

## To Teach or not to Teach? Online Communication and Foreign Language Pedagogy in the Digital World. A Case Study

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POSTER

**T**he abundant literature on computer assisted language learning clearly reflects the growing trend among language instructors towards using online communication as a pedagogical tool, whether to provide students new means of approaching language and culture or a multimedia platform for teachers to experiment with innovative and more dynamic forms of assessment. In a multicultural and multilingual environment such as Israel – and one which is technologically advanced to boot – language teachers have been quick to realise the potential of net-based collaborative frameworks as valuable learning opportunities in foreign language pedagogy, second language acquisition and intercultural exploration. Situated far away from countries where the target language is spoken and often hard-pressed for up-to-date teaching materials and relevant professional literature, language teachers tend to look to computer mediated communication not just as a means for extending the learning experience beyond the walls of the classroom but, more importantly, as a medium for establishing genuine communication with native speakers of the target language, in the hope that these networked interactions will result in both improved linguistic competence and intercultural literacy.

But does connectivity necessarily translate into learning? To what extent does online communication support language acquisition and promote cross-cultural understanding? This poster provides a preliminary glimpse at an online collaborative project between Spanish students at Tel Aviv University and Spanish teachers-to-be at the University of Barcelona that aims to answer these questions. Designed to foster learner autonomy and enhance language competence and intercultural awareness on the part of the Israeli students, and to hone teaching skills and abilities and enhance intercultural awareness on the part of the Barcelona teacher trainees, this series of web-based exchanges allows us to explore the blurry line separating linguistic interaction and extra-linguistic variables that inevitably affect the communication process, such as the role of the instructor as intercultural mediator, cross-cultural differences in communicative purpose, the affective responses of the interlocutors involved, objective institutional constraints... In the process, as they exchange viewpoints and perspectives, participants become actively involved in the reciprocal construction of their own as well as one another's cultural spaces and identities, revealing that intra- and intercultural literacy is not transmitted but instead is negotiated, and indeed created, through linguistic interactions, interpretations, and responses to interpretations, according to the learners' capacity to view their own culture(s) in dynamic relation to another group's perspective, ultimately building a sense of community among all the participants.