

## **TwitTIAMO! Using Twitter with Italian beginners to help develop cultural awareness and communicative language skills**

*Our first blogpost is by [Alessia Plutino](#), Teaching Fellow in Italian in the Department of Modern Languages:*



The pedagogical research project “**TwitTIAMO**” started in 2013 and is still in use with students of Italian at the University of Southampton to investigate student engagement, cultural awareness and communicative language skills development using the 140-character word limit that is the main feature of microblogging with Twitter.

TwitTIAMO has involved 20 to 30 able linguist students each year from our Italian Accelerated 1+2 Course. This is a fast-paced course for able linguists who pick up Italian from scratch. It allows for just four x 45 minute teaching periods a week, in which there is little time for anything else but language learning! Students expressed a desire for intercultural knowledge to be more integrated into their curriculum and this request had to match my aim, as tutor, for ‘active’ student learning and interaction in the target language outside classroom hours to help prepare them for their oral exam (role play in set scenario).

I found the perfect solution in Twitter, as it mimics the quick succession of comments in a normal conversation, requiring both quick thinking skills and spontaneity. A class Twitter account was set up, with student followers. The tutor acted as guide, suggesting linguistic structures learnt in class for students to mimic and expand creatively. Topics came up spontaneously deriving from students’ interests, and students also surfed the internet, used online vocabulary sources etc., sharing links and pictures and taking charge of their own learning.

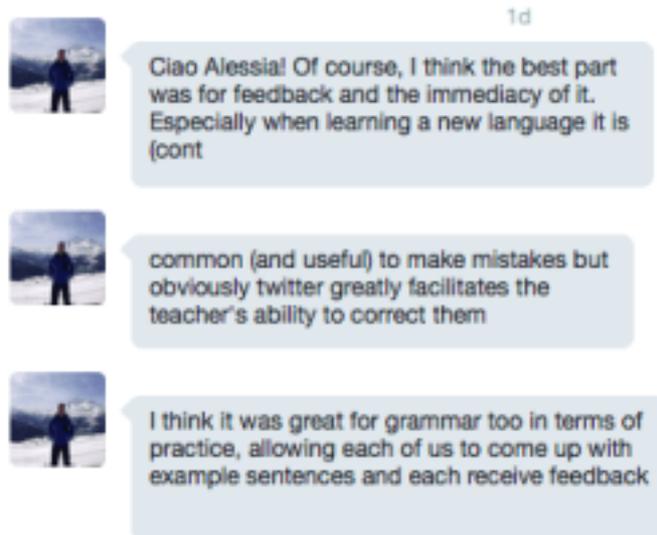
The results so far have been very positive, suggesting that:

- Twitter can help develop fluency in written and oral skills;
- Students can learn how to focus on what they say better (they can only use 140 characters)

- Through tweeting themselves, tutors can differentiate and help to reinforce what they have introduced in their classrooms
- Discussions are more interactive and swift and can also add to metacognitive development, i.e. reflective learning.

(List adapted from Ritchie's 2009 article in the *Times Education Supplement*)

Here is some student feedback on TwitTIAMO (using Twitter of course!):



You can read more about Alessia's successful project on the Languages at Southampton blog. You can also see a video of Alessia talking about the project on her page on the ILIaD website.

Source: University of Southampton website

<http://www.elearngroupml.soton.ac.uk/2015/06/30/twittiamo-using-twitter-with-italian-beginners-to-help-develop-cultural-awareness-and-communicative-language-skills-2/>

See also: Alessia Plutino's presentation at the LLAS 2015 e-learning symposium:

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/can-twitter-mfl-train-communicative-cultural-alessia-plutino?trk=prof-post>