



THEMATIC NETWORK PROJECT IN THE AREA OF LANGUAGES III

SUB-PROJECT THREE:

LANGUAGES AS AN INTERFACE BETWEEN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF EDUCATION

NATIONAL REPORT / Italy

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Part one: Description of administrative and educational structures and policies

1.1 General information on the country

Italy is a parliamentary democracy with a surface area of 301,277 km² and a population of 57,679,955 inhabitants. It was a founder member of the European Union, its Head of State is the President of the Republic, and it consists of twenty regions.

1.2 Responsibilities and competences:

The official language in Italy is Italian. However, the country contains twelve linguistic minorities (roughly 5% of the population) whose languages are explicitly recognised and protected by Article Six of the Italian Constitution. These minority languages include German and Ladino (in Trentino-Alto Adige), Slovenian (in Friuli-Venezia Giulia), and French in the Aosta Valley. In these areas, the use of the local language is officially recognised in public documents and used (alongside Italian) by the local administration and in the schools, where the officially recognised linguistic minorities are entitled to be taught in their mother tongue.

Overall responsibility lies with the Ministry of Education, University and Research (*Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca* – MIUR). These are years of great transition and change throughout the Italian educational system, with successive reforms being enacted and others in the pipeline. As a result of these reforms, considerable administrative and management responsibilities have been devolved to the territorial and local authorities (regions, provinces and municipalities), and also to the universities, schools and educational institutions. An inspectorate, answerable to the Ministry, operates at national and regional level and supervises the educational system as a whole.

1.3 Language policies and language education policies

Besides preserving the language rights and heritage of the country's linguistic minorities, the aims of foreign language teaching in the Italian educational system by and large reflect Italy's membership of the European Union and stress the intercultural and communicative objectives set by the Council of Europe. As regards the languages on the curriculum, the Ministry decides at national level which languages are offered. For all education levels, the languages offered are English, French, German and Spanish (the latter two feature less frequently on the curriculum). The choice also depends on the preferences expressed by the pupils' families and on the availability of qualified teachers.

Additional impetus to the learning of languages in Italian schools has been given by the *Progetto Lingue 2000* (Languages Programme 2000), the Italian government measure aimed at overhauling the teaching and learning of modern language in Italian schools. With its emphasis on the importance of forming student groups with the same language level and interests, smaller groups and flexible timetabling and its adherence to Council of Europe language learning guidelines, it has tried to redefine language curricula vertically in the Italian primary and secondary education system, from nursery to high schools, with the aim of organising a syllabus in terms of learning objectives and competences which can be verified and certified.

There is a long tradition of studying a range of modern languages in Italian universities; the choice of which and the level to be obtained in them varies according to the nature of

the different disciplines and Faculties. Thus, as we might expect, the learning and teaching of a variety of languages is a high priority in the *Facoltà di Lingue* (Modern Languages Faculty), but less so in the *Facoltà di Giurisprudenza* (Law Faculty). Nevertheless, as we will see below (1.3.2.b), the situation is fluid as the new reforms require the widespread awarding of 'credits' for language competence.

1.4 Mapping of institutions and programmes engaged in language provision

1.4.1 Vertical axis: formal education system

a) the educational system

The school system in Italy is compulsory for children from the age of six to that of fifteen, although many of them attend pre-primary education, usually at the *scuola materna* (nursery school). In the first cycle, after five years at the *scuola elementare* (primary school), pupils go to the *scuola media inferiore* (middle school) for three years, at the end of which they take a state examination to obtain their middle school certificate. This enables them to accede to the second cycle of study. This second cycle (non-compulsory after the age of fifteen) comprehends the *scuola media superiore* (high school) and the system of professional formation and instruction (4-5 years). High school studies end with a state examination which must be passed if a student wishes to go to university.

SCHOOL EDUCATION IN ITALY

AGE	TYPE OF SCHOOL
3-6	<i>scuola materna</i>
6-11	<i>scuola elementare</i>
11-14	<i>scuola media inferiore</i>
14-17/19	<i>scuola media superiore*</i>

* the length of the high school course depends on the kind of school

N.B. Since the 1999/2000 school year, education has been compulsory between the ages of 6 and 15. The current reforms are in the process of extending this to 16.

There are two main kinds of secondary school: the *liceo* (lyceum) and the *istituto tecnico e professionale* (technical and vocational school). The *licei* include the *liceo classico* (specialising in the humanities), the *liceo scientifico* (specialising in maths and science), the *liceo linguistico* (specialising in modern languages) and the *liceo artistico* (specialising in the arts). There are various kinds of *istituto tecnico e professionale* (technical and vocational institutes), such as the *istituto tecnico commerciale* (commercial technical institute), the *istituto tecnico agrario* (farming technical institute), the *istituto tecnico per il turismo* (technical institute for tourism) and so forth.

