

Investigating an International E-Mail Exchange
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Second and foreign language instructors rely on asynchronous and synchronous exchanges to provide learners with input beyond the textbook and the teacher, access to authentic language and the thoughts and opinions of peers in the target culture, and opportunities to make themselves understood in the target language. Previous research suggests that learners benefit from participating in intercultural e-mail exchanges. Yet it is not clear which types of learners benefit from exchanges or what they actually learn. The present study explores the content of an intercultural e-mail exchange between American students enrolled in a 5th semester German course at a Midwestern university and native and near-native speakers of German participating in a pedagogy seminar at a university in Germany. This study examines which topics are discussed with what frequency, who initiates which topics, and which topics are initiated successfully and unsuccessfully. Results indicate variation among the American students and between the American and the German students in their approach to the e-mail exchange regarding motivation and dedication, topic initiation, and answering questions.