Quality in Language Learning

Project Number: 2020-1-PT01-KA226-HE-094809

DIGITAL EDUCATION AND LSP CONTENTS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

The chapter will focus on how to investigate digital educational resources for the study of LSP languages and on how to use them to innovate or make more engaging language learning and teaching processes from the twofold perspective of the lecturer and the learner.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid rise of new technologies has caused the global higher education landscape to change quickly. In recent years, this already constantly changing technological environment has received a strong push by the Covid Sars-2 pandemic, which has forced institutions to develop digital teaching resources or, if already available, to improve and expand them to adapt to the new requirements. This context brought out and emphasized the already existing challenges, the difficulties, and potentialities of using technology in teaching, leading to a wider application of digital resources in the classroom.

Therefore, this chapter aims to discuss the opportunities related to the use of digital resources as integration or as an alternative to classroom activities in Higher Education language courses. We will begin this contribution with an outline of the theoretical underpinnings that support the use of digital resources in education. We will then discuss the current challenges that lecturers face in bringing technology in the classroom. In this regard, we will provide practical examples and case studies of resources that have been tested in university language courses of Finnish as a Foreign Language, German as a Foreign Language and Italian as a Second Language to increase language teaching effectiveness and attractiveness.

2. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This section will outline the theoretical and methodological concepts guiding our research on the use of technology as an alternative or supplement to the classroom. Particular attention will also be paid to the challenges facing the teacher today, in terms of being able to use digital resources and staying up-to-date with their use and the implications this has on his or her profession.

2.1 DEFINING DIGITAL COMPETENCE: THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

The digital turn in education has brought quick and unexpected changes and the education systems, often, have not been able to keep the pace with them.

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In this regard, teachers are aware, in their daily experience, that they must come to terms with the 21st century education landscape: they recognize the importance of promoting a variety of learning approaches and environments, including the use of digital technologies; moreover, they realise that using digital resources in classroom activities requires digital and technology-based competences.
These competences are among the eight key competences identified by The Council Recommendations of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning, which citizens must possess in order to facilitate personal fulfilment and development, employability, social inclusion and active citizenship (European Council, 2018). These are: 1. Literacy, 2. Multilingualism, 3. Numerical, scientific and engineering skills, 4. Digital and technology-based competences, 5. Interpersonal skills, 6. Active citizenship, 7. Entrepreneurship, 8. Cultural awareness and expression.
As also mentioned in chapter 1, when defining competence 4, Digital competence, the Recommendation refers to the Digital Competence Framework (DigComp 2016; new version 2022). Indicating the inadequacy of the EU citizen's digital competence level, the DigComp is a tool that can be used to identify this competence and to improve and support it. Five components of digital competence are introduced: 1. Information and data literacy, 2. Communication and collaboration, 3. Digital content creation, 4. Safety, 5. Problem solving.
Moreover, to better grasp teachers' needs and to support the development of students' digital competences as well, the European Commission published the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu, 2017) with a focus on the digital competences that are specific to the teaching profession.
In the Council Recommendation, the digital competence definition has been broadened as 'the confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society. It includes information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation (including programming), safety (including digital well-being and competences related to cybersecurity), intellectual property related questions, problem solving and critical thinking' (European Council, 2018, p. 9).
In these seminal documents, digital competence is seen not just as the confident use of software or digital devices, as it also includes a set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, abilities and strategies (e.g.: confident, critical, responsible use; problem solving and critical thinking) that teachers must possess in order to manage digital educational environments effectively.
The generation and dissemination of these documents and frameworks illustrate how they can contribute to innovation in education and professional development. They can help to identify teachers' level of digital competence, in order to fill possible shortcomings and to promote vocational education and training from the lifelong learning perspective. At the same time, they can support the necessary reflection on the appropriate pedagogical approaches to adapt in current educational and social environments.

2.2 The Pedagogical Debate on OERs

To summarise in a few lines some of the issues that characterise scholars' debate on Open Educational Resources (OERs) and their use in language teaching and learning, it is useful to observe that most research questions are based on four pillars: the relationship between OERs, pedagogical approaches and methodologies; learning goals and students' perception of OERs; teachers' digital competence and/or attitude regarding OER creation, use or re-use; the implication that the very definition of OERs for language learning might have on teaching practices.
The relentless pace of technological revolution has led to rethink teaching paradigms considered as acquired and consolidated. However, well before its disruptive expression in the 21st century, distance learning evolution defined various models of adult education. If we consider the pedagogy of different distance learning generations over time, we notice the interplay that is realised between learning

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theories and technological advancement (table 1). This productive interplay is outlined in table 1 which is adapted from Anderson & Dron (2011) considering the version proposed by Rivoltella (2021).

