

The Impacts of Cross-Cultural Online Exchanges on World Language Learning: Factors Influencing Students' Learning Experiences

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Abstract:

As globalization continues to reshape language education, integrating intercultural communication with language instruction has become essential for developing learners' world language learning proficiency. This study investigated the implementation of a cross-cultural online exchange project in a high school Chinese language classroom and examined students' learning experiences in an authentic online learning environment. The 30-week long project engaged students in online exchanges with international partner students through collaborative language and cultural learning activities. A total of 22 students participated in the study. Data were collected through a 20-item Likert-scale questionnaire distributed via Microsoft Forms, which was then analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 30. Descriptive statistics and regression analyses were conducted to examine the factors influencing students' learning satisfaction. The results revealed positive student learning perceptions across all six factors of the learning experience, with mean scores ranging from 3.67 to 4.13. The cross-cultural online exchanges have been shown to provide an effective pedagogy in increasing language learning satisfaction. Regression analysis further indicated that authentic communication, learning engagement, learning practice, communication confidence, and learning motivation were significant predictors of students' overall learning satisfaction. These findings suggest that educational institute should prioritize teacher preparation in using authentic intercultural interaction through online exchange activities as this type of teaching/learning environment can effectively enhance students' language learning experiences, therefore enhancing students' overall learning satisfaction.

Keywords: cross-culture, world language education, learning satisfaction, online exchanges, learning experience

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning a world language is not only learning about the language skills, but also the appreciation of cultural understanding and values of social traditions of other people. Scholars in language education field advocate that language and culture are essential components in terms of effective and communicative language development (Dema & Kramer Moeller, 2012). Without cultural integration, the language education is an

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incomplete endeavor (Miliutina, Kochubei, Zaremska, & Kadykova, 2025). Several studies point out the importance of this combination, as it increases students' language learning comprehensive, providing opportunities to understand the culture, traditions, and customs of other peoples (DeWitt, Chan, & Loban, 2022; Gaparova, 2025; Peng & Patterson, 2022).

1.1. Purpose of Study

Both theoretical and practical, this study hopes to offer insights for world language instructors who want to build more interactive and engaging learning environments and help students increase their world language learning satisfaction. The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the proposed instruction of global online exchange instructions which focus on cultural activities and authentic communications and to determine and discuss the perceptions of the main instructional approach of the world language education curriculum.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Designing Global Cross-Cultural & Language Online Exchange Activities

Virtual exchange projects offer accessible educational opportunities. More importantly, many studies revealed that virtual exchanges provide students with positive outcomes, including facilitating open-mindedness, stimulating curiosity for diverse cultures, ultimately broadening students' knowledge and increasing the global awareness (Lee, Leibowitz, Millea, & Saffo, 2022; Poe, 2022; Williams, 2013). Designing global cross-cultural and language online exchange activities considers various factors to create an effective learning experience. To optimize students' learning experience, this study established a set of learning factors to determine the learning satisfaction factor(s) in this proposed language instructions. The following section states the details of each factors.

2.2 Authentic Communication

Language learners learn better when they actively engage in activities through an intercultural approach. The Common European Framework of References for Languages (Council of Europe, 2020) advocates that it's important to embrace and appreciate the diversity of languages and cultures in language education teaching and learning instructions. Tahe (2021) highlights that speaking skills pose a significant challenge for language learners, with specific linguistic difficulties and anxieties. Opportunities for authentic language practice outside the classroom is therefore important. Offering students opportunities to engage and explore authentic language practice in their daily lives should be considered in language instructional curriculum.

Studies (Basini & Buchem, 2019; Hrebackova, 2019; Machwate, Bendaoud, Henze, Berrada, & Burgos, 2021) state that virtual exchanges provide students opportunities to practice languages, enhance intercultural knowledge, and improve language proficiency. Particularly, virtual exchange as an educational collaboration online tool brings various benefits, including its affordability, no physical limitations, ultimately enhancing students' teamwork and collaboration.

