# Social Networking Sites for Intercultural Competence

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# INTRODUCTION

This guide provides language educators with pedagogical strategies and practical suggestions for implementing social networking sites (SNSs) and social media in language courses to promote intercultural competence.

Modern technology has enabled the sharing of content with people from around the world, and today it is easier than ever to access digital resources created by speakers of the target language. According to the Pew Research Center (2018), 73% of adults in the United States own a desktop or laptop computer and 53% own tablet devices. Mobile devices have also become increasingly ubiquitous and affordable: another survey by the Pew Research Center (2019) found that 96% of Americans own a cellphone of some kind, meaning that images, texts, and videos are now shared in online spaces more than ever before. SNSs are open to participation and interaction. Yet, despite their great potential their implementation in language courses may be more complicated than expected, and teachers might feel overwhelmed with the too many options available and the technology itself continually changing.

Taking the need for pedagogical models and strategies into consideration, this guide evaluates three specific SNSs, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and offers practical examples of in-class and at-home activities for beginner and intermediate level language learners. The affordances and limitations of SNSs are also discussed to enable teachers to implement meaningful use of technology. In this way, they can help students develop intercultural competence skills while also teaching them to use SNSs and social media responsibly.

A website offering step-by-step video tutorials about the proposed pedagogical activities can be found at:
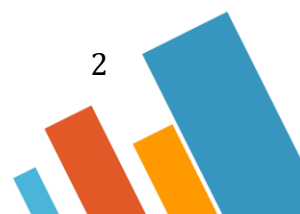
## https://snssic.arizona.edu/

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# RATIONALE

## Addressing intercultural competence in language courses

In the last three decades, the foreign language classroom has significantly changed, with the transition from teacher-centered to learner-centered education and the focus on meaningful language use and communicative competence. In their 21st Century Skills Map, the American Council on the Teaching of Target languages (ACTFL) explains that learning multiple languages and understanding other cultures are necessary skills to succeed in today's global world. Language education prepares students to interact in increasingly interconnected environments where people may hold similar or different beliefs and perspectives. While foreign language textbooks serve as a good source of information for language learners, foreign cultures are often represented as fixed concepts, thus restricting students from exploring differences in perspectives and developing critical thinking skills.

As reported in ACTFL's "Standards for Target language Learning in the 21st Century," "Because language is the primary vehicle for expressing cultural perspectives and participating in social practices, the study of a language provides opportunities for students to develop insights in a culture that are available in no other way. In reality, then, the true content of the target language course is not the grammar and vocabulary of the language, but the cultures expressed through that language."  (Cutshall, 2012, p. 32). By developing intercultural competence, learners come to recognize and respect cultural values and behaviors different from their own. Today's technology advances can facilitate this process, and language educators who integrate technology tools in the curriculum can take advantage of the virtually unlimited resources available on the internet, including SNSs.

## Describing intercultural competence

Intercultural competence has been defined in many different ways. According to ACTFL's (2014) "Global Competence Position Statement" (p. 1-2), these skills include:
- Understanding cultural differences within the same country
- Developing knowledge about other cultures while withholding judgment
- Interacting with awareness of perspectives and values of others
- Examining one's own perspectives and values as similar to or different from others.

*Second language proficiency does not guarantee intercultural competence: it is crucial to place culture at the core of the language curriculum to promote students' awareness of other cultures.*

## Why social networking sites?

SNSs, also called social networks or social media platforms, provide a context for people to create and share information, discover user-generated content, and engage in communicative exchanges.

The terms SNSs and social media have often been used interchangeably, however they more precisely stand for two different things. **SNSs are platforms created with the purpose of connecting people and sharing content.** On SNSs, users create personal profiles and interact with others despite the geographical distance. Examples of SNSs include Facebook, Instagram, MySpace, Twitter, and YouTube. **On the other hand, social media is a "form" of media generated by users and shared on SNSs.** Before the advent of the Internet, media included newspapers, videotapes, and comic books. Today social media encompasses various modalities, for example videos, texts, and photos.

SNSs have great potential for language courses because they offer digital resources about the life and culture of target language speakers. Differently from the language textbook which might become outdated a few years after being published, social media shared on SNSs are contemporary resources, created and promptly shared by users. SNSs enhance language courses by exposing students to diverse perspectives and giving access to authentic cultural content, which when used purposefully may support the development of intercultural competence.

## A sociocultural perspective

Sociocultural Theory (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006) offers a framework for explaining how foreign-language processes develop. According to this theory, learning a new language involves acquiring new conceptual knowledge and/or modifying existing knowledge "as a way of mediating one's interaction with the world and with one's psychological functioning" (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 5). Learning is mediated through students' participation in cultural activities (e.g., reading) in which cultural artifacts (e.g., images) and cultural concepts (e.g., norms) interact with each other and with the learner's psychological activity (Nava & Pedrazzini, 2018).

In line with sociocultural views of language learning, SNSs offer students a rich environment for cultural understanding, language exchange, and virtual connections. SNSs provide a context for learning through processes of observation and interpretation, where, through scaffolding and dialogue, intercultural competence can be enriched. Interactions in these online spaces can expose students to current cultural events and meaningful language use (Lomicka & Lord, 2016). Thus with SNSs the development of intercultural competence occurs through participation in culturally organized practices and active involvement, enabling a deeper understanding of the studied culture.