Generation	Main technologies	Pedagogy	Target	Teacher's role
1st generation	Published media	Behaviourist/Cognitive pedagogy (focus on instruction)	Individuals	Content producer, guide, language model
2nd generation	Mass media			
3rd generation	Networking media	Social-constructivist pedagogy (focus on construction and creation)	Groups	Discussion leader
		Connectivist pedagogy (focus on connections and sharing)	Networks	Critical mate

Table 1: Three generations of distance teaching/learning;
adapted from Anderson & Dron (2011); Rivoltella (2021).

The sociocultural constructivism (Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999) emphasises the importance of knowledge restructuring through processes of comparing, sharing and negotiating meaning in a context that promotes action in learning modes such as peer collaboration and peer tutoring (Fragai et al., 2017). In connectivism, the development of meta-skills is considered crucial (Siemens, 2006). According to Downes (2019), connectivism key principles, such as autonomy, diversity, openness and interactivity produce effective outcomes in students' language learning and in their increased capacity to learn how to learn, and to acquire new knowledge in an autonomous way.
By contrast, the conceptual definition of 'open education' may appear controversial. According to Almeida, the OER movement is often victim of a 'decontextualized rhetoric' (Almeida, 2017, p. 15) in its emphasis on 'social abstractions like inequality or oppression' (ibid., 2017, p. 14). The spread of labels such as 'open pedagogy' or 'open education practice' has thus raised criticism about the vagueness of modalities, tools and learning processes (Zawacki et al., 2020). Focusing on students' learning by doing, 'OER-enabled pedagogy' has been defined as 'the set of teaching and learning practices that are only possible or practical in the context of the 5R permissions [retain, reuse, revise, remix and redistribute] which are characteristic of OER' (Wiley & Hilton, 2018, p. 135). In contrast, Mishra (2017) calls for a less rigid definition of an OER, in a bottom-up perspective that would complement the top-down one. This would guarantee the criteria of 'authenticity' of resources (see the case of learning with academic podcasts and LSP's analytical tool in Module 2 of the e-learning package of the QuILL's website and in point 3.3. of this chapter) while a strict observation of the 5Rs wouldn't.

2.3 The Ages of the Media in Education

In "The third age of the media", Rivoltella (2018) argues that the current period represents the third stage of media evolution. Since the 1980s, the media have been the channel through which a message passes from one interlocutor to another, freeing itself from any restrictions of space and time. In this first phase, the possibility of using media as amplifiers of our sensory organs is still optional, which allows the user to maintain the illusion of being in control of the situation.
Since the end of the decade, we witness a drastic paradigm shift: media invade urban space and become the environment in which we weave many of our social relationships; our ecosystem appears to be increasingly constituted by media. At the same time, we are also observing the emergence of

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learning communities where one can share content, meet people or obtain services. From a pedagogical point of view, in this second phase, media as an environment become more pervasive but the user retains the power to enter and – eventually – leave it.
Finally, we come to the current third phase in which the media are transformed into a kind of second skin that allows us to build meaningful relationships and/or content together with other users. The power of this mutation makes it increasingly unrealistic to reject such tools; consequently, educational systems and services are obliged to cope with such pervasiveness.
The proliferation of ICTs has implied the multiplication of new types of languages: verbal, written, iconic, musical, gestural, among others. The ability to adequately understand and use these new languages represents a great educational challenge as it poses problems relating to the semiotic dimension (succeeding in transmitting knowledge of the structure of the new languages), the expressive dimension (ensuring that they are used in a creative and meaningful way) and the ethical dimension (what can or cannot be expressed or communicated). Finally, these are flanked by the political dimension of providing effective tools for the development of critical thinking, which underpins the concept of citizenship. It is indispensable to rethink the role of teachers to make ICT-based resources full educational tools, succeeding in bringing inside the classroom what we already use outside in a pedagogically correct manner.
We consider it useful to exploit the pedagogical implications inherent in Rivoltella's theories, especially in reference to the second and third stages of media. From an educational point of view, websites, apps and social media can be used to improve the effectiveness and attractiveness of the language teaching and learning process with regard to LSP (for example analysing podcast's input and discourse in media seen as a communicative environment) while innovative ICT-based resources offer new opportunities of communication in virtual contexts (for instance contributing to blogs' discussions in media seen as a connective tissue).

2.4 Notes on ICT-based Language Teaching after the Digital Turn

The forced move to online teaching during the pandemic has revealed deficits in digital and pedagogical lesson planning. In an attempt to fill this gap in knowledge, frameworks are being developed. Intra-institutional support and peer support from colleagues is important to keep pace with the dynamic development of the digital teaching environment.

