

# Teaching intercultural communicative competence through virtual exchange

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*Due to the current changes in the globalised world and its markets, traditional ways of teaching and learning need to be reconsidered to better equip students with employability skills for their future careers. This paper reflects some of the processes for enhancing multiple literacy practices and transferable skills framed by foreign language courses. In this respect, virtual exchanges create an excellent opportunity to foster these skills. They open space for increasing intercultural awareness, developing communication and collaborative skills, and enhancing information communication technologies. The paper not only gives a selection of motivational practices in teaching intercultural awareness and a foreign language through virtual exchanges but also brings insights into key concepts of intercultural communicative competence and a brief overview of the history of virtual exchange in education. It considers different variables in virtual exchange practice and points out the inevitable changes in the traditional role of a teacher.*

**KEYWORDS:** *intercultural communicative competence, task category, transferable skills, virtual exchange*



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education has fundamentally shifted as a result of technological development, demographic changes and globalisation, as well as due to the way we interpret and present knowledge. The basic requirements new generations have to meet include transferable skills that enable them to continuously adapt. We describe transferable skills as those versatile skills that we can apply and make use of in a number of different roles in the workplace. The list is wide and includes several categories such as interpersonal skills, technological skills and organisational skills. In language education, there is a strong potential to provide pathways for students to acquire especially some of these skills needed for various professions and the global workplace (including information, media and digital literacy, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity, flexibility and adaptability, organisational skills, social and intercultural competence, leadership and responsibility).

Taking the perspective of Czech employers, research carried out in the Czech Republic (Doležalová, 2014) confirms similar priorities described by more than 150 Czech employers. Communication skills (oral and written), flexibility and team work were placed on top of the list among the most frequently required soft business-related skills of university graduates in the tertiary sector. 83% of employers agree on the rapidly increasing desire for language competence, as they expect a new hire's ability to use language to express himself/herself effectively inside and outside the organisation. However, they often find these competences, which include not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills and international experience, deficient.

Various approaches are integrated in teaching and learning to develop these skills, one of which is the multidisciplinary approach involving different types of work and knowledge, for example, collaboration on a common task in multinational teams combining several areas of study and

integrating data, tools and theories from several disciplines. In other words, teaching a foreign language becomes the linchpin in a multidisciplinary learning system to consolidate other complementary transferable skills.

Taking the multidisciplinary approach to better prepare graduates for modern workplaces, MIAS School of Business at the Czech Technical University in Prague (CTU) has redesigned and innovated some foreign language courses by implementing virtual exchange practice as *'the application of online communication tools to bring together classes of language learners in geographically distant locations to develop their foreign language skills and intercultural competence through collaborative tasks and project work'* (O'Dowd, 2011, p. 342).

Thus, students cooperate with their mates from a foreign partner university using English as a lingua franca in a variety of in-class as well as out-of-class task-based activities. In the intercultural dialogue they face multiple challenges, such as communication barriers, different levels of politeness, respect, tolerance and working styles and having to recognise and deal with cultural stereotypes and local bias. However, going beyond the apparent visible cultural values, they reveal different perspectives that affect the synergies of culturally mixed virtual teams. With the assistance of the teacher they discuss them and try to deal with them.

The following two sections bring an insight to some concepts of intercultural communicative competence and give a brief overview of virtual exchange development in language teaching and learning. Then the paper classifies virtual exchange tasks into three general major categories and describes the implementation process. Intrinsic and extrinsic factors are considered. Finally, teachers' and students' reflections help to indicate the future trends and new horizons in language education.

## **2. CONCEPTS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE**

The estimate of approximately 400 million

native speakers out of 1.75 billion users of English means that most English language interactions take place among non-native speakers of English. While communicating through English opens the door to the global market and better jobs, the language is also the carrier of *'cultural heritage of all those individuals and communities who use English in their everyday lives, each of them giving it a distinct identity of their own'* (Medgyes, 2017, p. 3). With reference to Byram's (1997) work and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), effective intercultural communicators have the ability to perform appropriately in various contexts, complementing the competences and skills defined as intercultural communicative competence (ICC). ICC recognises the influence of our own culture and the way we view ourselves and others, knowing how to relate and interpret meaning, developing critical awareness, knowing how to discover cultural information and knowing how to relativise the values, attitudes, and beliefs of others. Deardorff (2006) refers to intercultural competence in a broader sense as *'possessing the necessary attitudes and reflective and behavioural skills and using these to behave effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations'* (Deardorff, 2006, p. 242). In foreign language education, ICC offers an additional dimension as it requires acquired competence in attitudes, knowledge and skills related to intercultural competence while using a foreign language.