The difference between the two kinds of secondary schools is best seen in terms of the emphasis of their objectives. The *licei* are traditionally oriented towards providing a more academic preparation for students who will most likely then go on to study at university. The *istituti tecnici e professionali* are more practically geared to the world of work, to providing their students with leaving certificates which will enable them to find employment; many of them however choose to go to university. Though at a superficial level the *istituti* might seem an easier option than the *licei*, in actual fact their programmes

can be just as hard, if not harder, than those of the *licei*. What is different between the two kinds of school is a question of emphasis: the *istituti* are more professionally oriented. Throughout the school system, students with special needs are integrated into mainstream education and specialist support is provided.

Higher education in Italy is mainly provided for by a system of public universities which includes some of the most ancient and famous in Europe. The University of Bologna, the oldest, was founded in 1088 and the University of Turin in 1404. There are some other state institutes of higher education, such as the Fine Arts Academies in the field of art, the Conservatories in that of music. Italy has also has a small number of private universities, such as the *Libera Università Internazionale di Studi Sociali* (LUISS) in Rome, and the Catholic University, the Bocconi University and the *Istituto Universitario di Lingue Moderne* (IULM) in Milan.

In the last few years the structure of the Italian University (whether private or public) has changed radically as a result of reforms aimed at making it more similar to those of other European countries. The new structure is largely based on a '3+2' formula, which requires students in most Faculties (not Medicine, for instance) to do a three-year first degree, which can be followed by a 'specialised' two-year degree. Postgraduate degrees available include masters' programmes (first or second level accessible after the first or specialised degree) and research doctorates. Student progress is usually measured under the traditional Italian system of giving examination grades in thirtieths, although some course only have a straightforward pass / fail (*idoneità*) requirement.. Examination success is followed by the awarding of *crediti formativi universitari* (credits - CFU) 180 CFU are required for the first degree; plus 120 more for the 'specialised' degree. Thus 60 credits represent one full year of study and 30 credits one semester. The following table, available in the *Istituto Universitario di Scienze Motorie* (Rome University of Movement Sciences) Guide for Exchange Students, shows how that university has worked out the relationship between the Italian marks and the grades of the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System):

ECTS ITALIAN MARKS DEFINITION

A	30-30 lode	Excellent, outstanding performance with only minor errors
B	27-29	Very good, above the average standard but with some errors
C	24-26	Good, generally sound work with a number of notable errors
D	21-23	Satisfactory, fair but with significant shortcomings
E	18-20	Sufficient, performance meets the minimum criteria
FX	<18	Fail, some more work required before the credit can be awarded
F		Fail, considerable further work is required

b) the studying of languages in the Italian education system

The formal education system in Italy prioritises the learning of languages throughout the children's schooling. Thus, the teaching of one European Union language is compulsory from the third year of primary school on, and in many middle schools a second European Union language is studied. Some of the high schools have five-year foreign language programmes.

However, the study of modern languages in the high schools depends largely on the type of school attended; in the *liceo scientifico*, for example, two modern languages might be studied for five years, but in the *liceo classico* only one for the first two years. So some students might reach university having studied two modern languages, other students

having only studied one. The *liceo classico* students will however have studied two classical languages (Latin and Greek) and thus have acquired a linguistic awareness which generally makes them good language learners when they come to study modern languages at university (some of the best German language students at the university fall into this category). There are also differences in the way the languages are studied. In the *istituto tecnico* the focus has traditionally been on the reading of quite specialised texts, while in the *liceo scientifico* a high priority has been given to the study of literature. There can however be considerable variation in the way languages are taught in the various kinds of *istituto* or *liceo* or even within the single school itself; this might depend on the kind of programme offered or on the ability and experience of the teacher. Another key variable involves the number of hours per week the languages are taught in the various schools. Indeed, a significant criticism of the Italian educational reforms in progress is that while they insist on the learning of foreign languages at school they involve a marked reduction of the number of hours per week devoted to language teaching.

A further complication is that although modern languages might be taught and studied throughout a pupil's school career, they might not necessarily be the same languages. This can also create didactic problems for the language teachers. For example, if the majority of the secondary school class has studied French at middle school, the English teacher might decide to start the English course as if all the students were beginners, including those who have studied English at middle school.