2.4.1 Digital Turn and Digital Gap

Although the use of digital technologies in foreign language teaching has been practised for a long time, there has been an exponential increase in digitally supported forms of teaching in recent years, due in particular to the SARS CoV-2 pandemic. The crisis posed major challenges to all stakeholders (learners, teachers, institutions, technicians, and parents). From the start, significant work was put into continuing the training programme in the form of online courses. Digitally supported teaching received an extraordinary boost, but in this improvised form it also showed that the necessary technological and pedagogical-didactic knowledge for this specific form of teaching was generally not available. It seems that the vision of digital skills promoted, especially for teachers, as a declared goal of European education policy, has not yet been sufficiently implemented. The high-profile skills required of teachers under the Framework for Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu), the "high levels of digital and pedagogical skills" (Punie & Redecker, 2017, p. 6), had to be measured against reality, and it became apparent that challenging learning curves were yet to be mastered. In particular, teachers who received little or no institutional help in the digital organisation and implementation of their courses suddenly had to deal with a new digital teaching environment and the associated planning and techniques. In the current research discussion, this juxtaposition of digital turn and digital gap is found

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in the double labelling of "planned online language teaching versus crisis-driven online teaching" (Gacs et al., 2020).

2.4.2 Strengthening Digital Literacy

Since content-related, pedagogical and digital competencies interact in efficient teaching, but teachers are often left to deal with this complex task alone, attempts were made to provide a structured framework for teacher training. This is also an attempt to create a positive effect on the theory-practice gap, i.e., the unequal relationship between theoretical research knowledge and its practical implementation in everyday teaching: "Despite a multitude of research-based publications and best practises relating to computer assisted language learning (…) there is a dearth of resources on how to prepare teachers for online language teaching and the skills needed for this new teaching environment." (Compton, 2009). Already at the turn of the millennium, the European Commission supported the ICT4LT website to promote ICT training for language teachers. In 2006, the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework was presented, which understands the learning situation as an interplay of technological knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge: "Thus teachers need to develop fluency and cognitive flexibility not just in each of the key domains (T, P, and C), but also in the manner in which these domains and contextual parameters interrelate, so that they can construct effective solutions." (Koehler & Mishra, 2009). In addition to TPACK, which was not specifically designed for language teaching, other frameworks emerged that focused on digital language teaching. These include the European Commission-funded projects DOTS, Developing Online Teaching Skills, and EAQUALS, Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality in Language Services. DOTS offers a Moodle-based workspace and seeks to meet the dynamic, ever-evolving demands of teacher training by offering constantly updated workshops (Stickler et al., 2020). EAQUALS (2016, p. 4), on the other hand, attempts to classify competences and requirements by means of a detailed description inventory in order to promote teachers' self-assessment. Further frameworks, also at national level, underpin the fact that there is a great need for action in this field (cf. Deregözü, 2022). Numerous initiatives are also aimed at reducing the skills deficit, e.g., the "Quality Initiative for Teacher Training", which promotes teacher training in Germany with a focus on the digital classroom environment (BMBF, 2022).

2.4.3 Increasing Teacher Confidence and Autonomy

In many places, the digital challenge must be faced by the teachers without support, which often has a negative effect on their emotional state and results in a lack of motivation. A defensive attitude towards digital tools is the result, especially when digitalisation is imposed as an institutional mandate. This in turn leads to a negative teaching atmosphere: "Such negative attitudes often filter down to the learners, who can sense their teachers' lack of enthusiasm (…) about the technologies that they are required to use, and this can have a detrimental effect on the learning environment on the whole." (Stockwell & Reinders, 2019, p. 45). It therefore remains a desideratum that teaching institutes anchor their in-service training of teachers to a structured and regular form. The ability to use digital tools in a constructive way and to feel safe in doing so leads to greater autonomy for the teacher. This in turn increases the instructional choices to appropriately place these digital tools or content in the lesson planning. It is highly advisable, especially when there is a lack of institutional support, to build a peer network between teachers to exchange best practices. Within the Quill project, operative tool 3 "Using digital resources in language teaching" provides an overview of important points in digital course organisation (setup, content creation, assessment, autonomy and motivation), which could be of particular interest to novice or seasoned teachers. This tool can be found in Module 2 of the Training Package available on the website of the QuILL project.