In terms of methodology, strengthening the ICC component of a foreign language course may ideally become a content and language integrated model of learning, where the content is intercultural and the language is developed simultaneously. With increasing internationalisation, mobility programmes and enrolment of foreign students, the trend is, however, to teach in English, i.e. to use English as a medium of instruction (EMI) as a common solution in an international classroom. In addition, EMI is often believed to improve students' English proficiency, and therefore contributes to a workforce that is more fluent in English. Simply, it is expected to give students a

double benefit: knowledge of their content subject, and fluent English language skills. Contrasting EMI with content and language integrated learning, Morgado and Coelho (2013) found that EMI does not offer support to simultaneous content and language development. Although students are more exposed to the language, there is a major concern that there is less language progress with EMI than in traditional language courses and the teachers of EMI admit they simplify the curricular content according to the students' language difficulties. In our empirical experience, this model works well with good independent users of language (from B2 CEFR level and up) while learners at an A2-B1 CEFR level seem to be limited to more simple tasks based mostly on a straightforward, predictable exchange of information in familiar contexts such as daily routines, time schedules, eating habits, holidays, and traditions. The outcomes of their critical intercultural reflection may remain less evident at these lower levels of English and, from the teacher's perspective, their intercultural communicative competence may seem less apparent as they cluster around the surface layers of cultural values.

Nevertheless, as the student feedback questionnaires show, even students at lower levels note both a benefit from the intercultural dimension and improvement in global competences, such as open-mindedness and awareness of otherness. These results suggest that, when setting objectives for intercultural communicative competence, the language component should be involved. The areas covered may include, for example, language development in modal verbs, question formation, and negation, dealing mostly with functional language use related to corporate and educational cultures, register, politeness conventions in different contexts, and meta-communication.

### 3. VIRTUAL EXCHANGE OVERVIEW

#### 3.1 ICT and VE

The application of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) in foreign language learning and teaching has become a commonplace and everyday reality of the 21st century both as part of

#### *'VE belongs to a fast-developing area of CALL with great educational potential'*

curricular and extra-curricular practice. Foreign language education is shaped by the technologies available and their ever-increasing and changing repertoires of use. Since the advent of computers in educational settings in the 1960s, the term Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has been adopted to embrace a wide range of ICT applications and approaches to foreign language learning and teaching (Levy, 1997).

In this context, VE belongs to a fast-developing area of CALL with great educational potential. The term itself has become established only recently (O'Dowd, 2018, p. 3), and researchers and literature have used other terms covering similar educational concepts such as telecollaboration, online intercultural exchange or internet-mediated intercultural foreign language education. VEs require an online interaction between two or more learners with similar language and intercultural communicative learning objectives. In almost thirty years of existence as an educational tool, VE has been subject to changes reflecting the rapid advance of ICT and the corresponding learning/teaching needs.

At the beginning, VEs took the form of e-pal writing and were used particularly in primary and secondary school settings. These were email exchanges between foreign language learners and/or foreign language learners and their native speaking counterparts to, on the one hand, mutually foster mainly their reading and writing skills and, on the other hand, learn more about their respective partner's countries, culture and life-style, and make friendships. Additionally, the so-called 'e-tandems' (O'Rourke, 2007), which first appeared in the early 90s, have been used predominately in academic contexts connecting two native speakers of complementary target languages involved in mutual language learning activities and collaboration.

The increased interaction and integration of people across the globe in the last two decades

