

## Will Second Life help me Survive in Italy?

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### Abstract

An experience with Italian classes in Second Life for III level students of Italian as a Foreign Language

Topics: Innovative language teaching and learning methodologies; Collaborative language learning; Case studies of effective uses of virtual worlds for teaching activities.

#### Description of proposal:

This presentation aims at sharing the experience that two researchers, Carmela Dell'Aria (University of Palermo - University of Venice) and Susanna Nocchi (Dublin Institute of Technology), had in the design, testing and implementation of a short course in Italian, with a strong focus on the development of intercultural competence and of oral language proficiency, for third-level students of Italian as a foreign language in the Dublin Institute of Technology. The course was held in SL, which was used as a virtual platform for foreign language education and learners engagement.

The paper will provide an example of learning scenarios that have been designed and implemented under the project. In this paper, the two researchers want to share what they learnt during this action research, whose aim was to use SL for stimulating the oral production of foreign students attending Italian classes in SL as a support to the face-to-face classes.

The experience was drawn on by both researchers for their individual research studies. Ms. Dell'Aria investigated the potentials of MUVES for foreign language learning, as well as the factors that impact the learners' language performance, as part of her Action Research project submitted to the University of Venice Ca' Foscari for the Master Itals in advanced Didactics of Italian as a Foreign Language. Ms. Nocchi analysed the experience as part of her PhD study on Exploring the potential of Virtual Environments to promote Intercultural Competence through the lens of Cultural Historical Activity Theory, in order to pinpoint examples of good practice and problematic areas to be addressed in developing intercultural competence in a Virtual Environment.

#### Rational for the course:

Since 2007 Carmela Dell'Aria (Misy Ferraris in SL) has been carrying out Café Italia, an experiment about teaching and learning Italian in SL. This pilot course was designed as part of that main project around a small group of DIT students of Italian. It's a transversal programme, which targeted language learners who would spend a year in Italy as part of the Erasmus project, and aimed at providing access to language learning to learners in remote locations and giving them the opportunity to work in group with Italian students.

#### Course design:

6 sessions were held in SL and designed to get students acquainted with some of the situations they will have to deal with when they move to Italy and start studying in an Italian university. Each session took place within a different environment, set up as an Italian area and with Italian native speakers. The sessions were recorded, a Wiki was set up for the duration of the study and



students were asked to fill in questionnaires and to sit for an unstructured interview at the end of the study.