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3. How to Use Digital Resources as an Integration or an Alternative to Classroom Activities: Tools and Case Studies

Based on the previous considerations, it emerges that the use of digital resources brings with it endless challenges to language teaching, with special regard to LSP. Therefore, in this section we will describe how to use digital resources as an integration and /or as an alternative to classroom activities in university language programmes. In particular, we will show how websites, apps and podcasts can be applied to increase language teaching effectiveness and attractiveness within the current technology-based learning approaches. In this regard, we will provide practical examples of resources that have been tested in language courses of Finnish as a Foreign Language, Italian as a Second Language and German as a Foreign Language.

3.1 Supporting Finnish Spoken Language Learning Using the Puhutsä Suomee? Web Course

Digital teaching materials help teachers to resolve specific issues in language teaching. With regard to Finnish language teaching, we may say that one of the most challenging aspects of learning Finnish is the great difference between the two main registers of the language, that is, standard and spoken Finnish. The standard Finnish is predominantly a written form of the language and spoken standard Finnish is limited only to very formal situations. The colloquial spoken Finnish differs from standard Finnish in pronunciation, morphology and syntax. In addition, the regional variants greatly differ from written and spoken standard language and colloquial Finnish (Karlsson, 2018, p. 443).

In terms of understanding speech in everyday communication, it is essential to know the key features of colloquial spoken Finnish. For a language learner, learning both speech and writing is of primary importance: written language is needed, for example, in education and professional life and when dealing with authorities, while communication and integration into Finnish society are facilitated by mastering the spoken language (Kuparinen, 2001, p. 15). The standard Finnish competence is also fundamental for successful academic and professional qualification.

The role of spoken Finnish in L2 classroom has been widely discussed by teachers and researchers for decades, especially in the 1990s. Currently, teaching is mostly focused on standard Finnish as it is considered the best approach for a learner to learn the basic language structures. Learning both registers of the language parallelly would increase the already high number of word forms to learn, making the cognitive load critically affect student's learning outcomes, especially at the beginner level. On the other hand, spoken Finnish competence has been considered important by teachers for students not only for managing everyday communication but also addressing the point of view of inclusion, as the lack of competence in spoken Finnish might label the learner different from other interlocutors. The key to learn both language registers is to practise each in their own context: reading and writing for standard Finnish, listening and talking for spoken Finnish. Most of the recent learning materials bring the colloquial spoken language out to some extent, but the emphasis in teaching still lies on standard Finnish. In addition, the time constraint in language courses often forces teachers to focus on standard Finnish.

Digital learning materials and tools play an important role in integrating self-directed learning and blended learning, supported by teacher. In spoken Finnish teaching, *Puhutsä suomee?* (Do you speak Finnish?) web course is a complete learning material that can be used as an introduction to spoken Finnish with a wide range of language proficiency levels (A1-B1). While other courses with digital teaching materials of Finnish as a second or foreign language especially for advanced learners quite often include contents focusing on lexical and grammatical competence (Kotilainen et al., 2022), this course is designed to meet the specific needs of Finnish learners to expand their knowledge on spoken Finnish both theoretically and practically. The materials are created and collected as part of the DIGIJOUJOU project (2017–2020) for Finnish teaching in higher educational institutions by Hertta

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Erkkilä (Centria University of Applied Sciences), Emmi Pollari (University of Helsinki) and Laura Uusitalo (Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences). The course materials are CC-licensed for teachers to share and use them for non-commercial purposes. The objectives of the course are to offer students theoretical and practical skills on understanding and producing spoken Finnish and to give them tools for better comprehension of the differences between spoken and written language registers.
The course material consists of five modules that contain situational videos, instructional videos, online exercises and suggestions and ideas on various oral and written assignments. At the beginning of each module, the learning objectives are very clearly explained. A smart device with headphones and microphone and Internet connection are required for taking up the course. The exercises use different kinds of applications and interactive multimedia tools for task-based learning, such as Zoom, YouTube, Padlet and WhatsApp. Situational videos present spoken Finnish for day-to-day communication and informal discussions. The videos present very natural, simple and authentic spoken Finnish. They cover different speech situations that are familiar to intermediate and advanced language learners, but a systematic examination of the differences interest even a fairly advanced student as they offer a new perspective on spoken Finnish. Specific vocabularies are available in support of the situational videos, with explanation on the spoken Finnish forms and standard Finnish. Instructional videos have a more theoretical approach, focusing on spoken language morphology and syntax. In these 5–10-minute videos, the main differences between spoken and standard Finnish are explained by teachers. This course also offers a self-learning module that contains grammar summary, a complete glossary and numerous exercises with automated feedback in order to help students practise spoken Finnish. The course is completed with a bibliography of theoretical readings. The course well adapts for different teaching methods such as flipped classroom, contact and distance learning and independent study, and it serves both as a complementary study material and as a complete course.
The course has been successfully used as a complementary material in the final phase of a basic-level Finnish language course for the first-year university students at the University of Bologna since 2020. Its objectives are to introduce students to the main characteristics of the colloquial language in a comparative-contrastive perspective with respect to standard Finnish, to familiarize students with different registers of Finnish and to highlight the importance of both registers and their respective contexts of use. The resource is used following the guidelines and in blended learning, accompanied by the teacher. The clarity of presentations, immediacy of icons and variety of exercises and rapidity of feedback have been positively received by students and teachers. This course encourages students to start using colloquial spoken Finnish alongside the standard language, thereby allowing also the classroom communication to evolve from a standard Finnish adjusted Teacher Talk towards a more natural spoken Finnish language.