## Statistics on social networking sites

The popularity of SNSs and social media has led teachers and researchers to examine their use in educational contexts. Facebook is not the first SNS, however it is among the first ones to become extremely popular across the world. Data from a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center (2019) show that the number of adults in the United States using SNSs has increased in recent years.

*% of U.S. adults who say they use the following SNSs*
69% use Facebook → 51% several times a day
37% use Instagram → 42% several times a day
22% use Twitter → 25% several times a day

The wide use of SNSs among adults in the United States should be encouraging for teachers eager to use these platforms in their own language courses. Most students are already familiar with these technologies and integrating them into the language curriculum should not be too cumbersome.

**Facebook facts**          launched in 2004
                            +2 billion monthly users worldwide

**Instagram facts**         launched 2010
                            +1 billion monthly users worldwide

**Twitter facts**           launched 2006
                            +321 million monthly users worldwide

By looking at the monthly users of the three SNSs it becomes clear that there is an enormous amount of media being shared daily by people all over the world. This extensive amount of data can be used at no cost by language teachers and learners to investigate, explain, and reflect on cultures different from their own.

## Facebook vs. Instagram vs. Twitter

Common to the three SNSs is the **hashtag** function, a word or phrase preceded by a hash or pound sign (#) and used to identify messages on a specific topic. Hashtags help organize and categorize content, as well as the process of content discovery.
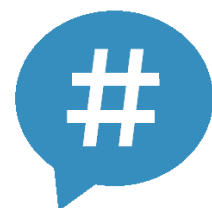
The content shared on SNSs, whether it is an image, a text, or a video, is called **post**. A post is also a status update, in other words a social media update shared by any user on any social network. Users can comment under other people's posts on each one of the three SNSs.

**Facebook**   *www.facebook.com*
- Text, image, and video-based platform
- More private than other SNSs, mostly used to connect with family and friends
- Learning affordance: group function

**Instagram**   *www.instagram.com*
- Image and video-based platform
- Increasingly popular among young adults who share photos related to their lives
- Limited functionality on computers, works best on mobile devices
- Learning affordances: e-portfolio, or collection, function

**Twitter**   *www.twitter.com*
- Text-based platform
- Fast-speed and concise platform, each post can contain up to 280 characters
- Learning affordance: microblogging function

# EVALUATING SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

This section describes affordances, learning benefits, and limitations of SNSs for intercultural competence. Before implementing new technologies in the educational setting it is important to consider how said technologies will support student learning and engagement.

## Affordances

### Multimodality

Content on SNSs is shared in multiple modalities, thus offering students different ways of learning about a specific topic. Usually, multimodal content shared by users combines two or more modes (e.g., text, image, video, and audio).
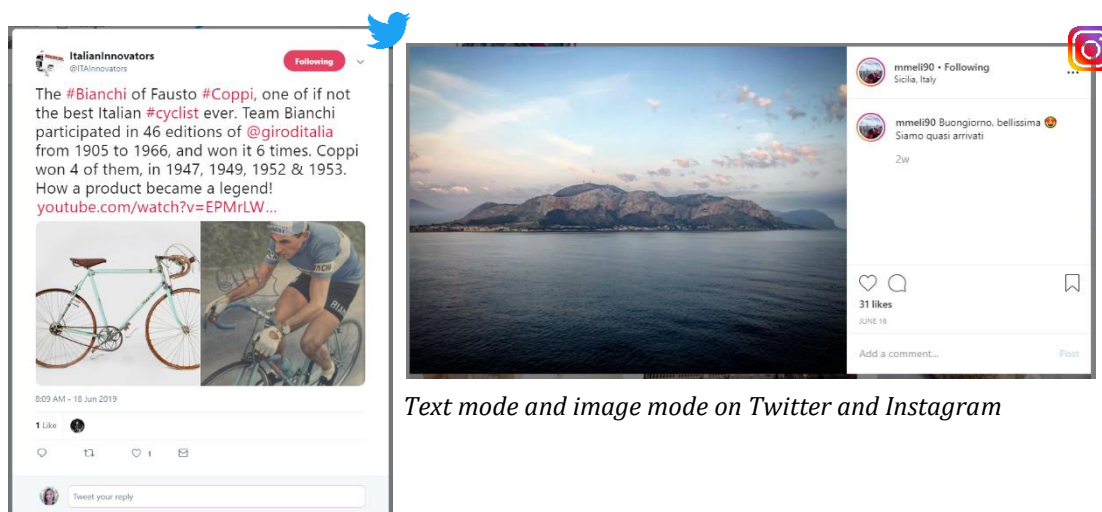


*Text mode and image mode on Twitter and Instagram*

### Context and authenticity

Media found on SNSs is contextualized because language and content are presented in relation to users' real-life experiences. People from all around the world share information related to their personal lives which can be freely viewed by students. Content is constantly uploaded by users generating a virtually unlimited number of resources that can be accessed within the instructional setting and in informal contexts.

### Free to use, user-friendly, and mobility

Differently from other technology tools, SNSs are free to use, and teachers and students can easily create accounts for educational purposes. SNSs can be accessed on desktop computers or mobile devices through the use of dedicated sites and mobile applications. The opportunity of accessing social networks on students' smartphones is particularly suited for classroom instruction, as students can take out their mobile devices for an activity and then put them away when no longer needed. In this way, students are not required to bring additional tools into the classroom; instead, they are using what they already have.

