10 speakers

For Spanish – 73 speakers from 15 countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Puerto Rico, Spain, and Venezuela
Native Speakers' Profiles in the Target Language!

- About Me
- Profession
- Hobbies
- Books
- Music

Assignments: Types, Directions, Suggestions...

- First Time: Simple Conversations that go along with the course themes
  - Intermediate vs. Advanced Courses
  - Points matter: Switching from 20-point to 100-point weight and changing the final oral exam as the 30-min TalkAbroad Conversation

- Second Time: Follow-up reflection and quick self-assessment of oral performance and confidence

- Next Time: Longer reflection/ summary of conversation
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Student Responses

1. Overall my experience with TalkAbroad

2. Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements. L2 means target language and refers to the world language you are studying at UWSP, such as French, German, Spanish, Chinese, etc.

Student Responses

- “I loved being able to talk with people from diverse places that I had never been to. Every person shared something unique - be it their daily routine, work, family traditions, points of interest or just their personality. They were all very respectful and helpful! Sharing new words, gentle corrections and encouragement. I deeply value these conversations and found them an excellent way to help grow my language skills.”

- “I liked it when my native speaker helped carry the conversation by assisting me when I needed help. I could not imagine being able to carry the whole conversation. That would terrify me. I liked it when we both contributed to the conversation.”

- “Being able to speak with someone outside of my French class gave me an amazing amount of speaking confidence. It was super easy to schedule and set aside time for a 10-minute conversation!”

UWSP, Vera Klekovkina, Morgan Wagner, Jodi Williams
Morgan’s Story

Anxiety!
Apprehension
Alright...
Anticipation

Jodi’s Story

Awareness
Time flow
Curiosity
Improved Communication
Connection/Shared Humanity

11/2/2019

UWSP, Vera Klekovkina, Morgan Wagner, Jodi Williams
Benefits and Challenges

- Linguistic Gains
- Cultural Competencies
- Confidence Gains
- Motivation

Next Steps

References

  - Megan Mercedes Echevarría, “Teaching Language and Teaching Literature in Virtual Environments: A Comparative Analysis of Two Online Videoconferencing Initiatives for Conversational Practice with Native Speaker”