

Lesson Plan developed during the [DigCompHub project](#)'s 4th Mentoring cycle.

## Empathy in digital environments

by **Martina Conti**, teacher of Italian as a foreign language for foreign learners at CPIA 3 Rome

inspired by DigCompHub MLR4 [Digital Empathy – Fostering Human Connections Online](#)

**Target audience:** adult learners with basic digital skills and A2 (CEFR) level language skills or higher.

### Objectives:

1. Develop students' linguistic-communicative skills to be able to articulate a request, either between people or to a machine, which can be answered positively or negatively.
2. Broaden intercultural skills by making students reflect on their awareness of their own culture and that of other students, as well as that of the host country.

**Duration:** approximately 120 minutes.

### Required materials:

- A. Cards with gestures typical of Italian culture and text written underneath, to be cut out or to be shown after the image of the gesture, if it is shown in Powerpoint. The pictures should show physical contact as a form of emotional support (e.g. holding hands, hugging, caressing).
- B. Plasticised faces/emoticons with magnet for sticking them on the board. At the end of the lesson, write sentences with the emotion (e.g. I am angry/ I am sad/ I am disappointed/ I am amazed).
- C. Whiteboard with Internet connection for the activities proposed later (connect to Amazon, a chatbot, etc.) and to show the MLR4's video translated into Italian by Heygen's lipsync AI application (or other).

## Lesson Structure

### Phase 1 - Elicitation

- 1.1 Students are shown a series of images relating to Italian gestures and are asked to explain, in plenary, what they see and the meaning of each gesture. They are also shown some images (e.g. two friends hugging each other, one of whom is sad, or two people holding hands) that have no direct meaning in Italian gestures, but refer to the Italian cultural sphere that expects some physical support when people want to show that they feel connected to others.
- 1.2 Students are presented with sad/happy/scared/angry/disgusted emoticons and are asked how, in their culture, they express these emotions, whether with particular gestures or phrases.

### Phase 2 – Initial steps

- 2.1 Divide the class into groups and show the students short texts (maximum 5 lines) on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in everyday activities such as handling a complaint with Amazon using a chatbot; elderly care using the giraff robot; support in writing e.g. with ChatGPT and Copilot.
- 2.2 Ask the students comprehension questions related to the texts they read and possibly let them tell the other groups what each group understood/learned about their text.



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### **Phase 3 – Central steps**

- 3.1 Show students the video in MLR4 translated into Italian via Heygen application.
- 3.2 Ask students if they think it is a real person speaking or an AI programme.
- 3.3 Ask students what kind of emotion seeing this video aroused in them.
- 3.4 Ask students in small groups to answer the questions at the end of the MLR4 resource. The questions can be translated into Italian by the students, or by the teacher, or even using ChatGPT after watching the video in MLR4.
- 3.5 Starting from the students' answers to the questions, ask how they would express in their culture the concepts in the questions, and how those concepts could best be expressed in Italian to create connection with other Italian speakers, with the ultimate aim of inclusion.

### **Phase 4 – Final production of a text: reality assignment**

Students will buy something on Amazon and have to write a text to the chat to lodge a complaint. They have to describe the problem and ask if they can replace their purchase, or if they have to buy it again. How do they react if they have to buy it again? What do they write if they are told that they can return it without paying?

- 4.1 Once the text has been corrected (in plenary or in pairs), the complaint chatbot is actually opened on Amazon to verify that the text is correct.
- 4.2 Ask questions to find out whether the students think the chatbot is AI or a person, whether they actually showed respect and empathy in the text, keeping the message of what they wanted to communicate clear.

### **Phase 5 – Conclusions and final check**

Students are shown that an AI assistant is currently present on WhatsApp and Instagram. They are asked as an 'exit homework', to write a text to make a request, solve a problem or resolve a cultural issue on the dedicated Whatsapp/Instagram chat and see if it is able to show empathy or simple kindness.

#### **- DigComp competences addressed by the lesson plan -**

**4.3 Protecting health and well-being:** *because of the discomfort experienced when confronted with an artificial agent.*

**1.2 Evaluating data, information and digital content:** *because of the need to discern between digital/artificial and human.*

**2.1 Interacting through digital technologies:** *in the past, this competence concerned the use of digital tools and services to communicate with other human beings, but today it is to be extended to interaction with artificial systems endowed with human-like communication capabilities.*