## Learning benefits

### Global competence

The exposure to foreign cultures on SNSs can help students gain an in-depth understanding of perspectives and practices different from their own. Through meaningful pedagogical activities students can investigate cultural differences and examine cultural matters through the lens of social media from different countries.

### Collaborative learning and community building

SNSs place students at the center of the learning experience where they can connect with cultures and speakers of the target language as well as people they already know. Students may work collaboratively on an e-portfolio on Instagram, or may respond to target language speakers' comments on Facebook. SNSs allow students to learn and engage in a familiar format. SNSs have the potential of creating virtual communities that increase involvement between people who share a common interest.

### Increased motivation

Considering the widespread use of smartphone devices and of SNSs, many students are already familiar with these platforms and may feel motivated to also use them for educational purposes. SNSs-based activities may also give students the choice of cultural topics to investigate which help them feel more involved in the process of learning and content discovery.

### Autonomy

The ability to learn independently is an important component of language learning. SNSs can help students become in charge of their own learning, especially when they take part in activities that require the search and construction of knowledge, rather than being dependent on the instructor. On SNSs students take an active approach to language and culture and become more invested in the learning process.

## Limitations and challenges

### Privacy and security

SNSs are open for anyone, and this means that students may encounter people whom they do not know or content that is viewed as inappropriate or even offensive. Concerns about privacy are understandable, however there are ways to limit content visibility and increase security. Learning how to limit the audience to what is being shared, especially with younger students, can help prevent privacy issues. Before using SNSs, it is important to understand and discuss Internet safety as well as privacy settings and norms.

### Accessibility

Although mobile devices and the Internet have gained great popularity in recent years, not all students might have devices or smartphones that allow access to SNSs, or an Internet connection at home. Considering what students have access to is important to promote inclusive learning. If some students do not have the necessary tools to use

SNSs, consider borrowing devices from the library or have students work in groups during class activities.

### Distraction

Social networks may become a distraction in the educational setting. Encouraging a meaningful use of SNSs, identifying specific class times for their use, and stating the reasons for their implementation can help create expectations and guidelines for students. It is easy to get lost in mindless scrolling on social networks, thus having a clear sense of purpose in the educational setting is fundamental for successful implementation.

### Technology-related and other issues

Teacher training on how to use SNSs and various technologies is also necessary to avoid wasting class time. To avoid technology-related problems, some time should be spent beforehand to learn about how to effectively use SNSs. Students might also not want to use their personal accounts for educational purposes and thus creating an alternative account might be desirable. SNSs allow for multiple accounts to be logged in at the same time, and switching between accounts is fairly easy.

# PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES

## Digital and social media literacies

Literacy as we know it today does not simply refer to the ability to read and write, but includes the ability to understand language in multiple contexts and in multiple modalities. **Digital literacy** refers to the appropriate and effective use of technology and it is usually learned experimentally through immersion and use of technology devices. Students who are digitally literate know how to communicate in online spaces, how to create and consume digital content, and understand the importance of digital communication.

**Social media literacy** is tied to SNSs and refers to being able to interact appropriately, to create and share media responsibly, and to evaluate other people's digital content with a critical lens. Social media literacy helps students become critical thinkers, active creators of content, and informed global citizens.

Before implementing SNSs in the classroom setting, it is important to consider whether students are digitally literate. As educators, these are some questions we may want to consider:

- Do students know how much digital content to share?
- Do students know how to interact and respond to different online audiences?
- Do students know how to present themselves online?

These questions should be discussed with students before implementing SNSs in the instructional setting.

Although much is talked about students as digital natives, it cannot be given for granted that students already know how to use SNSs. An in-class training session prior to using SNSs is an excellent way to ensure students' success. SNSs video tutorials shared on the adopted learning management system (LMS) is also a great idea to support successful use. Through planned and scaffolded instruction, teachers can provide students with meaningful opportunities for the development of intercultural competence using SNSs.

## In-class activities

SNSs can be used in the classroom in a variety of ways to help students investigate cultural differences, collaborate in sharing perspectives and ideas, and reflect on personal experiences across cultures. The following activities require students to have SNSs accounts as well as smartphones (or laptops) with internet access in the classroom. At the end of each one of the activities below there is a link directing to a video tutorial to help further understand the proposed activity.

