How do people communicate in a virtual environment where they do not have the possibility of seeing one another and where everything they share is the space of the virtual classroom? How can analysts account for the multimodal, multilingual communicative patterns of participants in online interaction? How are identity positions negotiated and (co)constructed in these settings?

These are some of the central issues in the four studies through which this thesis seeks to understand communication and learning in online glocal communities within higher education. The studies arise from netnographic work during two online Italian for Beginners courses offered by a university in Sweden. Taking sociocultural theoretical points of departure, this thesis examines how students create meaning in language learning using tools that allow them to interact when they have access to multimodal resources.

The findings from the four studies indicate that students who are part of institutional virtual higher educational settings make use of several resources in order to perform their identity positions inside the group as a way to enrich and nurture the process of communication and learning in this online glocal community. The sociocultural dialogical analyses also shed light on the ways in which participants gathering in discursive technological spaces benefit from the opportunity to go to class without commuting to the physical building of the institution providing the course. This identity position is, thus, both experienced by participants in interaction and also afforded by the ‘spaceless’ nature of the online environment.