2.3 Cultural Learning

Language is not only a tool of communication. It's also a carrier of culture (Qinglong, 2017). Each language embodies unique cultural values, beliefs, traditional, and language

usage habits. Effectively teaching and learning the target culture is becoming a hot subject in world language education. The interconnection between language and culture is essential component in learning foreign languages. Studies (Ali, Kazemian, & Mahar, 2015; Miliutina et. al., 2025) show that students exposed to cultural content achieved better achievements, in terms of better results in vocabulary retention, pronunciation accuracy, contextual language use, and intercultural communication.

Through exchanges with international peers, students' language and cultural awareness can be enhanced. Especially in today's globalized world, good language skills and global awareness are important for students to successfully communicate and work with people from different cultural backgrounds (Duffy, 2008; Fang, 2024).

2.4 Learning Engagement & Learning Motivation

Existing research studies indicate that multimedia resources enhance learning experience (Alzubi, 2023; Huang, 2025; Yang, Hsieh, & Wong, 2024; Zhao & Yang, 2023) and reduce foreign language anxiety (Gao & Zuo, 2025; Pang & Zhang, 2023). Several studies indicate that the online exchange effectively enhances student learning (Bonk & Graham, 2006) and learning satisfaction (Dziuban, Hartman, & Moskal, 2004; Maruanaya, Lekawael, & Loppies, 2024) as it provides flexible time and location with learning materials.

2.5 Communicative Confidence

Gu (2025) indicated that virtual reality usage could enhance foreign language learners' communicative confidence. Communicative confidence is defined as a learner's self-perception of their ability to communicate target language effectively and appropriately in diverse social and linguistic contexts (Larsari, 2011).

3. METHOD

3.1 Sample

Convenient purposeful sampling procedures were used. The students in this study were students enrolled in World Language- Chinese 3 (n=15) and World Language- Chinese 4 (n=7) in a public high school located in Issaquah, Washington, USA. At the end of the school year, a quantitative survey was conducted to the participants. All the students participated on a voluntary basis. The participants also acknowledged, agreed, and understood that all the information they provided would be used for the study purposes only.

3.2 Global Online Exchange Activities

This study focused on online exchanges in the combination of cultures and languages program between Issaquah High School in the US and Kaohsiung Municipal Haiching Vocational High School of Technology and Commerce in Taiwan. The goal of this proposed instruction is to provide reality language practices, motivate students' learning and at the same time, deepen their intercultural understanding through structured online exchange activities.

This study implemented three modules including monthly/bi-monthly activity sessions using emails, video exchange through digital platforms. Each of activity sessions was theme-based discussions, such as cultural comparisons, typical daily high school days, and holiday celebrations. These activities aimed to provide students with real-world

opportunities to practice the target languages. There, the researchers created activities that integrated classroom instruction with authentic communication. The global online exchanges program consisted of nine activities under three modules over a 30-week period. The first module was used to discuss the online exchange program, topic discussions, and assignments. Students were offered an option to check out technology tools, include iPad, tri-pod, external microphone, ring light to assist their video assignments from the researchers. The goal was to assure that each student came with adequate equipment for assignment preparation. The researchers aimed to create an accessible and equitable learning environment. The second module was used to list all the online exchange assignments. The last module contained the final showcase and closing ceremony. For each activity, the instructions and the criteria of discussion topics were posted on the Canvas course. Students’ assignments were then uploaded to their Canvas account. At the end of this program, students showcased how they collaborated with international partner students throughout the initiative.

3.3 Research Instrument & Data Collection

A quantitative descriptive approach was used to collect the world language learners’ perceptions of virtual exchanges for learning experience and increasing learning satisfaction. This study involved 22 students enrolled in the Chinese 3 and Chinese 4 courses at Issaquah High School, USA. Questionnaire distributed online via Microsoft Forms at the end of academic year during June 2026. It contained 20 closed-ended questions on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Agree), and 5 (Strongly Agree). The 20-item questionnaire is divided into 7 sections, including authentic communication, learning engagement, learning practice, cultural learning, communication confidence, learning motivation, and learning satisfaction as shown in Table 1.