### Facebook
### Activity 1: Comparing food values and practices across cultures
*ACTFL goal areas:* cultures, comparisons
*Level:* beginner and above
*Learning objectives:*
1. Identify and describe food values and practices in multimodal SNS posts
2. Compare food values and practices between the target culture and students' home culture

*Directions:*
1. Have students work in pairs with one or more smartphones.
2. Ask students to search for the Facebook page of a popular fast food or restaurant located both in the target country and students' home country. To do so, search for the name of the country plus the name of the restaurant. Students will find two pages, one for each country. For example, students can search the following: Burger King Italia and Burger King United States; or Subway France and Subway United States.
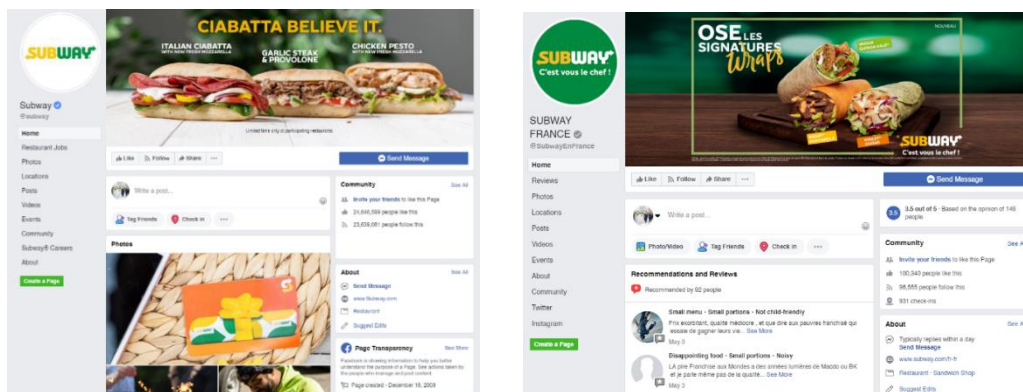


*Examples of Subway France Facebook page and Subway United States Facebook page*

3. Working in pairs, students compare the two pages both from an image and text perspective. Give students some guiding questions:
   a. What words and images stand out to you in the two pages?
   b. What similarities did you notice between the two pages in terms of values and perspectives? Is the focus on cost, serving size, quality, or ingredients?
   c. Do you think that restaurant chains are the same in different countries? Why or why not?
   d. How may the differences be related to the target culture?

4. After the pair discussions, ask students to share their findings and reflections with the rest of the class.

*Options and suggestions:* With beginners you can facilitate this activity by providing translation of keywords found on the Facebook page. Students can also use the "See translation" feature under Facebook posts. In many cases, for the United States the name of the Facebook page is simply the name of the fast food, without the name of the country. More advanced learners may discuss their opinions in the target language.

*Online tutorial:* https://snssic.arizona.edu/in-class-activities/facebook-1/

## Activity 2: Analyzing language use in social media

*ACTFL goal areas:* cultures, communication
*Level:* intermediate and above
*Learning objectives:*
1. Evaluate formal and informal language use on Facebook pages
2. Reflect on students' language use on their own Facebook profile and recognize the importance of responsible social media use

*Directions:*
1. Have students work in pairs with one or more smartphones.
2. Provide students with the name of various Facebook pages of the target country offering some type of service (e.g., housekeeping, yard work, plumbing, exterior house painting, pet sitting, long-distance moving, etc.).
3. Each pair of students picks two pages, examines the language of the page owner and costumers, and reflects on the language used. Provide some guiding questions:
   a. Is the language formal or informal? How can you tell?
   b. Why do you think the page owner/customers chose to be formal or informal? Why is this choice important?
   c. Do the two pages use the target language in the same way? How so?
   d. Think about Facebook pages in your own language. What language do they use? Why so?
   e. What language do you use on your own Facebook profile? How is it similar or different from how you use language in face-to-face interactions?
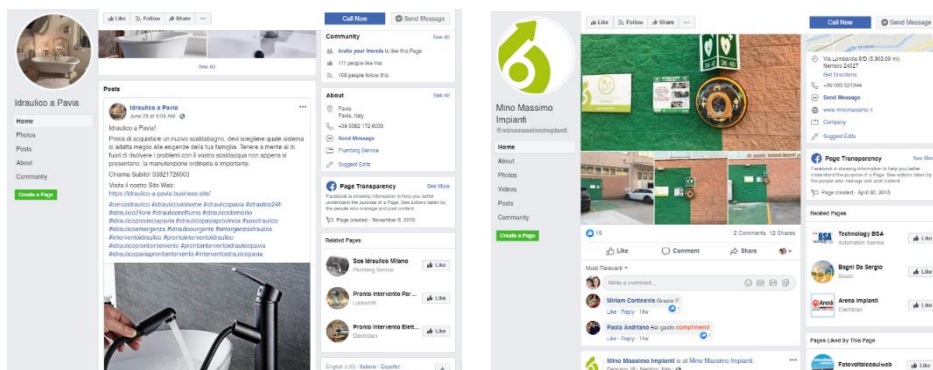


*Examples of two Italian Facebook pages offering plumbing and electrical system services*

4. After students discuss the guiding questions above, have some pairs share their opinions with the rest of the class. The class discussion should be conversational with students replying to one other.
5. At the end of the activity explain that Facebook pages represent a brand, thus they are usually strategic in the choice of language use. In the same way, students need to be responsible when sharing opinions on their own Facebook profiles and on SNSs in general.

*Options and suggestions:* Intermediate-level students should discuss the guiding questions in the target language. Encourage students to take note of their opinions and comments when discussing the guiding questions. When choosing Facebook pages prior to the activity, select pages that present both formal and informal language and comments under posts.