The modern languages studied at school might also depend on the school's location; thus for example students in the Alto Adige generally study German and those in the Aosta Valley French. Piedmont (the Italian region whose capital is Turin) was once a French-speaking part of Italy and the teaching and learning of French used to be deeply-rooted in the region. Over the last twenty or more years however English has been gaining ground at the expense of French. The decline of French is a sad cultural loss for the region and is an example of what might be described as the destructive effects of the opportunistic attitude to learning English. Many parents now insist on English being one of the languages their children study at school.

The higher education establishments in Italy are authorised to define their own curriculum and their own study plan within the framework of the national regulations. Since the prioritising of foreign language learning by Bologna Process, most Italian higher education programmes now involve the awarding of credits for knowledge of foreign languages.

The universities have tenured language and linguistics teaching staff as well as language centres which provide services for the teaching and learning of foreign languages. However, the picture is by no means uniform, even within the single universities. For instance, some Faculties have their own courses and internal examinations, while others accept external certification for the awarding of credits; and some 'outsource' the provision of language teaching to external providers. The *Politecnico di Torino* (Turin Polytechnic), for example, has 'outsourced' its English language teaching for some years.

1.4.2 Horizontal axis: including other language providers

Foreign languages can be learned in many ways in Italy, during and after the formal education system. Some of these ways are well integrated into the school and university system as will be seen, others less so. Here we provide some examples.

a) foreign cultural institutes

The Italian universities have always interacted with foreign cultural institutes, such as the British Council, the Centre Culturel and the Goethe Institut: organising and promoting seminars, lectures, conferences, exhibitions and cultural events, teaching and examining language learners and so on.

b) external certification agencies

These agencies have provided validation of language learning proficiency in Italy for many years. However, their role as regards the formal education system has changed as a result of recent protocols signed between some of these agencies and the responsible bodies, such as the Ministry (MIUR) and the *Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Italiane* (CRUI)

c) school and university exchange programmes

Many Italian schools are involved in exchanges with schools in other European countries as part of the various European exchange programmes. At a higher education level the University of Turin has been involved in several European projects for student mobility, especially since the Socrates programme began.

d) private language institutes and schools

Many language learners attend these before, during and after their formal education programmes.

e) study holidays abroad

Some parents also send their children abroad on 'study holidays' to improve their language skills, for example for English to Britain, Ireland or Malta for their English.

f) foreign language media (films, television, magazines, newspapers etc)

g) public and private enterprise

Many of these provide in-house language learning programmes for their employees; others enable their employees to take such courses externally (for example, in private language schools or abroad).

h) charitable and church bodies and associations

Because of their cosmopolitan nature many of these have strong links with non-Italian countries and bodies where a knowledge of foreign languages can prove essential.

i) international organisations

Turin hosts the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organisation as well as a number of the other international organisations, where a knowledge of foreign languages is a priority.

j) Università popolare and Università della Terza Età

Funded by the City Council, the *Università popolare* holds foreign language courses in the evening. The *Università della Terza Età*, which is self-financing, holds afternoon foreign language courses.

k) major cultural or sporting events / tourism

In 2006 Turin will host the Olympic Winter Games which has already provided an important stimulus to the learning of modern languages in the City and Province of Turin.

The local authorities have embarked on an ambitious language teaching and learning programme as part of their *Progetto Ragazzi Torino 2006* (Turin 2006 Youth Programme), again prioritising links with external examination bodies.

l) distance learning and e-learning

The advent of the new technologies has led to new kinds of language learning programmes.

Part two: Mapping of interfaces on the vertical and horizontal axes

2.1 Some salient features of the Italian HE system

Before we map the interfaces between higher education in Italy (and in particular the University of Turin) and the other sectors of education, it seems useful to point out some of the salient features which typify higher education in Italy. It is suggested here that while these features impinge, often negatively, on the teaching and learning of foreign languages in Italian universities, they have also led to the development and implementation of teaching techniques and learning strategies particularly suited to the context. Some of these are considered to be examples of good practice by the Turin University TNP3 Committee and are described in Part Three. These features help explain why for many Italian university students take a long time over their studies, which are not necessarily so easily separated along our vertical and horizontal axes. In some way, as will be seen, many of these students could even be considered to be already in a 'lifelong learning' situation.