To validate the questionnaire, a total of three experts reviewed the questionnaire items for clarity and alignment with the survey objectives, including the key sections of student learning experience in the project, such as authentic communication, learning engagement, language practice, cultural learning, communication confidence, learning motivation, and learning satisfaction. Researchers also conducted an analysis using IBM SPSS Statistics version 30 to measure its validity and reliability. The validity test showed that all 20 questionnaire items were valid, as the corrected item-total correlation values were at least .30 (Field 2018). The reliability test using Cronbach’s Alpha produced a value of 0.853, with a score of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ indicating acceptable internal consistency (Basantes-Andrade, López-Gutiérrez, Mora Grijalva, & Ricardo, 2023). The Cronbach’s α value of reliability in each section ranged from 0.746 to 0.982, as shown in Table 1. In addition, participants provided informed consent after an explanation of their rights. All survey responses remained completely anonymous throughout the research.

Table 1. Quantitative questionnaires

Sections	Mean	Std. Deviation	Internal Reliability α
Authentic Communication	3.90	.541	.924
Learning Engagement	4.13	.667	.759
Language Practice	3.79	.667	.754
Cultural Learning	4.10	.686	.746
Communication Confidence	3.67	.550	.889
Learning Motivation	3.96	.611	.982
Learning Satisfaction	4.13	.667	.965

3.4 Procedure

The research was conducted in World Language- Chinese 3 and World Language-Chinese 4 classes at a public high school in Issaquah, WA, USA. In the school zone, students can access free Internet. Each student also has received a laptop provided by the school at beginning of the school year. In this study, the proposed global cross-cultural instructions provide students opportunities to interact with partner students in Taiwan. At the beginning of the study, the participants (n=22) were introduced to the instructions, course content, and the Canvas teaching and learning platform. Students’ assignments were asked to uploaded to the Canvas. During the study, the course instructions integrated a variety of hands-on culture and language activities, including mooncake making and sugar painting aligning with the festivals, such as Mid-Autumn and Lunar New Year. Through the cultural activities, students learned the cultural norms and the languages. In each activity, students were input with some cultural stories, then hand-on activities were introduced. They were asked to present/share their own project and ultimately built their second lens to reflect and compare with their own heritage, as shown in Figure 1 of replicable instruction design model.

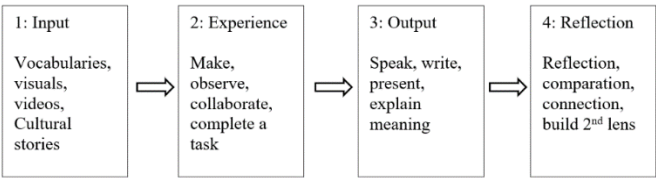


Figure 1. Replicable design model for hands-on cultural activities

Each hands-on activity aligned with ACFEL 5C standards to scaffold language learning, including communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. Figure 2 shows the example of learning symbols and expression through sugar painting. Students were highly engaged in the class and proudly presented their own work, as shown in Figure 3.

Designs	Meanings	Frames
魚 (yu, fish) 龍 (long, dragon) 兔子 (tuzi, rabbit) 蝴蝶 (hudie, butterfly) 花 (hua, flower) 福字 (fu zi, "fu" character)	年年有餘 abundance year after year 大吉大利 great luck and good fortune 幸福 健康 快樂 happiness, health, joy 新年快樂 萬事如意 Happy New Year; May all go well.	我選擇____, 因為它代表____. I chose _____ because it represents _____. 我的糖畫是_____. My sugar painting is _____. 我想把這個祝福送給_____. I want to give this blessing to _____. 這個圖案在中國文化裡表示_____. In Chinese culture, this design means _____.