*Online tutorial:* https://snssic.arizona.edu/in-class-activities/facebook-2

## Instagram

### Activity 1: Memes in the target language

*ACTFL goal areas:* communication
*Level:* beginner and above
*Learning objectives:*
1. Understand humor in the target language
2. Use language creatively by developing a caption for a meme

*Directions:*
1. Ask students to work individually and search on Instagram hashtags related to memes in the target language. For example, #memeitaliani, or #memeespañol.
2. Each student picks one meme. Then by working in pairs, students need to understand the language and meaning of the two chosen memes.
3. Students in pairs come up with their own caption in the target language for one of the two previously selected memes.
4. Finally, students share with the class the original caption of the meme as well as the caption they created in the target language.

*Options and suggestions:* Students might also be asked to explore memes previously selected on Instagram by the teacher. These memes can be added to a dedicated Instagram account so that they can be easily found. This way, there is more control over the content that students will be using.

*Online tutorial:* https://snssic.arizona.edu/in-class-activities/instagram-1/

### Activity 2: Discovering different everyday cultural practices

*ACTFL goal areas:* cultures, comparisons
*Level:* intermediate and above
*Learning objectives:*
1. Recognize cultural variations within the same country and across different countries where the target language is spoken
2. Compare everyday cultural practices with students' own practices

*Directions:*
1. Divide students in small groups (ideally three students per group); each student should have their own device.
2. Provide two or three cultural themes related to everyday practices with specific hashtags. For example:
   a. Workplace practices (#lavoro, #vitadaufficio, #lavoratori)
   b. Recreational activities (#domenica, #tempolibero, #aspasso).
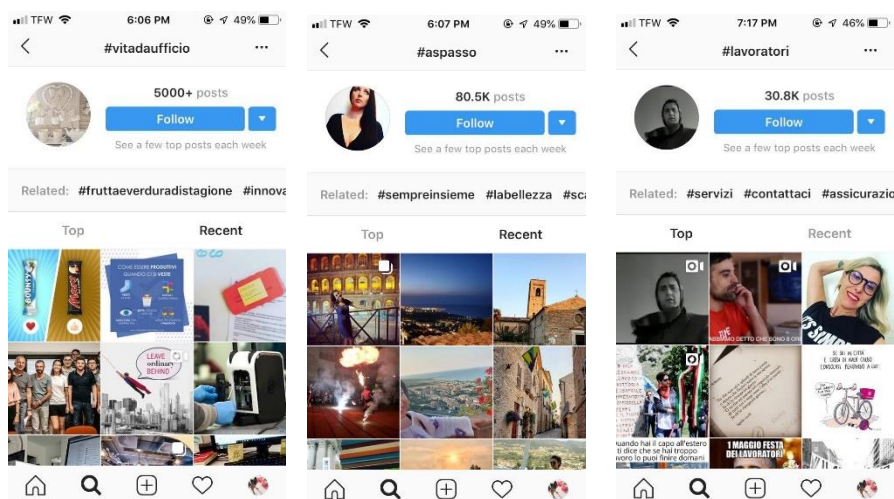


*Examples of posts, and related hashtags, found on Instagram using the hashtags #vitadaufficio, #aspasso, and #lavoratori*

3. Each group picks a theme, searches one hashtag on Instagram, and picks three photos as well as three additional hashtags related to the theme. Students in different groups who choose the same hashtag will most likely find different information, thus helping them understand that culture and practices differ within the same country and across the different countries where the language is spoken. There is not just "one culture!" Students should reflect and discuss how the found practices relate to their own practices and beliefs.
4. After the group discussions have ended, each group has five minutes to share what they found with the class by explaining what they learned about the chosen theme and how it relates, or does not, to their own practices.

*Options and suggestions:* The cultural themes can be aligned with the syllabus. The cultural themes can also focus on how people within the same country celebrate festivities in different ways. Encouraging comparisons between cultural practices within the same country as well with students' own practices and beliefs is central to this activity.

*Online tutorial:* https://snssic.arizona.edu/in-class-activities/instagram-2/

## Twitter
### Activity 1: Exploring proverbs and sayings in the target language
*ACTFL goal areas:* communication, comparisons
*Level:* beginner and above
*Learning objectives:*
1. Reflect on the "hidden" values and perspectives of the target culture

2. Compare proverbs and sayings of the target language with students' own language

*Directions:*
1. Have students work in pairs with one or more smartphones.
2. Provide students with two specific hashtags: #Englishproverb (or #Proverbioitaliano) and #Englishsaying (or #Dettoitaliano).
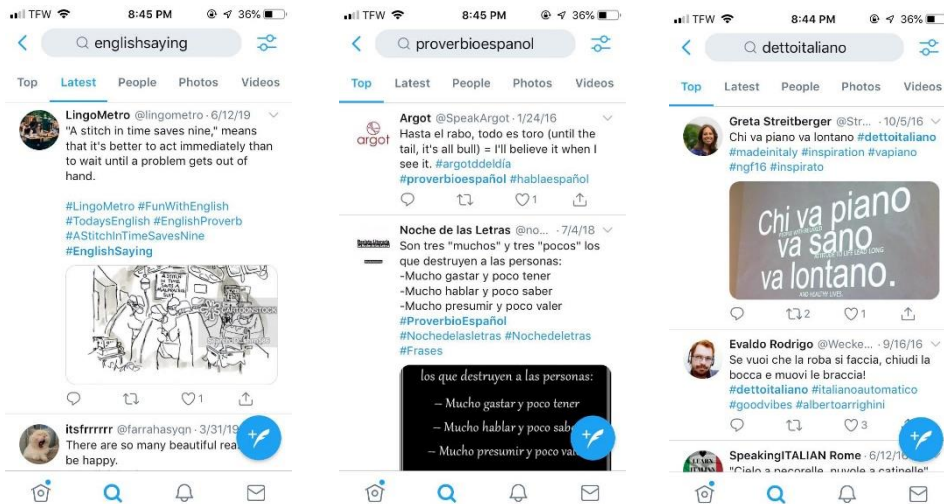