In 1969, as part of the changes brought about by the student movement of 1968, Italian university entrance requirements were radically altered with the *liberalizzazione degli accessi* (liberalisation of admissions) law which opened up access to the universities. Successful completion of their high-school studies was considered sufficient for students to enter higher education. Access is still only limited in some Faculties like Medicine and some specialised course programmes, where prospective students are generally selected through a series of admission tests. Since then, the public universities have been home to large numbers of students. For example the *Università La Sapienza* in Rome has over 150,000 students enrolled and the University of Turin more than 65,000. The high numbers means that classes can be very large; many Italian professors who teach *materie fondamentali* (compulsory courses) in the first two years might have as many as 200-500 students. It has also led to a teacher / student ratio that for Ciliberti and Anderson is "rather high with respect to many other European countries." They provide official statistics to contrast the 1 to 34 ratio in Italy, with the 1 to 20.5 in France, the 1 to 15.8 in Germany and the 1 to 13.4 in Great Britain (1999: 30).

Italian universities are also characterised by a low graduation rate. There are various explanations for this. One of them lies in the physical dimension and number of exams which have to be passed before the Italian degree can be awarded. Another factor is linked to the classic constraints of trying to cope with the massive numbers of students enrolled on some of the courses, such as possible shortages of staff and classrooms, timetabling problems and so on. Further, many students work and therefore might take more time over their degrees in a system which makes this possible. Examinations can be taken by *studenti non-frequentanti* (students who have not attended courses) and can generally be repeated a number of times if a candidate fails or would like to improve their

mark. The time frame within which teaching / learning and evaluation takes place is loosely defined. The higher education institutions do not impose a rigid timetable on the student's academic career: it is up to the student to decide when he / she feels ready to sit the final (usually oral) exam. And in most Faculties there are at least 8 possible exam dates available during a given academic year. "Furthermore, a student may refuse a mark on an exam and try again at a later date - a practice that, at least in theory, means that educational outcomes as reflected in course marks are placed on record only if mutually acceptable / accepted." (Ciliberti and Anderson 1999: 31)

One striking aspect of the student population in Italian universities is the high student drop-out rate, especially after the first year: in some university courses this can involve as many as a quarter of the students enrolled. A number of possible reasons for students dropping out have been suggested, such as wrong choice of Faculty, finding work, failing exams, health problems, shortage of money, personal problems, family problems, disillusionment with the course and so forth. There is also a contrast between the way students have studied at high school (closely supervised by their teachers) and the independent way they are expected to study at university. This has been considered it to be one of the main causes of the high drop-out rate, and even more so of the length of time students take over their studies. It also needs to be noted that many students might change Faculties during their university careers and that a lot of them are *fuori corso* (out-of-time) students who take longer than the legal duration of the various courses of study to complete their degree. Ciliberti and Anderson (1999: 31) cite a national statistic of between 25% and 55% of the Italian university population; adding that it depends in part on the course of study, and commenting that it is largely due to the flexible exam system mentioned above. The situation might be changing as a result of the recent and current reforms, but as yet we do not have useful data on this.

These factors taken together determine the comparatively high age at which Italian university students complete their studies: before the recent reforms in a study of nearly 30,000 graduates (Camelli 2000: 21), the average graduate took their degree aged 27.7 and only 18% graduated before they were twenty-five. This might not be an entirely negative phenomenon if looked at from the point of view of finding employment, as it reflects the fact that many of those enrolled in Italian universities find jobs while they are studying and so can still continue with their studies when they are employed or between jobs.

As regards foreign languages, another feature is that students entering higher education come from all sorts of language learning and other backgrounds because of the variety characterising the high school system. A final characteristic can be the opportunistic attitude with which many of the stakeholders regard foreign language learning in the higher education context: languages are on the curriculum but not enough heed is paid to the ways they are learned and used (the major developments that have been taking place in language learning and applied linguistics) and thus the provision of the necessary means to facilitate their learning (Cortese 2002; Solly 2003).

2.2 Structures for co-operation in the educational sector and between the different language providers

Higher Education in Italy depends in large part on decisions taken at a ministerial level. The Ministry (MIUR) oversees all levels of education in Italy and at a formal level provides the guidelines which govern the sector as a whole. For example, as regards language learning, it is ministerial decisions which lay down the subject combinations required by the various degree programmes, including the presence of foreign languages and the number

of credits to be awarded for their knowledge. This is likely to change at a regional level as a result of the constitutional reforms currently under debate in the Italian Parliament, whereby some of the key responsibilities for educational decision-making are to be transferred from central to regional government. Therefore the situation photographed here could well become less uniform in the future. Because of their 'autonomy', it is the higher education institutions themselves which are responsible for the actual implementation of the ministerial requirements: thus, the provision of teaching, the nature of the assessment procedures and how the credits are to be awarded. Nevertheless, while the universities have a much greater degree of autonomy than in the past, there are also strong forces which tend to lead towards greater conformity: competition between universities both inside and outside Italy, increasing student mobility, the ECTS system, distance and telematic learning, the need to find new forms of funding and so forth.

