Online Synchronous Discussion for Language Learning in a Global Classroom

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At the English as a Second Language classrooms at SHU, we have been using Skype to strengthen language learning for our international students. Skyping is a tool that facilitates autonomous learning by giving students ownership for their knowledge. Students participate in the discussion with their international partners freely while the teacher is observing and taking notes. It allows to shift the focus from the teacher to the learning process increasing intrinsic motivation to develop the skills acquired during classes. Listening, speaking reading writing are the typical English as a Second Language skills that are acquired during the formal classes. Skype allows for students to freely use - and for teachers to assess - what has been learned/taught during the formal instruction time. Students get to choose the topic, country and/or the framework of the conference thereby connecting the classroom skills with real-world context.