Table 1  
VE task categories

| VE TASK  | DESCRIPTION  | TYPE OF VE  | OUTCOMES  | SUPPORTED LEARNING   | POTENTIAL PITFALLS  |
|--|--|---|---|--|---|
| 1. INFORMATIVE EXCHANGE                          |  |   |   |  |   |
| a) Personal cultural profile                     | Students create their own profile based on cultural values and dimension. They create a pie chart or visual presentation or a short video shared online accompanied with a written description about what influences them most                       | Asynchronous<br>In-class/out of class   | Introduction online through own profile, search for interesting team partners, learning about others  | Individualised, focus on personal priorities, choice of interests and own design   | Can easily turn into a stereotypical introduction without challenging input   |
| b) Online meeting                                | Students arrange an online kick-off meeting to get to know each other, share ideas for project tasks and plan means of cooperation. Only general framework is given, students are free to decide about day/time and priorities on the meeting agenda | Synchronous<br>Out-of-class   | Meeting and greeting after reading and sharing online cultural profiles, practice of communication, small talk, planning of team work, writing of meeting minutes | Students take full responsibility for both planning and execution of online session  | Can easily turn into a chit-chat without challenging input, requires teamwork among students                                  |
| 2. COMPARISON AND ANALYSIS                       |  |   |   |  |   |
| a) Creating facts/knowledge-based quiz questions | Students create a set of T/F or Y/N quiz question in teams covering geographical, political, economic and cultural areas of their home countries or the country of their study   | Asynchronous<br>In-class/out-of-class   | Sharing, comparing and answering online the team quizzes, online debate on the content, form and language issues  | Independent fact finding, choice of questions based on students' interests, self-discipline, peer language feedback, learning beyond the classroom, spoken and written interaction | Requires a follow-up (debate and reflection), teamwork, negotiations, tends to reduce the exchange to an information exchange |
| b) Carrying out an opinion poll                  | Students prepare 2 questions about local and global artefacts and ask foreign students in an opinion poll  | Interviews, meeting new people, semi-structured communication, spoken interaction | A written report comparing and analysing the findings, generating ideas for creating team videos  | Choice of respondents, questions, method, out-of-classroom work, individual time management  | Students tend to research on visible issues (food, fashion and folklore)  |
| 3. COLLABORATIVE                                 |  |   |   |  |   |
| Creating a team video                            | Students in international teams work together to produce a video on local and global artefact of their own choice. The joint multimedia product is assessed in a students' contest   | Asynchronous, out-of-class(creation); and synchronous, in-class (contest)         | A multimedia product (a video), developing ICT literacy, ICC, negotiation of meaning, criteria-based assessment   | Choice of topic, technology, story board, own management, vote for the winning video, decision making  | Requires technology-savvy S in each team, negotiation and teamwork, off-task involvement                                      |

has intensified the importance of foreign language learning with respect to the development of multiple literacies responding to complexities of social and intercultural encounters (Guth & Helm, 2011). Nowadays, the great richness of ICT opens up space for multifaceted forms of VEs in which learners, through virtual communication, cooperate in decision-making and problem-solving processes and present joint project outputs (e.g. research reports, videos, blogs, websites, business plans). Content-wise, currently many VEs in tertiary education focus on the fields of study of the involved parties, thus enabling them to foster both expert knowledge and soft-skills acquisition. Despite its potential, until recently, VEs had been implemented into courses only sporadically and very often only as an extra course activity undertaken by volunteer educators and their students. The remarkable step forward for VEs as an educational tool is that at present, they are considered as synergistic and complementary to physical exchange study programmes for young people (Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange). Simultaneously, the joint efforts of VE researchers and practitioners together with official bodies of the European Commission are aiming for recognition of VEs as a valid and effective pedagogical approach that would thus be integrated into standard curricula.

### 3.2 General VE task categories and the implementation process

Three virtual exchange task categories have been primarily used, varying according to their level of difficulty/complexity: information exchange tasks, comparison and analysis tasks, and finally, collaborative tasks (see Table 1).

An informative task provides online virtual partners with information, for example, about personal profiles of their counterparts (communicative, listening, social, cultural). Unlike the personal profile, which is highly individual and shared online mostly asynchronously and in writing, oral communication is practised through holding a synchronous online meeting. In addition to spoken interaction, this requires some collaboration and organisational skills such as setting up a chair and

following rules (e.g. who is going to speak and for how long). Comparative and analytical tasks are seen to be more demanding as they go a step further and include interactive comparisons such as exchanging quizzes, carrying out an opinion poll, and analysis (e.g. of the opinion poll results). These tasks have a significant cultural and linguistic focus. Collaborative tasks are the most challenging and complex, yet they are also often the most enjoyable and fulfilling. They aim at producing a joint outcome based on co-authoring (storyboard) and co-production (shooting a video), and always require a great deal of planning, coordinating and negotiating to reach agreement and finalise the multi-media product.

