

Chapter 17

An Experience of Integrated E-Learning in the Teaching of the Italian Language for Immigrated People

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses the planning and carrying out of a research project concerning the teaching of the Italian language for immigrated people. First of all, the dimensions of the phenomenon of immigration from non-EU countries in Italy and in Europe is reported (mostly from Northern and Central Africa and the East), and its evolution during last years is described, with a special attention to the change in the policy of reception and hospitality. Secondly, the theoretical framework for the virtual learning environment to be adopted to support the teaching of Italian language is highlighted. At last the planning of the teaching activity is analyzed and the features of the didactic process are discussed. The experience the author aims at carrying out can be considered a study case, but a comparison with more traditional experiences is made, and the implications for a good inclusion of the immigrants is analyzed.

1. INTRODUCTION

During the last twenty years people migrating from Middle East, Far East and Northern/Central Africa towards Italy and countries of Northern Europe grew up, and passed from 500.000 to 5.000.000 persons. This phenomenon, which occurred in the same period in most part of the Mediterranean countries, marked the transformation of Italy from an emigration country into an immigration land.

A few numbers better describe the situation depicted above and its rapid evolution, especially in Italy. At the beginning of 2014 Italy had 60.782.668 inhabitants (53% among them were women), and there were 4.922.085 foreigners (i.e., 8,1% of the whole population). The Italian Institute for Statistics (ISTAT, 2014), reports that at the beginning of 2015 there were 5.073.000 foreigners, that means they

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were 8,3% of the Italian population. In 2017 nearly 10% of Italian population is made of foreigners (mostly immigrants from Africa and Middle East).

Interesting features concerning the foreigners living in Italy can be found in the most recent reports from ISTAT and CENSIS, and from the comparison of the actual data reported there and those coming from former reports (CENSIS, 2015; ISTAT, 2015).

First of all, it has to be noted that the majority of the immigrants (nearly 80%) choose to stay in Italy to find better living and working conditions (they are called in fact economic migrants), or to reunite with their family (just over 20% among them).

When looking at working conditions of immigrants it emerges that the economic crisis of last years has influenced their employment rate, in 2008 it was in fact 67%, but in 2015 it decreased to 58,1% (i.e. very near to the employment rate of Italian citizens, which is 55,6%). The data on the above situation are accompanied by the trend in the unemployment rate for foreigners, which grows to 17,1% in the first semester of 2105, while it is 12% for the Italian workers.

Furthermore, it has to be noted that the increase in the number of unemployed and inactive foreigners doesn't tell very much on the quality of their job, which is still mostly unskilled, hard and low-paid: 65,9% of immigrants do in fact manual work (35,6% among them do unskilled work) and only 34,1% are employed, professional or executive.

During last years the signs of a change can be detected in the community of immigrants living in Italy, because business owners increase of 31,5% (mainly in the commerce sector), while Italian companies decrease of 10,6%. Whether this index describes a growth of foreigners towards the middle class, so marking the difference with analogous situations in London and Paris, where still remain areas of high ethnic concentration and social distress, further and deeper analyses are needed to identify the right practices and processes which can help immigrants to better integrate themselves in the Italian society.

It goes beyond the aims of this work the discussion of the governance of the reception of foreigners, which in 2014 has seen the Italian Government forced to develop a special plan, to cope with the extraordinary flow of non-EU citizens: adults, families and unaccompanied minors. It is however important to remind here that the reception system is hierarchically structured and is multi-layered: it involves in fact the Interior Ministry, the municipalities, the Italian association of municipalities (ANCI – National Italian Association of Municipalities), international and intergovernmental organizations and the Third Sector organizations (also called voluntary or community sector).

At last it has to be remarked here that foreigners who aspire to stay in Italy need a residency permit, and, as in other countries all over the world, there are different kinds of permissions:

- “First stay permit”, two years long, which can be given the first time to the people who request it and have the requirements to obtain it;
- “Residence confirm”, renewal of the first permit, which can be given to people, whether the conditions for its release persist;
- “Long period residence permit”, after five years of permanence in Italy, which is given under request to interested people, and is subjected to the passing of an examination on the knowledge of Italian language.

Undoubtedly, it is expected that for entitled foreigners, tools and processes that enable them to be citizens in every respect are established, and first of all, it is desirable they are provided the basics of the Italian language to let them easily interact with public offices and administration and with other people.

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