Pair learning via Email and Skype in English and Spanish

Cornell university (USA)- Universidad de Caldas (Colombia)

What does the project consist of?

This project consists of pairing English native speakers with Spanish native speakers for mutual help in the learning of each other's language and culture. You will learn by sharing opinions and information through email and Skype and by correcting your peer's mistakes. You will be asked to communicate once a week via email and every other week via Skype.

What language should you use?

It is very important that both peers write messages and speak in both languages: **half in English and half in Spanish**. Both languages must be used equally. This way both will have the opportunity to write, read, listen, and speak in the language they are learning. When reading a message or listening to your peer, you will have a model to follow and an idea of how native speakers use the language. At the same time, there is an opportunity to practice what you know about the language that you are learning and to identify how much you know and what difficulties you may have. The same will happen to your partner, who is learning your language and cultural practices.

What to expect from this exchange with a native speaker of Spanish

In this exchange you will have the opportunity to experience the language on a different level. As such keep in mind that the Spanish you will hear and read is not necessarily the formal Spanish you are used to from your Spanish class. This exchange gives you a great opportunity to practice colloquial Spanish and learn expressions from the Colombian dialect. Please be patient while you adjust and do not hesitate to ask your exchange partner for clarifications, definitions, synonyms, and/or to speak a bit slower if you need it.

What do you need for active and effective learning?

1. **Recommended dictionary**: wordreference.com

2. **A learning diary**: You will write in your native language about the exchange progress. This is key because it will allow you to evaluate what and how much you are learning and help you to discover aspects of your own learning. In this diary, you will need to write about the following after each email and interaction via Skype:
   
   - **Vocabulary**: Write a list of new words and idiomatic expressions that you learned from your peer or the dictionary together with an example of its use in context.
   
   - **Errors**: Write down the errors that your peer identifies, write the correct form, and a brief explanation or rule. This will help you to avoid the same errors in the future.
   
   - **Culture**: Write down those aspects that you have learned related to your peer's cultural practices with specific examples.
   
   - **Comments**: Write down all anything that is related to your learning such as observations, questions and reflections about your progress and the exchange experience.
Collecting this information is important for your learning and it will be essential in completing two assignments, *Written Reflection* and *Digital Presentation*.

**What do I write and talk about in the emails and Skype conversations?**

This exchange is 10 weeks long. One week you will need to write an email to your peer with a minimum of 150 words in Spanish and 150 in English. **You will start the email in one language and continue in the other.** The following week you will send your partner the corrections of her email and make arrangements to communicate via Skype that same week. The conversation will be a minimum of 50 minutes. Use the first 10 to 15 minutes to comment on the corrections (in Spanish and in English). Use the rest of the time to talk about the email topic **dividing the time equally** between English and Spanish. All communications will take place outside of class time.

All the emails must be sent to your partner along with a copy to your instructor. If you consent that your data can be collected for future studies, also send all your assignments to: profesorasilviaamigosilvestre@gmail.com

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For each email, please use the following format **in the subject area** to help your instructor give you credit for your work:

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section number + your name + assignment title
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For example, John Doe in section 1 would send the first assignment with 1_John_Email 1 as the subject of his email.

For the second assignment: **1_John Email 1_Corrections**

**Note:** Please create a **Skype account** for this exchange and share it with your exchange partner in your first email.

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1 See list of assignments for a description.
2 Please note that Colombia and the United States share the same time zone. Also please be aware that Colombia does not follow the same daylight saving time changes.
3 Please read the Informed Consent Form for more details. If Silvia Amigo-Silvestre is your section instructor and you do not want your data to be part of a future study, she will only collect your assignments to give you credit for your work in Spanish 1230.
Assignments (due by the end of the indicated week by Sunday at midnight):