In virtual exchange activities students not only practise their communication and listening skills and the application of appropriate language use while engaging ICT skills by using tools to work with in Web 2.0 (Zoom or Skype for online meetings and Google Classroom for sharing). They discover new, potentially unfamiliar purposes and are compelled to look back, review situations, or view them from a different perspective. Moreover, focusing on the process as well as the outcome enables them to keep better control, engage more, and maintain a detached view. They are encouraged to decide and act autonomously within the well-defined framework while planning, organising and presenting individual steps which, in synthesis, always lead to the completion of an online exchange task. In short, they naturally apply their technological skills, learning and innovation skills (collaboration, creativity and communication), as well as career skills (social competencies, leadership and responsibility). The flow of the implementation process is as follows:

- in-class introduction of topics and tasks (managing the team; brainstorming; agreeing on action steps; linked tasking);
- in-class and out-of-class work (work on practical issues and tasks such as on-line meetings, quizzes, video, reports; consulting including language, content, and management issues; assessment through confirmation/modification);
- briefing and debriefing (strategy review; im-

compact and risk assessment; practical issues; action steps; results manifested in outputs and reports; lessons learnt; feedback through questionnaires).

#### 4. VE FRAMEWORK AND VE TASK CATEGORIES AT MIAS CTU

##### 4.1 General observations

VE practice at MIAS CTU has been implemented firstly into English for Intercultural Communication Courses (EICC) within the project Intercultural Communicative Competence – An Advantage for Global Employability (ICCAGE 2015-2017) and later applied to General English and Business English Courses using similar VE framework. In this paper, we focus primarily on EICC. The one semester courses have been run for resident, Erasmus and overseas students in higher education. Following a brief theoretical introduction of cultural models, values and dimensions students are provided with a framework which serves as an organised plan and enables them to get insight into instructional strategies, learning activities and assessment. It defines the basic content, tasks and criteria which students are supposed to consider on their learning path. As a guideline, it offers an adequate learning context to boost motivation and a friendly atmosphere helps to clarify objectives and set up strategies and a general time schedule for completing the tasks successfully. Thus, work and progress are easier to monitor. The framework offers solid ground, especially to uncertain and inexperienced students (and teachers) who are used to highly structured routines.

##### 4.2 VE task categories

Although EICC aims primarily at raising intercultural awareness and the acquisition of openness to cultural differences through communication, comparison and negotiation, the VE framework also fosters the analytical and critical thinking skills of students, especially through self-reflection and the evaluation process.

In an attempt to organise the online VE tasks according to a level of difficulty and complexity, we use the categorisation offered by O'Dowd and Waire (2009) in Table 1 above, which divides into

*'The remarkable step forward for virtual exchanges as an educational tool is that at present, they are considered as synergistic and complementary to physical exchange study programmes for young people'*

information exchange tasks, comparison and analysis tasks, and collaborative tasks. General VE task categories and VE types in Table 1 match a specified VE task description, outcomes, and pitfalls of selected tasks implemented into the MIAS EICC courses. Table 1 also shows in which areas they support and develop learner autonomy, which builds on the idea that one of the functions of education, including foreign language learning, is to support learners in taking a more active role in participatory partnership. The descriptions in Table 1 are tailored for EICC, nevertheless, they can be modified to match a Business or General English course setting. The tasks work well both in heterogeneous and homogenous classes, however, the students' approach may differ according to these and other factors arising from their cultural, institutional and political backgrounds.

##### 4.3 Informative tasks

The first informative task provides online virtual partners with information about the personal biographies (Table 1, Task 1a) of their counterparts. In their own personal profiles, students try to think and learn about themselves, their values, and corresponding cultural values and dimensions related to family, friendship, religion, education, gender, authority, attitude to space or time, and other. Meeting online (Task 1b) also functions as an extended introductory and networking activity.

##### 4.4. Collaborative and analytical tasks

Comparative and analytical tasks (2a, b) include comparisons of 20 fact-oriented quiz questions of students' own choice on selected cultures (2a) and an analysis of 20-40 opinions collected in an opinion poll and summarised in opinion poll reports (3b). The relatively extensive number of

quiz questions and poll respondents were aimed at B2 language level and help students to search deeper and go beyond the easy and visible aspects of culture. The linguistic focus is on the formal register of report writing, including the use of the passive voice, reading numbers, or reported speech. A potential pitfall may arise when students underestimate the effort required for proper planning and preparation and the task may thus result as a simple information exchange.