Figure 2. Chinese symbols & expression learning



Figure 3. Sample pictures of hands-on cultural activities

Following the hands-on cultural activities, students were then given an opportunity to participate in an online exchange project with partner students in Taiwan. To reinforce Chinese language learning through authentic communication, students completed seven themed video exchange assignments throughout the project, as shown in Table 2. Each assignment focused on a specific topic, such as “A Typical Day in an American High School” or “Lunar New Year Greetings”, encouraging students to use what they’ve learned in the class into practice, meaningful and real-world contents. For example, students created videos in Chinese introducing their daily lives, classrooms and school campus, and US cultural traditions, which were shared with Taiwanese partner students. In return, students in Taiwan produced videos introducing their own culture and school experiences, such as local night markets, and school campus. This reciprocal exchange provided meaningful opportunities for students to apply their Chinese language skills, enhance their Chinese authentic communication practice, and increase their learning motivation through direct interactions with native speakers.

Table 2. Virtual exchange content

Module	Description
1	Orientation & Introduction of Virtual Exchange
2	Online Exchange Assignments: Self-Introduction Discussion: Typical High School Life & School Campus Discussion: US Christmas & New Year Celebration Classroom Decorations for Lunar New Year Lunar New Year Greetings Chinese Horse Culture: Using a Horse-Related Idiom Typical Student’s Weekend Life
3	Final Showcase & Closing Ceremony

Upon completion of the cross-cultural online language exchange program, a QR code and MS-Forms link were presented in the class inviting students to complete an online questionnaire to evaluate their learning experiences before the end of the school year. Participation was voluntary and students were not required to provide any personal information, such as name or contact number in the survey, ensuing participants’ anonymity.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Research Question 1: How do global cross-cultural online language exchange activities influence students’ world language learning?

The design and implementation of the online language exchange project aimed to foster students’ world language learning through structured, guided cross-cultural online

exchange experiences over a 30-week period. The participants identified many positive aspects of the online exchange environments, including the opportunities for authentic communication, active learning engagement, meaningful language practice, solid communication confidence, and sustained learning motivation. Based on the results, these factors significantly contributed to students' overall learning satisfaction, suggesting that authentic interaction with international peers played a significant role in creating positive language learning experiences. The results suggest that students' learning satisfaction was largely influenced by opportunities to engage in communication, actively participate in cultural learning activities, and develop confidence in using Chinese with international peers. The findings support the effectiveness of long-term online language exchange as a pedagogical approach for promoting authentic language teaching/learning and therefore enhanced students' learning experiences.

1) Authentic Communication: The findings indicate that online exchange project provided an authentic communication environment. Almost all of the participants (93.3%) pointed out that they felt real and meaningful using Chinese through the cross-cultural online exchange project. Particularly, two-third of the participants (80.0%) indicated that communicating with international partner students felt like using Chinese in a real-world situation. Many of them (90.3%) indicated that this project helped them use Chinese in a more way than regular activities.

2) Learning Engagement: The findings suggest that the online exchange project effectively enhanced students' learning engagement. A majority of the participants (80.0%) pointed out that the project increased their interest in learning Chinese, while 73.3% found learning Chinese more interesting. In addition, many of them (86.7%) indicated that knowing their Taiwanese partner students would watch or listen to their work motivated them to put more efforts. The authentic audiences indeed increased the learning engagement.

3) Language Practice: The results demonstrate that project provided meaningful opportunities for language learning. Only 6.7% of the participants disagreed that the project offered more opportunities to produce the target language. More than half of the participants (60.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that they spoke Chinese more frequently than they usually do in regular classroom instruction. Moreover, 80.0% agreed or strongly agreed that recording audio and videos assignments helped them improve their Chinese pronunciation. These results suggest that multimodal production activities supported oral language learning.

4) Cultural Learning: The findings indicate that the online exchange project effectively promoted students' cultural learning and global awareness. Many students (66.67%) gained a broader global perspective and a deeper understanding of Taiwanese culture. Particularly, 66.7% learned new things about high school life in Taiwan and 60.0% learned how high school students spent their weekends in Taiwan and learned similar things to and different from their life experience. Impressively, 73.3% felt more connected to students from other parts of the world. The results suggest that the project increased students' cultural awareness and built a stronger sense of global connectedness.

