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Learning Spanish Online: Emotions and Identity in role-play settings

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy in Second Language Teaching

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Abstract

This study focuses on the dynamic interaction between the learner, the context, and the target language using as its framework the learner-context interface model (White 1999, 2003, 2005; White, Direnzo & Bortolotto, 2016). The research considers the online learning context as social, collaborative, interactive and dynamic. Using Spanish as the target language, the analysis is guided by one research question: How do emotions and identity contribute to the construction of the learner-context interface in online Spanish role-plays?

Data for this research was gathered from a series of voluntary, non-assessed Adobe Connect online technology role-play sessions for Intermediate Spanish distance students at Massey University in New Zealand, and from two Stimulated recall interviews, where the use of the web-cam became significant for the analysis. The data set consisted of Stimulated recall sessions, students' questionnaires and diaries, and a teacher's journal.

The four role-play sessions took place over a period of two weeks: two sessions of one hour duration each week. Four students participated and all of them had at least an intermediate level of competence in the Spanish language, as well as previous experience in online learning settings.

Making use of the rich data collected the study records and analyses the moment-by-moment interactive emergence of emotions -with salience of humour- and identities and how these impact L2 (second language) learning in a technology-mediated L2 classroom. Insights from this research will offer a contribution to the growing study of emotions in L2 learning, as well as to the study of the complex dynamics of identity and language learning, particularly in relation to role-play settings.

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