#### 4.5 Collaborative tasks

Collaborative tasks in the EICC course focus on identifying global and local artefacts in the country of students' study. Teams co-produce and shoot joint videos as their own digital story with which they join a school video contest. The videos are assessed by both students and the teacher.

The tasks offer different educational environments and create different learning opportunities. Thus, the learning process takes various forms using mostly semi-structured scaffolding format (agenda, report and debriefing templates) and common technologies (Skype, Zoom, Facebook, Google classroom and Google+) with attention to developing awareness of different types of learning strategies, individualising pace and time and cultivating the ability for continuous self-learning. In informal exchange (1a) students decide on individual chart design and selection of relevant personal priorities based on a set of illustrative examples. Organising and chairing an online meeting (1b) builds on the knowledge gained in project management majors. Thus, in 1b students are fully responsible for the planning and execution of the online meeting. However, they are provided with meeting minutes and report templates to better deal with various degrees of openness and awareness of the process. The templates also help learners later on to be able to complete similar tasks independently and avoid shallow summaries and conclusions.

#### 4.6 The importance of debriefings

Linguistic factors, including grammar, spelling, and punctuation are often seen as marginal or de-

*'Each virtual exchange may entail considerably different variables of extrinsic and intrinsic forces influencing its character'*

motivating by students and thus indicate one of the weaknesses of using English as lingua franca. In comparison and analysis tasks (2a, b) as well as in collaborative tasks (3), a great deal attention is given to debriefings. Debriefings are more learner-centred and focus on student reflections on overall strengths and weaknesses. Observation and first-person narratives are commonly used and provide rich descriptions. Questions such as 'what did you think' and 'what did you feel' effectively demonstrate the interpretative approach and help to reveal emotional and rational layers of judgements. They also show to what extent one has the capacity to successfully apply autonomous learning skills to language learning. Semi-structured interviews used in opinion polls (2b) allow for spontaneity and flexibility and encourage students to examine their thought processes and describe their own experience. Participant observations (Tasks 2 and 3) are popular techniques which involve taking notes, mostly in the form of analytical memos.

Besides the choice of VE tasks which correspond with the target group of learners, there are other significant factors that may affect the nature of VEs. The following sections analyse the external and internal influences in the VE and discuss whether these have an impact on soft skill development.

### 5. EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL INFLUENCES ON VE

Each VE may entail considerably different variables of extrinsic and intrinsic forces influencing its character. Diverse institutional and organisational conditions such as the number of collaborating partners, the choice of partner teacher/s and classes, the number and composition of students (culturally homogeneous or heterogeneous) in each

class, differences in the organisation of the academic year, time-zone disparities, and unevenness of design, content, requirements and assessment in the courses where exchange takes place, determine the background of a VE and need to be taken into account prior to the exchange itself. In addition, there are intrinsic aspects, such as personal traits, skills and knowledge, international and team work experience, cultural values, and language proficiency of each interacting individual which influence the overall nature of a VE.

As an example of how VE can be combined, VE practice between two university courses is now described. Over a period of eight to ten weeks, the intercultural VE was implemented in a Business English-Language course at Budapest Business School (BBS) in Hungary and in a course of English for Intercultural Communication at the Czech Technical University in Prague (CTU) in the Czech Republic. The university courses each had approximately 20 students, creating two parallel inter-university groups. One inter-university group was made up of second-year M.Sc. students of Project Management at MIAS School of Business at the CTU studying in the Czech Republic. The other was formed by 1st-year B.Sc. students at the Faculty of International Management and Business (BBS). Both inter-university groups were culturally mixed, mostly composed of local and Erasmus+ students studying at the CTU and BBS respectively. The cultures involved included the Czech Republic, Slovakia, South Korea, Russia, Portugal, Finland, Mexico and Taiwan, which enabled a range of varied and culturally rich perspectives. The local classes were divided into teams of 3 to 4 students, with the constant cooperation of two designated liaison teams from the partner universities. Each team appointed a team leader to be responsible for submitting the completed tasks, sharing information, sticking to deadlines, and communicating with their respective teachers.