*Examples of tweets related to English, Spanish, and Italian sayings and proverbs*

3. Students explore proverbs and sayings in the target language on Twitter, pick one of their choice, and analyze its meaning. Provide some guiding questions:
   a. What is the value or perspective behind the proverb or saying you selected?
   b. In what context or situation would you use this proverb or saying?
   c. Can you think of a similar proverb or saying in other languages you speak?
4. After the pair discussions, students share their findings with the class.

*Options and suggestions:* In many cases students will find a translation of the proverb or saying within the same post. If there is no translation and the meaning is not clear, students may use Google Translate.

*Online tutorial:* https://snssic.arizona.edu/in-class-activities/twitter-1/

**Activity 2: Investigating patriotism in the target country**
*ACTFL goal areas:* cultures, communities, comparisons
*Level:* intermediate and above
*Learning objectives:*
1. Analyze perspectives related to patriotism
2. Compare the concept of patriotism between the target culture and students' own culture

*Directions:*
1. After providing specific hashtags in the target language (e.g., #patriotism, #patriotic, etc.), ask students to work individually and explore multimodal posts related to patriotism.
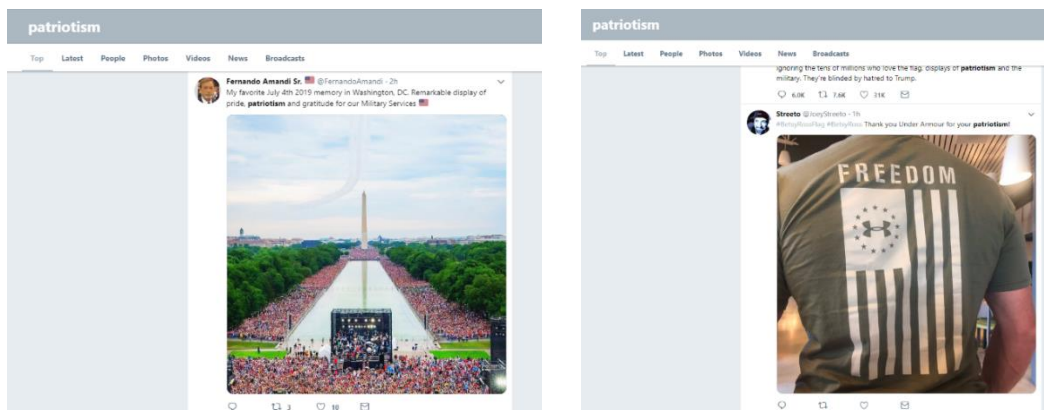
*Examples of patriotism-related posts on Twitter*

2. Students pick one post and write a brief written reflection analyzing how the concept of patriotism is portrayed in a target language speaker's tweet and compare it to their own understanding of patriotism.
3. In pairs, students share their findings and written reflections.
4. After the discussion of the findings, invite students to share their understanding of patriotism from the perspective of the target language speaker and their own perspective on patriotism.

*Options and suggestions:* Depending on the group of students this topic may be sensitive and provoke unexpected reactions. Before starting the activity, establish general rules of conduct. For example, ask students to listen respectfully when others are talking and state that different people will have different opinions, with no right or wrong.

*Online tutorial:* https://snssic.arizona.edu/in-class-activities/twitter-2/

## At-home activities

SNSs can promote informal learning and autonomy when used outside of the classroom. Students can use their mobile devices or laptops to participate in various collaborative activities. An internet connection is required for the following at-home activities.

### Facebook

### Activity 1: Exploring new cultural topics

*ACTFL goal areas:* cultures, communication
*Level:* beginner and above
*Learning objectives:*

1. Consider new cultural topics usually not found in traditional language textbooks
2. Examine and question culturally-relevant photos

*Directions:*

1. Create a closed Facebook group as the course instructor and add all students to the group. No friending is required to add students to the group.

2. Once per week, post a photo related to a cultural topic. The chosen photos should be related to diverse cultural topics, presenting students with content usually not found in the language textbook.
3. Every week students need to comment or ask a question under the posted photo. Encourage students to share reflective and thoughtful comments by providing some guiding questions, for example:
   a. What catches your attention in this photo and why?
   b. How does this photo relate to your own experiences with the target culture?
   c. How does this photo relate to what you already know of the target culture?