2.2.1 Forms of co-operation

It seems difficult to draw a clear distinction between the cooperation on the vertical and horizontal axes, as the cooperation, as mentioned above, might involve both of axes. We would thus like to present some examples of what we consider a) vertical or **mostly vertical** and b) horizontal or **mostly horizontal** cooperation, before outlining the position of external certification and the European portfolio in the Italian educational system

2.2.2 Vertical or mostly vertical cooperation

As regards vertical cooperation, the fact that one single ministry is responsible for all levels of education lends a certain quality of coherence to the system. Thus the learning of languages is programmed throughout the curricula with the aim of respecting the objectives of the Bologna Process. Further cooperation at a national level can be clearly seen in *Progetto Lingua 2000*. This programme has redefined the language curricula vertically, from the nursery schools to the high schools. It has aimed to reorganise the syllabus in terms of language objectives and competences that can be verified and certified, often following the guidelines proposed by the Common European Framework (CEF)

An important recent stimulus to the cooperation has been provided by the careers advisory '*orientamento*' programmes organised to facilitate the progress of students through the vertical passages from the education system: thus Turin high school students now receive information (including talks and discussion) on the programmes provided by the various university Faculties. This generally includes information as to the language requirements and thus helps the high school teachers target their courses towards Faculty requirements

Another significant vehicle furthering vertical cooperation in the educational system has been the *Scuola Interateneo di Specializzazione per l'insegnamento nella Scuola Secondaria* (SIS), the two-year specialisation programmes organised by the universities for graduates training to become high school teachers. At a local level the University of Turin has also cooperated on language learning and teaching programmes with local state institutions, such as the *Istituto Regionale per la Ricerca Educativa* (IRRE).

2.2.3 Horizontal or mostly horizontal cooperation

The holding of conferences and *corsi di aggiornamento* (in-service and refresher courses) are a strong feature of the Italian system. These can be organised at local, regional or national levels and participation is rewarded. For example, state school teachers are

required to attend a certain number of these *corsi di aggiornamento* every year. These courses often involve links with higher education institutions: they might for example be organised by universities, be held in university facilities and include of papers presented by university faculty. One of the main bodies active in organising these courses in the field of foreign language learning is *Lingua e Nuova Didattica* (LEND); it also provides a lively forum of discussion in its journal. For the learning of English the British Council in Italy and TESOL Italy both host major annual conferences; while primarily aimed at teachers working in the school system these conferences also contain sections for university teachers and are important vehicles for cooperation primarily at a horizontal level. There are also a number of highly respected academic journals in the field of language learning and linguistics, among them: *Rassegna Linguistica Italiana* (RILA), *Linguistica e Filologia* and *Textus*.

Other national bodies working at a horizontal level include the *Associazione Italiana di Centri Linguistici Universitari* (AICLU), the Association of Italian University Language Centres, which has provided a strong impetus for collaboration and cooperation between the language centres.

2.2.4 External certification / European portfolio

The external certification of languages and the European language portfolio belong in Italy to both the vertical and horizontal interfaces of cooperation between higher education and other sectors of education. Indeed, as they do not have age or attendance restrictions, they might be considered to fall into the category of lifelong learning.

Only some Faculties in some Italian universities use external certification instead of their own examinations. Generally speaking, the picture presented by the University of Turin can be considered as fairly representative for the country as a whole. The *Centro di Coordinamento Linguistico dell'Università di Torino* (CELUT) takes the following line on the awarding of language certificates by private organisations and agencies: while they are considered to be a useful means for measuring the students' knowledge of languages, they are based on different parameters to those required by the university courses and therefore should not be considered as substitutes for university examinations. There are some exceptions within the university: for example, the Law Faculty awards its 3/4 basic credits to holders of Council of Europe Threshold Stage, and the Turin Polytechnic requires its students to hold at least the Cambridge ESOL PET (pass with merit) for its compulsory English component. The Polytechnic is also experimenting with the more academically geared external certification, of the International English Language Testing Service (IELTS).

Nevertheless, the Italian universities have taken important steps towards meeting the 'European' standards in learning and teaching foreign languages as set out in the Common European Framework (CEF). This has involved agreements between the Italian Ministry of Education and external examination bodies. In 2000 the *Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Italiane* (CRUI) signed agreements with various European institutions involved in language assessment and certification: *Alliance Française*, Cambridge UCLES (now Cambridge ESOL), *Chambre de Commerce et de l'Industrie de Paris*, *Goethe Institut*, *Ministerio de Educación, Cultura e Deporte*, Pitman-City and Guilds International, Trinity College, London, *Weiterbildung Testsysteme GMBH* c/o International Language Schools) concerning the granting of linguistic certification within the Campus One Project.