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<th>Week of:</th>
<th>Assignment Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>February 12</td>
<td>Email 1</td>
<td>Please write the first email message to your partner: 150 words in Spanish and 150 in English (minimum). Start the message in one language and continue in the other. Tell her about yourself, what you like and your interests. For example: You can describe what you are studying and why, your university, where you are from, where you live, etc. This introduction is important to identify common interests and to ask her about different aspects of her country and culture about which you would like to learn more.</td>
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<td>February 19</td>
<td>Email 1-Corrections</td>
<td>Please send your partner the corrections to her email and also arrange a time to communicate via Skype before the end of this week.</td>
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<td>February 24</td>
<td>Email 2</td>
<td>Write to your partner about the concept and importance of family. Who are the members of your family? What are their responsibilities? Are they shared equally among the male and female members? What values are important in your family? How often does your family get together? Also, please write a list of at least 10 words you associate with &quot;family&quot;.</td>
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<td>March 3</td>
<td>Email 2-Corrections</td>
<td>Please send your partner the corrections to her previous email and also arrange a time to communicate via Skype before the end of this week. As part of the conversation, please compare the word association lists you both made and reflect upon them. Please also agree on Skype about a topic you will be writing about in Email 3.</td>
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<td>March 10</td>
<td>Email 3</td>
<td>Free topic.</td>
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<td>March 17</td>
<td>Email 3-Corrections</td>
<td>Please send your partner the corrections to her previous email and also arrange a time to communicate via Skype before the end of this week.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 24</td>
<td>Email 4</td>
<td>Write a list of at least 10 words that you associate with &quot;religion&quot; and send them to your partner in an email, also describing the following: 1. Is religion important in your country? 2. Is there a predominant religion in your country? 3. How do religious values affect the politics and laws in your country?</td>
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| Written Reflection|                           | This assignment counts as one of the compositions for the course. Please write in Spanish and include the following:  
  a) Idiomatic expressions and vocabulary that you have learned.  
  b) Analysis of the most significant and/or frequent errors (especially patterns of errors) your partner corrected in your first 3 emails together with a brief explanation of the error and/or grammatical rule.  
  c) A 300-350 word critical reflection about cultural aspects and practices.  
  This assignment will be evaluated with the same rubric used for the other compositions and reflections in the course. |
| April 7           | Email 4-Corrections       | Please send your partner the corrections to her previous email and also arrange a time to communicate via Skype before the end of this week. As part of the Skype conversation, please compare the word association lists you both made and reflect about it. |
| April 14          | Email 5                   | Write a list with at least 10 words you associate with "drugs". Share them with your partner and explain if, in your opinion, all drugs should be legalized and why. |
| April 25          | Email 5-Corrections       | Please send your partner the corrections to her previous email and also arrange a time to communicate via Skype before the end of this week. As part of the conversation, please compare the word association lists you both made and reflect upon them. |
| Digital Presentation|                          | The focus of this 5-minute digital presentation will be email and Skype conversations 4 and 5, but you can also add other significant information from the previous communications. In this presentation you will be asked to:  
  ❖ Introduce your partner to your instructor and classmates.  
  ❖ Reflect critically about the experience and what you have learned. Please include the following:  
    ▪ Vocabulary and idiomatic expressions  
    ▪ Analysis of the most significant and/or frequent errors (especially patterns of errors).  
    ▪ A critical reflection about cultural aspects and practices.  
  After recording it, you will be asked to upload it to your section's course website. Every student will then be asked to watch 3 of her peers' presentations. We will dedicate a class period to reflect upon them and the exchange experience as a whole with your classmates and instructor. More details about how to upload the videos will be posted in the course website. |

4 Please see the information on the next page about how to correct your partner's mistakes.
How to correct your partner's mistakes

One of the objectives of this exchange is to help your partner learn more about English. Please take the following into account when correcting her email messages:

- **Use English** when correcting and explaining errors in your partner's email.
- **Think what you would like your partner to correct for you** and do the same for her. Please don’t try to correct it all. Select the most important mistakes such as those that she repeats frequently, those that make communication difficult or create confusion, and those that do not sound right in English.
- **Decide with your partner your preferred method of mutual correction.** You can agree upon it in your first email message whether you are, for example, going to use colors, sustained capital letters, underline, bold, quotation marks, etc. Please also agree if you are going to correct directly on the message or in an attached document, etc. Agreeing on these aspects is very important for the corrections to be effective for both of you.
- **Write comments next to the corrections that you make.** You can ask questions or suggest other forms of expressing the idea correctly. Please use examples of how to use the same structure or word in other contexts. Correcting your partner’s mistakes will help you to develop your ability to evaluate your own writing and to reflect about the language that you use. You will also learn about how your partner's language works.
- **Take the time to correct your partner's mistakes** and to show her the correct way to use English. Please correct the messages she sends you and use the first part of the conversation (10 to 15 minutes) via Skype to comment your and her errors and answer any questions. Use the rest of the 50 minutes to talk about the email's topic. Please remember that half of the time must be in English and half in Spanish.
- **Recycle your errors.** That is, make sure to use your partner’s corrections in later messages. This aspect is very important to improve your linguistic skills. Please analyze and reread your partner's messages and record your errors in your learning diary.

