1 Introduction to using digital resources to enhance language learning – case studies in Italian

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In 2015, Anna Proudfoot, Enza Siciliano, and Rosalba Biasini agreed with the Society for Italian Studies (SIS) that a double session dedicated to Italian language teaching and learning would be included in the programme of every SIS Biennial Conference. SIS's stated aim, after all, is "to further the study of Italy, Italian language, literature, film, thought, history, society and arts in the United Kingdom and Ireland" (SIS NA)[3], and guaranteeing a dedicated session at this conference meant creating a space where language tutors and practitioners could present their scholarship and share experiences, methods, and techniques.

The double session at the 2015 conference, held in Oxford, focussed on digital resources and online learning, and was divided into a panel on *Online learning in the Italian language curriculum*, chaired by Anna Proudfoot, and another panel on *Using digital resources to enhance Italian language learning*, chaired by Rosalba Biasini. The topic, central in current research in the field of language teaching and learning, was chosen in order to showcase the specific contribution made by Italian to digital scholarship and innovation.

A group of Italian language tutors attended the conference to present papers and/or to contribute to the discussion on Italian language teaching and learning, and on related scholarship. Following the conference, the group decided that a publication of the proceedings to mark the first of these meetings would be a

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useful resource for all language tutors. To five of the original papers presented in Oxford, another three were added in order to include a range of ideas and experiences in one publication. The group worked together to produce the book that we are now pleased to present.

The first paper, **Marta Kaliska**'s *Developing pragmatic competence through language digital resources*, provides examples of tasks created on the basis of digital language resources such as language corpora, online forums, and communities, where learners can observe language used in digital communication in order both to attain pragmatic knowledge and enhance their language skills.

The second paper, **Maria Chiara La Sala**'s *Enhancing written language skills during the year abroad through online independent learning*, focusses on online independent language learning resources for the year abroad in Italy, which increases linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness, and seeks to explore how Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) can allow tutors to support the development of written language skills in the Study Abroad context, evaluating an online resource designed to enhance written language skills during the year abroad.

The next paper, **Paola Celant**'s *Using online tools and resources to encourage independent learning amongst ab initio students of Italian: a case study,* analyses the use of a range of online tools and resources, describing how technology has been embedded in an Italian language course and evaluating to what extent implementation of online tools and resources can enhance the students' experience.

The following two papers explore the use of technology-based language logs to enhance independent learning. **Salvatore Campisi**'s *ITALO (MyLearning Log): a case study in the use of technology-based resources to foster student engagement and autonomy* describes the project 'ITALO (MyLearning Log)', a learning log aimed at encouraging student engagement with the VLE, monitoring usage and effectiveness of the resources deployed, and developing learner autonomy.

Simone Lomartire's *The Italian electronic language log: a critical evaluation* focusses on the use of the electronic language log as a tool to monitor independent learning practices by *ab initio* students, providing a direct analysis and critical evaluation of the work produced by students for their electronic language log and, specifically, showing how this learning tool has helped beginner students of Italian manage their own learning independently.

Anna Motzo's *Using, adapting, and sharing learning resources to widen participation in language learning: a case study of Italian open educational resources for dyslexic students* offers an insight from the perspective of the practitioner on how to use, re-use, and adapt existing language learning materials, namely open educational resources, in ways that are designed to improve the learning experience for dyslexic learners and benefit non-dyslexic learners at the same time by adopting a multisensory structured language approach.

Marcella Oliviero and **Andrea Zhok**'s paper *Peer-teaching with technology: an Italian grammar case study* centres on the notion that changing traditional student identities by turning them into 'student-teachers' can have very positive consequences on their involvement with the learning process. In this approach, students are asked to research a grammar topic and generate tutorials using open-source suite *Xerte*, working collaboratively in small groups and teaching their peers by delivering their own tutorials in class.

The last paper of the publication is **Rosalba Biasini**'s *The digital world as topic: developing digital competences in the Italian language class*, which analyses how digital technologies and competences can be used in the Italian language class as a topic, describing how, while developing all the 'canonical' linguistic skills, students can improve transferable skills, such as working on self-development, shaping digital identity and reputation, and approaching media literacies and learning.

Buona lettura!

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