5) Communication Confidence: The results demonstrated that the online exchange project enhanced students' communication confidence. None of the participants disagree that the experience built their Chinese communication confidence. Especially, nearly all participants (93.3%) felt less nervous when speaking Chinese with native speakers.

In addition, 73.3% indicated that they felt more comfortable using Chinese to communicate now, while 53.3% felt more confidence in using Chinese to communicate with others. These finding suggest that repeated authentic interactions with native speakers contributed to increased communication confidence.

6) Learning Motivation: The findings further suggest that online exchange project positively influenced students’ motivation to continue learning Chinese. A majority of the participants (80.1%) pointed out that this experience positively increased their desire to continue learning Chinese. Similarly, 80.0% indicated that participating in this type of online exchange learning experience encourage them to learn Chinese more. An equal proportion (80.0%) felt they want to learn foreign languages in general after this experience. These results indicate that authentic intercultural communication fostered sustained motivation and encouraged continued engagement in language learning beyond the classroom.

Overall, students had a positive learning satisfaction. They (80.0%) enjoyed participating in this online language exchange class, while an equal proportion (80.0%) expressed satisfaction with the learning experience.

4.2 Research Question 2: What factors influence students’ learning experiences in a global cross-cultural online language exchange learning environment?

To answer this question, a multivariate regression was conducted to examine the relationship between the factors and the students’ learning experience in cross-cultural online language exchange learning environment. Learning satisfaction was used as a criterion variable. A multiple regression analysis revealed that six learning factors were predictive of learning satisfaction that the six factors explained 92.5% of the variance in learning satisfaction ($R^2 = .925$). The overall six predictors together significantly predict learning satisfaction ($F_{(6, 8)} = 16.531, p < .001$). Among the six predictors, Authentic Communication ($\beta = .798, p < .001$), Learning Engagement ($\beta = .709, p < .01$), Language Practice ($\beta = .536, p < .05$), Communication Confidence ($\beta = .790, p < .001$), and Learning Motivation ($\beta = .774, p < .001$) were significant positive predictors as shown as Table 3.

Table 3. Multivariate regression with six learning factors

Factor	R ²	F	p	β
Authentic Communication	.636	22.759	<.001***	.798
Learning Engagement	.503	13.169	<.003**	.709
Language Practice	.288	5.249	<.039*	.536
Communication Confidence	.624	21.547	<.001***	.790
Learning Motivation	.599	19.450	<.001***	.774
Cultural Learning	.110	1.608	.227	.309

*** significant at the .001 level

** significant at the .01 level

* significant at the .05 level

4.3 Additional Findings

To examine if there is a relationship between particular learning factors and the mean score of learning satisfaction, a correlation matrix test was conducted. Each of the six factors revealed a positive relationship with learning satisfaction as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Relationship with learning satisfaction

Factor	Pearson's r	Interpretation
Authentic Communication	.798 **	Very strong positive correlation
Learning Engagement	.709 **	Very strong positive correlation
Language Practice	.536 *	Strong positive correlation
Communication Confidence	.796 **	Very strong positive correlation
Learning Motivation	.774 **	Very strong positive correlation
Cultural Learning	.332	Moderate positive correlation

** significant at the .01 level

* significant at the .05 level

Pearson's correlation analysis revealed that learning satisfaction was most strongly associated with Authentic Communication ($r = .798, p < .01$), Learning Engagement ($p = .709, p < .01$), Communication Confidence ($r = .796, p < .01$), and Learning Motivation ($r = .774, p < .01$). These findings suggest that providing students with authentic opportunities to interact with international peers, increasing their confidence in communicating in Chinese, and enhancing their learning motivation were closely related to greater satisfaction with the cross-cultural online language exchange project. Language Practice ($r = .536, p < .05$) also demonstrated a significant positive relationship with learning satisfaction. Students with opportunities to practice their Chinese were more likely to have higher learning satisfaction. Although Cultural Learning showed a moderate positive correlation with learning satisfaction ($r = .332$), the relationship did not reach statistical significance ($p = .227$). Therefore, the findings do not provide sufficient evidence to support a significant association between Cultural Learning and learning satisfaction.

5. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study investigated the predictive effects of six learning factors on students' learning satisfaction in a Taiwan–U.S. cross-cultural online language exchange project. The findings revealed that Authentic Communication, Learning Engagement, Language Practice, Communication Confidence, and Learning Motivation significantly predicted students' learning satisfaction, whereas Cultural Learning was not a significant predictor. Overall, these findings suggest that students' satisfaction was influenced significantly by meaningful interaction and authentic language practice.

Authentic Communication revealed as the strongest predictor of learning satisfaction. This finding is consistent with previous virtual exchange research, which emphasizes that authentic interaction with international peers enhances students' engagement, communicative competence, and satisfaction because language is used for meaningful social purposes rather than classroom exercises (Basini & Buchem, 2019; Hrebackova, 2019; Kohn & Hoffstaedter, 2017; Machwate, et al., 2021). The finding also supports the principles of Communicative Language Teaching, which argue that language is acquired more effectively when learners participate in authentic communication in real contexts (Mont, Dooly, & Masats, 2026). In the current study, students interacted directly with peers from another country, discussed their daily lives, schools, and communities, and therefore experienced Chinese as a genuine communication tool instead of merely an academic subject.

Communication Confidence was also a significant predictor of learning satisfaction. This finding agrees with previous studies demonstrating that virtual exchanges increase learners' confidence and willingness to communicate through

repeated interactions with international partners (Gu, 2025; Kohn & Hoffstaedter, 2017; Tabuchi, 2025). As students became more comfortable communicating in Chinese, they were more likely to enjoy the learning process and resulted in higher satisfaction. The finding is also consistent with previous research studies that the authentic interaction provided by the online exchange likely reduced communication anxiety while strengthening students' confidence in using Chinese (Bonk & Graham, 2006; Gao & Zuo, 2025; Pang & Zhang, 2023).

Learning Engagement significantly predicted learning satisfaction which supports previous research (Alzubi, 2023; Huang, 2025; Ismailov, 2021; Yang, Hsieh, & Wong 2024), showing that students who actively participate in collaborative online learning tend to experience greater satisfaction and better learning outcomes. Because the online exchanges required students to prepare presentations and communicate with overseas partners, active participation may have increased students' active involvement in the learning process. Therefore, it leads to have higher learning satisfaction.

Similarly, Language Practice was found to be a significant predictor of learning satisfaction. This finding is consistent with previous research studies (Bonk & Graham, 2006; Yin & Fathi, 2025). These suggest that frequent opportunities to use the target language in authentic communicative contexts improve learners' speaking ability. Unlike traditional classroom instruction, online exchanges enable learners to use Chinese to deliver their communicative purposes which makes language practice more meaningful and enjoyable.

Learning Motivation also significantly predicted learning satisfaction. This result supports studies grounded in Self-Determination Theory, which indicate that motivated learners are more satisfied with language learning, particularly in online language exchange environments. Students who were intrinsically interested in communicating with international peers were more likely to invest efforts in the exchange activities, contributing to higher levels of learning satisfaction (Dziuban, Hartman, & Moskal, 2004; Maruanaya, Lekawael, & Loppies, 2024; Wang, 2017).

In contrast, Cultural Learning did not significantly predict learning satisfaction. One possible explanation is that the online exchange project emphasized authentic communication, sharing students' own cultures and daily lives rather than in-depth cultural exploration. Students introduced Taiwanese and American school life and traditions, but they may have viewed these activities mainly as opportunities to communicate in target language rather than as opportunities to explore cultures. Consequently, authentic communication and communication confidence may have had a greater influence on their learning satisfaction than cultural learning itself. This interpretation is consistent with previous virtual exchange research showing that intercultural competence develops most effectively when exchanges include explicit inquiry and deeper discussion of cultural perspectives rather than simple information sharing (Ismailov, 2021).

Additionally, the relatively small sample size may have reduced the statistical power to detect a significant relationship. Future studies with larger samples and more structured cultural learning activities may provide a clearer understanding of how cultural learning contributes to students' learning satisfaction.

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