**Correction Methods**

The researchers that have studied this topic suggest three ways to make corrections:

1. **Feedback:** One partner lets the other know that she made a mistake allowing her to find it and correct it. For example:

   Hello Mike!

   In Colombia all students take vacations in June and December. In Christmas my mother prepares food for Christmas. For the people of Colombia it is important to share time with the family. It’s a good time for us. I like Christmas. Do you like it?

   In this case you indicate that there are mistakes using a yellow bar, but you don’t correct them.
2. **Correction:** One partner lets the other know where and what was the error she committed and also gives the necessary information so that she can revise it and correct it. This can be achieved by giving a few examples of the correct use. For example:

> In Colombia all **students** to **takes** vacations in June and December. In **Cristmas mi** mother **prepare** food for **cristmas**, For the peoples of Colombia is important to share time with the family. It’s a good time for **we**. I like the **Cristmas**. **You like it?**

In this case, first you indicate that there are mistakes using red and bold and then you write the correct form:

> all children **are on vacation** in June and **in December**.

> On **Thanksgiving day** my sister cooks **special** food.

> For Argentinian **people** it is important to share time with **family**.

> This is a **fantastic present for us**.

> I like **Christmas time**. **Do you like it? / Do you prefer it?**

**Carolina:**

> Remember that in English you must add “s” at the end of the verb when you use present tense and when you refer to he, she, or it: **My mother prepares special** food.

> Pay attention when you write **Christmas**: you must write **Christmas like this** and with a capital letter at the beginning, because it refers to a specific time.

In the previous example the text has been corrected, the correct form with examples has been written, underlined and bold. And some explanations have been provided.

**Remediation:** The partner gives information that would allow his peer to revise the grammatical rule in order to make the corrections encouraging her to revise it and make the necessary changes by being aware of the correct rule. The partner provides examples with a concise and clear explanation to help his peer. This method is particularly effective in case the partner detects a special difficulty or the error is repeated frequently. Please consult with your instructor if you have any questions about a specific grammatical rule or use of vocabulary. One example:

> In Colombia all **students** to **takes** vacations in June and December. In **Cristmas mi** mother **prepare** food for **cristmas**, For the peoples of Colombia is important to share time with the family. It’s a good time for **we**. I like Cristmas. **You like it?**

All **students** to **takes** vacations: You must write the word **students** like this. And you don’t need to put final “s” in the verb **take in this case**, because you must use it **only in present tense with he, she or it**. For example: He **takes** a break / she likes to practice Spanish. Keep in mind that it isn’t correct to say **vacations**, you say vacation without “s”.

In **Cristmas mi** mother **prepare** food for **cristmas**: In English we say **On Christmas**, noy **In Cristmas**, but we say **in June, in January**. You wrote **mi**, but in English it’s **my**.

In this paragraph you don’t need to repeat “**for Christmas**, because it’s at the beginning.
For the peoples of Colombia: In this situation it’s better to say Colombian people or you can say people from Colombia. Pay attention to the use of people. It’s always people not peoples.

Some examples: American people/Canadian people

It’s a good time for we: In this case you say us instead of we because after a preposition like of (or for, by, etc) you use us (me, them, her, us.)

Some examples: He gave it to me. / They sent them for us. /David listens to us.

Remember that you need the auxiliary “Do” when you want to ask about something that is in present tense.

Some examples:

Do you like it?  Do you need to go there today? Do they want to practice Spanish with Caroline?

Observations to take into account during the exchange

❖ You need to express your point of view, opinions, and disagreements whenever necessary, but please do so in a courteous and respectful manner.

❖ Justify your ideas and comments in order to make the exchange more productive.

❖ You must be ready to receive constructive criticism from your partner and also to provide it. Keep in mind that this exchange is to help your partner to understand aspects of your language and culture and also to learn from her. Give her words of encouragement.

❖ Try to solve doubts you may have about the language and culture that you are learning. Rely on your partner and ask her questions whenever necessary. Also, help your partner whenever she needs it. Do not hesitate to ask your instructor whenever you have a question.

❖ Please remember the Cornell Code of Academic Integrity. Do not ask your partner to edit, comment or help you to write the essays or homework for Spanish 1230.