The students used the Google+ community platform as a formal and monitored space for uploading all project outputs for their classmates and teachers to access and check. The teams also held three or four synchronous virtual meetings for the

initial team introduction and socialising moments as well as the decision-making processes as the module progressed. Team communication and virtual exchange with partners also occurred without monitoring in a wide range of applications chosen by the students and, due to differing university schedules. in-class debriefing sessions followed each VE activity, although activities such as writing and exchanging the knowledge quizzes, writing the reports collaboratively, and designing and creating the video together were done outside of class.

Although the students differed in age and study experience the differences in the cultural setting of the parallel groups did not seem to affect task completion or project results substantially. Despite initial barriers to communication caused by different perspectives and thought patterns with respect to hierarchy and approach to learner autonomy, students were highly motivated to complete the tasks once they understood their responsibilities. On the other hand, the empirical observations of over 15 VE implementations carried out at MIAS CTU between the years 2016-2019 confirm that the activities make heavy demands on the teacher's role. Unlike traditional teaching methods, university lecturers need to be able to act as facilitators, guides, monitors and e-moderators (Dooly, 2010). Their approach requires a higher level of flexibility, openness towards others and effective communication. In addition, the nature of VE calls on the teacher's ability to skilfully operate a variety of ICT applications and platforms.

## 6. CONCLUSION

VE tasks enable students to move from more routine in-class concepts and techniques to activities outside the classroom and got students involved creatively by supporting critical thinking, individual commitment, teamwork and the distribution of roles within the team.

The videos' effectiveness in collaborative tasks (Table 1, Task 3), measured through student perspectives, makes learning motivating and enjoyable and reveals related skills, from interpersonal to organisational. By filming live-action, real life and

experience are brought into the classroom. Introverted students admitted, however, that it was hard to accommodate their learning styles and abilities since they were forced to step out of their comfort zone just to find and perform a role that would not be overly stressful. As these students occasionally pointed out, they had preferred to work independently and carry the responsibility for completing the given tasks individually.

Students' comments are presented in the following samples that were provided in the final debriefing sessions as well as in their feedback questionnaires and final reports:

*'It made me more curious.'*

*'The video project was fun and enabled us to be creative.'*

*'It was a great opportunity to work in a multinational team and with students from a different country.'*

*'Proactive approach to learning!'*

*'The most important thing – it was different, it wasn't just another subject with many power point presentations.'*

*'The language barrier and cultural differences were obstacles that we faced with our own local team as well as with the Hungarian partner team, especially at the beginning. But they were not insurmountable. We learnt to be more patient and polite. Furthermore, communicating virtually can take longer and be more challenging than communicating face-to-face.'*

*'The main finding is that no matter from which country we are, we were able to cooperate with one another. We were able to work on the same tasks. We were able to listen to and support one another.'*

*'We learnt that we needed to describe what we mean very thoroughly to get what we needed for our video task. But we all wanted to join the contest and were willing to work hard and finish what we set out to do.'*

*'I've learnt something about myself... that I am very direct... and that to be the team leader does not always mean to be respected as a leader.'*

In general, the impact of the controlled use of VEs on learning is explicitly beneficial and enhances

### *'The impact of the controlled use of VEs on learning is explicitly beneficial and enhances the learning process'*

ces the learning process. Collaborative videos in particular, as a natural part of the contemporary learning environment, appeal to the senses and help students to process information. Another important consequence is that, unlike passively sitting in a traditional lecture, when students actively engage in this ICT-based activity, proposing their own product or performance, they enjoy a greater degree of satisfaction with the course and the subject itself.

Although students may report or even complain about different institutional requirements, different online behaviour of their team partners (different approach to time, deadlines or authorities, which need to be dealt with sensitively), we assume that they should not be protected from them. Different perceptions undoubtedly influence macro and micro management of the VE work and output, yet, if reflected critically, with provided guidance, they can contribute to learning from their own experience. Most students confirm in their final reflections that successful completion of tasks increases their motivation, brings a great deal of satisfaction and strengthens their confidence regardless of their origin.

Foreign language study that is designed within a multidisciplinary approach developed through virtual exchange enables students to explore real-life work understanding, knowledge and exposure. Additionally, communicating online across cultures in a foreign language is a notable transferable skill that is sought after to meet the current industry needs. Furthermore, through collaborative projects with other subjects, students better understand the utility of language education beyond classroom walls. Finally, virtual exchanges promote a wide variety of technological skills. Therefore, despite the challenges they may face, they are highly motivational and should be more systematically implemented in language teaching.

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