*Options and suggestions:* Students may comment in their first language to facilitate meaningful comments. Students may also reply to each other's comments.
*Online tutorial:* https://snssic.arizona.edu/at-home-activities/facebook-3/

### Activity 2: News from the target culture
*ACTFL goal areas:* cultures, communication, connections
*Level:* intermediate and above
*Learning objectives:*
1. Evaluate a news post in the target language and share a perspective or opinion about the news
2. Collaborate with peers by commenting on news posts shared by others

*Directions:*
1. Create a closed Facebook group as the course instructor and add all students to the group. No friending is required to add students to the group.
2. Within the group share several Facebook pages of news channels and newspapers in the target language (e.g., for Italian: Corriere della Sera, L'Eco di Bergamo, Il Sole 24 Ore).
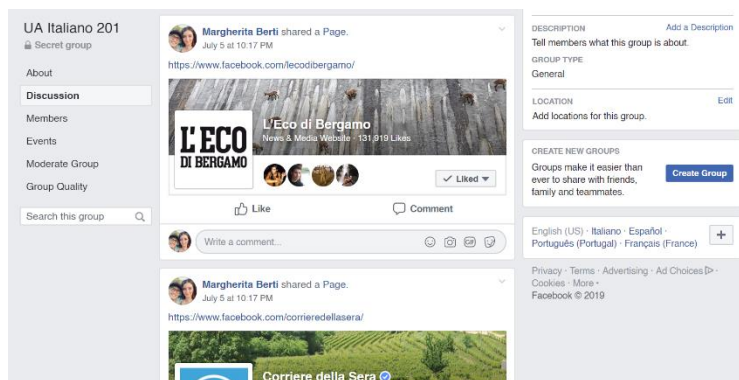


*Example of newspaper Facebook pages shared within a Facebook group*

3. At home students have to pick one of the shared news pages, look through the Facebook page and choose one news post that is interesting to them. Students will need to read and analyze the news post and then share a comment in the target language under the chosen post. The comment should address the reasons why the news post was interesting to them and their own opinion on the topic.

4. Next, students take a screenshot of the chosen news post and their comment and share it in the class Facebook group.
5. Students ask a question on a classmate's screenshot within the Facebook group.

*Options and suggestions:* Provide students with a comment example for a Facebook news post. Offer a sample sentence, for example: I am interested in _____ because _____ and I think that _____. It is hoped that students will engage in conversations with speakers of the target language within the Facebook news pages and among themselves in the group.

*Online tutorial:* https://snssic.arizona.edu/at-home-activities/facebook-4/

## Instagram
### Activity 1: Instapoetry in the target language
*ACTFL goal areas:* cultures, communication
*Level:* beginner and above
*Learning objectives:*
1. Explore a new writing genre
2. Use language and visual resources creatively

*Directions:*
1. Decide on an Instagram hashtag and share it with students (e.g., #UAItalian201). Provide students with examples of Instapoetry, that is short and free verse poems paired with a symbolic sketch or on an image that represents the poem. Some account examples in English are @atticuspoetry, @tylerknott, @RMDRK, and @k.towne.jr.
2. Over eight weeks students will need to share one post per week on their own Instagram account with the class hashtag. The posts will need to follow the Instapoetry examples, including one photo and a related short poem in the target language. Students' posts should be related to their own lives, cultural topics seen in class, or other topics interesting to them.
3. At the end of the eight weeks students may share their favorite Instapoetry post in an online discussion board or in the classroom.

*Options and suggestions:* Examples of Instapoetry in the target language may also be given to students by searching for specific hashtags; for instance, #instapoetryitaliano and #instapoetryespañol. Students may be provided with a specific cultural topic to post throughout the eight weeks. Students' accounts need to be set on public in order to find their posts marked with the class hashtag.

*Online tutorial:* https://snssic.arizona.edu/at-home-activities/instagram-3/

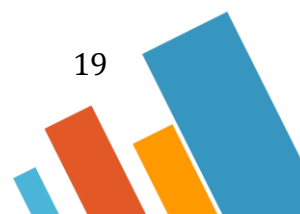### Activity 2: Creating curated cultural e-portfolios
*ACTFL goal areas:* cultures, comparisons, connections
*Level:* intermediate and above
*Learning objectives:*
1. Develop an in-depth understanding of a cultural topic of interest
2. Create a curated cultural e-portfolio

*Directions:*

1. At home students add a photo or video to their Instagram e-portfolio (also called collection) once a week for a total of four weeks on a topic of choice. Students also write a 100-word weekly reflection in the target language about the chosen post and submit it to the LMS along with a screenshot of their e-portfolio.
2. Provide students with guiding questions for the written reflections. For example:
   a. Why did you choose this post?
   b. What did you learn about this particular cultural product or practice?
   c. How is this different or similar to what you have learned in the textbook or from other media?
3. After four weeks, students form small groups in the classroom and discuss their e-portfolios with classmates explaining what they learned on a specific topic.

*Options and suggestions:* On Instagram e-portfolios are private, therefore students can use their own personal account. Provide students with a specific cultural theme to investigate; for example eating habits, festivities, dress code, and their related hashtags. This activity can be aligned with the syllabus and students may explore cultural topics that will be addressed during the semester.