There are of course benefits for the students in the awarding of external certificates, which have a broadly accepted currency in the world of work. Moreover, the Council of Europe exams are held to have had an important washback effect on the learning of foreign languages in the high schools and in some ways can be said to be driving the

cooperation between higher education and the different language providers on both the vertical and the horizontal axes. While accepting that both students and potential employers recognise and might want this kind of certification, the CELUT takes the line that the university must not under any circumstance give up any of its authority, responsibility and natural role in assessing learners for the specific work accomplished for its own particular educational goals. There is considerable debate in the Italian Universities today concerning certification, the alternatives being: accepting and encouraging external certification; accepting and encouraging the use of portfolios as a way to integrate institutional certification; seeking to standardise assessment procedures created in Italian universities, perhaps best suited to the aims of language courses in Italian tertiary education, particularly so for EAP courses geared to domain-specific curricula. At present the AICLU has a working party examining the issues of external certification and the language portfolio, and is in the process of designing and piloting a programme of language proficiency certification for use in Italian Higher Education facilities as well as an Italian version of the portfolio. There is considerable interest in Italy in the European portfolio, which is considered to be innovative with its self-assessment structure and 'can do' statements; it is seen as being potentially useful for the students' careers, both at university and in the world of work. As regards levels, the Deans of Italian Modern Languages Faculties have decided that the level of the foreign language proficiency at the end of the three-year course should be C1.

Part three: Needs, obstacles, opportunities, measures, facilitating instruments:

3.1 Identification of needs, obstacles and opportunities and measures to be taken to improve communication and co-operation

As we have seen there is considerable communication and cooperation in the Italian system between the various stakeholders on both the vertical and the horizontal axes. These are within the framework of the guidance provided by the single Ministry responsible and by Italy's strong commitment to the language learning policies of the European Council. It is to be hoped that this communication and cooperation will continue when the new regionalisation reforms are in place. They are considered to be especially important given the salient features characterising higher education in Italy described above. Thus, given the large numbers of students involved and the related constraints, the Italian system would seem to have a particularly requirement for collaboration and cooperation on both the horizontal and the vertical axis throughout the students' learning of foreign languages. For example, as we have seen course attendance is often not compulsory and as a lot of students are also working they cannot attend courses on a regular basis, if at all. This has led to the need for many students to adopt a self-study approach and to be thankful for external language learning facilities.

3.2 Identification of facilitating instruments for lifelong learning in the field of modern languages

The University of Turin TNP3 Committee has identified the following as examples of good practice in the facilitation of lifelong learning in the field of modern languages. It will be

observed that all contain elements of partnership with external bodies, and that in many of them the university plays a leading / guiding role.

3.2.1 Using drama / theatre in foreign language teaching / learning

The use of drama / theatre in foreign language learning has been experimented successfully in Italy and good results in raising both students' and teachers' motivation have been reported by those involved in doing theatre activities in a foreign language at the University of Turin. The courses and programmes, experimented in various languages, serve not only to improve the students' pronunciation and intonation, but also increase their capacity to memorise material and help to create an atmosphere of warm cooperation.

Often these activities, considered by us examples of good practice, entail close collaboration with external bodies, such as those organised with the *Centre Culturel de Turin*, involving meetings, round tables, theatre workshops and conferences, for example on francophone literature and the French language. The *Lingue in scena* project aims at involving high school students (14-19 years old) and foreign language teachers in performing theatre in original language (English, French and German). The projects dealing with German language and theatre are monitored by the *Goethe Institut Turin* and financially sponsored by the Piedmont Region and the Provincia di Torino. For more information see: [//www.goethe.de/it/tur/linguesc.htm](http://www.goethe.de/it/tur/linguesc.htm)

3.2.2 Using the web / distance learning

Italian Universities are in the forefront of experimenting with the new technologies in language learning and the University of Turin is no exception. For example as regards German, the web site of the Turin University Language Centre of the Humanities Faculties - *Centro Linguistico per le Facoltà Umanistiche* (CLIFU) - provides a very helpful link to some of the most useful webpages on learning German as a foreign language: the web pages have been compiled by Georg Hehmann, German lecturer at the Modern Languages Faculty and the site allows students to download learning materials. Further information is available at: <http://hal9000.cisi.unito.it/wf/Servizi-pe/Formazione/Tandem-in-Tandem-a-T1/index.htm>

The Tandem Server mirror site (www.cisi.unito.it/tandem) is a useful Internet- tool that facilitates autonomous language learning with a native speaking tandem partner not only via electronic media (email, Internet, SMS, etc.) but also face-to-face. This multilingual facility, containing a general introduction in autonomous and intercultural tandem learning, helps, tips, skills, a wide bibliography for tandem learners and a tandem dating service with regularly updated summary tables for available eTandem partners, has been evolving since 1994 by the International Tandem Network in several EU funded international projects in collaboration between the University of Bochum (Germany) and over 30 European universities, schools and other educational institutions, among them the University of Turin. It is integrated at the University of Turin by a local web-page (www.cisi.unito.it/tandem/TORINO) and a tandem learning advice service which dates also face-to-face tandem partnerships (at the moment only for German). Weekly email-tandem learning meetings were organised until some years ago, but recently students seem to prefer to carry out their tandem correspondence individually at home.

The Tandem Project is also highly regarded by those responsible for teaching / learning Spanish, especially when students can be directed towards specific interests and study programmes. Besides the main ESP-ITA (Italy-Spain) link, there is a second one based in Barcelona for Italian and Catalan. The Italian project is directed from Bologna

University by Prof. Susanna Bonaldi who has organised links with students in Argentina, especially as regards Italian emigration. In Turin the project is run by Juan Fernández, Spanish lecturer at the Facoltà di Lettere,

On a more literary note, the www.germanistica.it web-site has been used to publish the various solutions of poetry translations with interesting feedback from students at other universities.

3.2.3 'Stages', exchanges and inter-university agreements

The University of Turin Faculty of Modern Languages has signed a number of agreements with the Goethe Institut Turin and the German-Italian Centre Villa Vigoni in order to allow its students to attend a stage (compulsory in the new bachelor course of studies). The aim of the stage is to improve language skills in German and to have an insight in the organisation of these two important institutions which work as an interface between Germany and Italy. Contacts: Dr. Marcella Costa (Villa Vigoni), Prof. Gerhard Friedrich (Goethe Institut).

Further information is available at: www.lingue.unito.it/tirocini

The University of Turin has been successfully involved in various European exchange projects for many years, both Socrates-Erasmus programmes and others. Here we mention the Socrates-Erasmus exchanges with the following French universities: Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris III, Université Paris X Nanterre, Université Paris VII Denis Diderot, Université Blaise Pascal de Clermont-Ferrand, Université Lyon III Jean Moulin, and Université de Toulon et du Var. Other agreements exist with French universities, for example that with Université Lyon III Jean Moulin (LEA, Langues Etrangères Appliquées) for a joint DESS (Diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées), Mastaire Langues et Affaires – Laurea specialistica della classe 43/S. There is also the *Scuole tematiche / Ecoles thématiques* coordinated – at the level of a Doctorate in French Linguistics (organised from Brescia, with local centres in Turin, Milan and Trieste) with the Université Paris VII Denis Diderot and Paris X Nanterre. Indeed, as far as the learning of French at university and links with French universities are concerned, Turin hosts a rather special institution the *Università Italo-Francese / Université Franco-Italienne* – the French-Italian University founded as a result of bilateral agreements between the French and Italian Governments and with seats in both Turin and Grenoble..

Another experience involving students studying abroad has been organised by the Turin University of Faculty of Political Science with the University of Wolverhampton in the United Kingdom. This is particularly interesting in that it enables the students who go to Wolverhampton for a stay of three-four weeks to attend university courses in the subjects they are studying in Turin (economics, history, international relations, social sciences and so on). Thus they improve their knowledge of these fields as well as attending the language learning courses (General English, Business English etc.). They can stay in residential accommodation on campus or with families, and have full access to the library and other university facilities. The programme is run by Prof. Giuseppina Cortese and Prof. Michelangelo Conoscenti.