*Online tutorial:* https://snssic.arizona.edu/at-home-activities/instagram-4/

## Twitter
### Activity 1: Conducting a Twitter interview
*ACTFL goal areas:* cultures, communication
*Level:* beginner and above
*Learning objectives:*
1. Engage in a meaningful conversation with a target language user
2. Compose appropriate questions based on the interviewee

*Directions:*
1. Identify two target language speakers who are willing to be interviewed on Twitter by students. The interviewees need to answer students' tweets.
2. Share details about the interviewees with students. Students might need to use a specific register when drafting questions for the interviewees.
3. Pick a unique hashtag for your class; for example, #UAItalian101, and check that the hashtag is not already used on Twitter. A hashtag as #SpanishClass might already be used on Twitter; choose something specific to your class.
4. At home students draft five questions for the interviewees and peer review them on the adopted LMS or in class. Then students tweet their questions, with the chosen class hashtag, to the interviewees who will be replying back. The conversation between students and interviewees should continue beyond the first tweet.
5. By searching the class hashtag on Twitter (e.g., #UAItalian101) students' questions and tweets will be retrieved.

*Options and suggestions:* Students might draft questions on a specific cultural topic or current events relevant to the target country. Students might be required to use grammar structures and vocabulary seen in class.

*Online tutorial:* https://snssic.arizona.edu/at-home-activities/twitter-3/

## Activity 2: Microblogging about country-related trends

*ACTFL goal areas:* cultures, communication, communities

*Level:* intermediate and above

*Learning objectives:*

1. Examine other people's perspectives on a specific topic
2. Develop a Twitter post based on students' understanding of the selected topic

*Directions:*

1. Pick a unique hashtag for your class; for example, #UAGerman201, and check that the hashtag is not already used on Twitter.
2. Ask students to look at Twitter trends based on the/a country where the target language is spoken.



*Examples of Twitter trends based on Italy and Spain*

3. At home, students will pick one trend, examine the tweets related to it, and tweet a post between 200 to 280 characters expressing their opinion on the chosen trend, along with the class hashtag.
4. Students will also explore classmates' posts and comment on two of their tweets.
5. By searching the class hashtag on Twitter students' tweets will be retrieved.

*Options and suggestions:* Twitter trends may be explored based on a specific city. This activity can take place over four weeks, with students picking and posting about a different trend each week. Twitter trends are excellent for the language classroom since they represent users' perspectives about events and episodes currently happening around the world.

*Online tutorial:* https://snssic.arizona.edu/at-home-activities/twitter-4/

# RESOURCES

## Other social networking sites

**YouTube**     *www.youtube.com*
A video-based SNS and an excellent resource for input in the target language. Examples of how it could be used include listening to target language speakers' video-logs, searching for songs, and exploring users' comments under videos.

**Pinterest**     *www.pinterest.com*
A visual SNS used to collect ideas and organize them in collections, also called "boards." Students can create collaborative e-portfolios or stories. Students might choose to create an art gallery with captions or a visual journal by posting images related to their own understanding of the target culture.

**WhatsApp**     *www.whatsapp.com*
A mobile group messaging application that enables users to send text messages and voice messages, share images and videos, as well as other media. Within this platform students may create an audio and photo diary addressing a particular cultural topic of interest. This application can also be used to informally expose students to cultural topics throughout the semester, for example by sending news links or target-language-specific memes.

**Tumblr**     *www.tumblr.com*
A blogging platform that allows to easily set up a personal blog. On Tumblr students may collaborate on a blog investigating the presence of the target language and culture within their own community. With the dedicated mobile application, students can easily take photos with their phones and upload them to a blog.

## Recommended readings

Al-Ali, S. (2014). Embracing the selfie craze: exploring the possible use of Instagram as a language m-learning tool. *Issues and Trends in Educational Technology, 2*(2), 1-16.
> This article discusses how Instagram can be utilized as a learning tool to create content and foster students' speaking and writing skills. The use of Instagram allowed students to generate ideas for their writing activities with contextually-relevant content and offered them a learning experience that they enjoyed.

Antenos-Conforti, E. (2009). Microblogging on Twitter: Social networking in intermediate Italian classes. In L. Lomicka & G. Lord (Eds.), *The next generation: Social networking and online collaboration in foreign language learning* (pp. 59-90). San Marcos, Texas: CALICO.
> This article describes Twitter as a language learning tool that can be used for microblogging. Participants posted tweets based on prompts provided by the teacher and results show that the interest in Italian culture increased as a result

of using Twitter. The social network provided a more authentic opportunity for interaction and purposeful conversation.

Blattner, G., & Fiori, M. (2009). Facebook in the language classroom: Promises and possibilities. *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning, 6*(1), 17-28.
>In this article the authors discuss the group feature of Facebook and how it may benefit language learners by providing a space for authentic language interaction and the development of socio-pragmatic awareness.

Godwin-Jones, R. (2017). Smartphones and language learning. *Language Learning & Technology, 21*(2), 3–17.
>In this article the author provides an overview of the usage of mobile devices for language learning starting from 2007. Situated learning, local and global integration, and personal empowerment are identified as powerful factors that allow learners to access linguistic and cultural resources, acquire new knowledge and skills, and increase social connectivity.

Kim, D., Rueckert, D., Kim, D. J., & Seo, D. (2013). Students' perceptions and experiences of mobile learning. *Language Learning & Technology, 17*(3), 52–73.
>The aim of this article is to explore language learners' perceptions of mobile learning outside of the classroom context. Participants took part in six projects with the goal of exploring mobile learning experiences. The chosen mobile applications included YouTube and VoiceThread. Responses and participants' reflections show that mobile technologies have the potential to be used as engaging tools for language learning outside of the classroom.

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