3.2.4 Courses on Italian language and culture for non-native speakers

In order to meet the many requests coming daily from foreign students and citizens interested in learning the Italian language for study or work purposes, the University of Torino organises regular courses of Italian for foreigners at the CLIFU (Art Interfaculty Language Centre) during the course of the year. For more information see <http://www.clifu.unito.it/hp.html>

Besides the traditional language courses for Erasmus students, since 1998 the University of Torino has also been organising an Italian Language and Culture Summer School for non-native speakers. The course aims at combining the language learning with leisure activities that generally characterize a summer holiday. The *Torino Università Estate* (Turin Summer University) Committee was born in 1998 on the initiative of the Rectorial Commission of International Relations, in order to offer a high quality 'welcome system' during the summer period for people interested in learning Italian as foreign language. The initiative met a considerable success both among Italian Institutions in the world and among universities. With an average participation of 40/45 persons per year and a standard duration of 18 days, Torino Università Estate has involved university students, teachers, professional men and women or simply people interested in the Italian language and culture from all over the world and aged between 18 and 60 years old. The rich supporting programme (including leisure activities, sport and culture) has been particularly appreciated also thanks to the assistance of young tutors, mainly students from the Faculty of Modern Languages. Classes are taught by qualified teachers, who are specialised in teaching Italian as a foreign language.

In 2003 a 'One week skiing and Italian language course for foreigners in the mountains of the Winter Olympic Games 2006' took place for the first time in Bardonecchia. This initiative provides the opportunity to learn or improve Italian, and to practise skiing; the programme also includes a number of cultural and leisure activities to help participants get to know the mountains and the local culture. The event takes place in winter in Bardonecchia, one of venues of the Winter Olympic Games 2006 and is organised together with "CUS Torino" and "Comune di Bardonecchia". For more information: x <http://www.summerschool.unito.it/>

Part four: Recommendations:

We have tried here to provide a brief overview of the Italian situation and to highlight some of its main characteristics; at the same time we have pinpointed some examples of what we consider to be good practice, which we hope will prove useful as points of reference to other practitioners working elsewhere in similar or somewhat similar contexts. As regards recommendations, we note the extremely positive work carried out by the various practitioners in our local context: very often the collaboration and cooperation with external stakeholders is the result of their personal enthusiasm and initiatives. Finally, we would like to draw special attention to the work of the SIS. As we have mentioned their future is under debate and yet, as far as the teaching and learning of foreign languages in Italy is concerned, they seem to be havens of good, or rather excellent, practice.

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Glossary

autonomia - autonomy (greater local decision making autonomy was introduced into the Italian educational system in the 1990s)

corsi di aggiornamento – in-service and refresher courses for practitioners

crediti formativi universitari (cfu) – these credits are awarded for successful completion of courses and will allow greater mobility to the student population, at an interfaculty or interuniversity level

Erasmus / Socrates – European student exchange programme under the auspices of the Council of Europe

fuori corso – 'out-of-time' students who take longer than the legal duration of the various courses of study to complete their degrees (Ciliberti and Anderson 1999)

istituto tecnico e professionale – technical and vocational secondary school (more oriented towards preparing students for the world of work)

liberalizzazione degli accessi – liberalisation of admissions (1969 law radically altering access to Italian universities; new entrance requirements meant students from any five-year secondary school could enter any university faculty: the number of students went up, and their academic backgrounds and needs changed dramatically)

liceo – lyceum (academically oriented secondary school)

materia fondamentale – compulsory courses to be taken by all the students on a study programme

maturità - secondary school leaving certificate, at present obtained after 13 years of schooling

nonfrequentante - student not attending course, but taking exam

Progetto Lingue 2000 - 2000 Languages Programme (Italian government programme aimed at overhauling the teaching and learning of modern language in Italian schools)

Progetto Ragazzi Torino 2006 - Turin 2006 Youth Programme (ambitious language teaching and learning programme linked to the choice of Turin as the host city for the Olympic Winter Games in 2006)

prova idoneativa - course requirement usually based on a pass / fail exam

scuola elementare – primary school (usually from 6 to 11)

scuola materna – nursery school, kindergarten (usually from 3 to 6)

scuola media inferiore – middle school (usually from 11 to 14)

scuola media superiore – secondary school (usually from 14 to 17/19); see also *liceo* and *istituto tecnico e professionale*

List of acronyms

AICLU	<i>Associazione Italiana Centri Linguistici Universitari</i>
CEF	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CELUT	<i>Centro di Coordinamento Linguistico dell'Università di Torino</i>
CLIFU	<i>Centro Linguistico Università di Torino</i>
CRUI	<i>Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Italiane</i>
ECST	European Credit Transfer System
FCE	First Certificate in Examination
IELTS	International English Language Testing Service
IRRE	<i>Istituto Regionale per la Ricerca Educativa</i>
LEND	<i>Lingua e Nuova Didattica</i>
MIUR	<i>Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca</i>
PET	Preliminary English Test
RILA	<i>Rassegna Italiana di Linguistica Applicata</i>
SIS	<i>Scuola Interateneo di Specializzazione per l'insegnamento nella Scuola Secondaria</i>
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
UCLES	University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate (now Cambridge ESOL)