3.2 USING THE APP *FORLIVIAMO* TO SUPPORT ITALIAN L2 INCIDENTAL LEARNING

Forliviamo is a free web application for the incidental learning of Italian as L2 developed at the Department of Interpreting and Translation (DIT) of the University of Bologna (Forlì Campus). It provides international students with language, culture and practical information related to the city of Forlì – that is one of the cities of the Multicampus of the University of Bologna– and its surrounding areas (cf. Cervini & Zingaro, 2021); (Zingaro, *forthcoming*). Forliviamo was designed within the CALL-ER project (Context-Aware Language Learning in Emilia Romagna), funded by the Region Emilia Romagna (High Competences for Research and Technology Transfer, Human Resources for Intelligent Specialization) through a one-year research grant awarded to the author of this section, and it was inspired by a previous project, named ILOCALAPP (http://www.ilocalapp.eu/).
Forliviamo was developed within the methodological framework of Context-Aware Language Learning, Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), experiential and incidental learning.

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Context-awareness is defined in the field of MALL as "a mobile computing paradigm in which applications can discover and take advantage of contextual information such as user location, time of day, neighbouring users and devices, and user activity" (Musumba & Nyongesa, 2013, Introduction section, par. 1). For example, mobile devices can be used in education to perform tasks related to the surrounding environment (e.g., using geolocalisation to search for places of historical and cultural interest or for information related to daily life and city services etc.).
Another concept that fits this app is the so-called incidental learning, which has been defined in general terms as "a by-product of some other activity, such as task accomplishment, interpersonal interaction, sensing the organizational culture, trial-and-error experimentation, or even formal learning" (Marsick & Watkins (2016, p. 12). In this regard, it is hoped that users of Forliviamo will improve their Italian indirectly, by surfing the app and making experiences within the context where they are. The following paragraphs will provide an overall description of the structure and the features of the application.

3.2.1 Structure and Features

The app content is organized in six main categories: 1) *University life* at Forlì Campus, 2) *Eating and drinking out* (local recipes and restaurants offering local cuisine), 3) *Itineraries* on local architecture of the Middle Ages and fascism, 4) *Practical life* (health, post office etc.), 5) *Places* and 6) *Events* of the city and its surroundings. Each text has been assigned a level, albeit indicative of linguistic competence, recognisable to users through the following captions placed under the titles of the texts: "Basic level", "Intermediate level" and "Difficult level"
Although Forliviamo was not designed with the specific objective of LSP learning, each section also allows the user to deal with domain-specific languages, such as: architecture, Italian higher education system, national health system, patient information leaflets and local gastronomy, with the latter also including ethnographic *realia* (Vlahov & Florin, 1970, p. 432), i.e., words and expressions for culture-specific material elements, such as local kitchen tools and food lexicon in both Italian and Romagnolo dialect. Users have the opportunity to start from any of the categories, without a predefined path. However, in order to stimulate curiosity and promote active participation in the learning process, some extra contents, i.e., additional texts or multimedia, can only be unlocked through activities based on the concept of gaming, such as taking a quiz. This choice was made in accordance with the studies of Castañeda and Cho (2016), Rachels and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2017) and Kétyi (2015) that have shown the positive impact of the integration of a game-like application in a classroom on language learning.

3.2.2 Testing

Forliviamo has been used both as an integration of the classroom activity and for self-learning on the topic of gastronomy within a course of Italian as L2 held by the author of this section, which involved a sample of 21 intermediate level students.
The lecturer divided the students in groups. Each group was assigned 3 texts (1 basic, 1 intermediate, 1 advanced level) and was asked to carry out reading and listening comprehension activities, with the latter to be done with headphones. At the end of the activity, groups reported to the rest of the class what they have learned. Another option is to assign the same procedure for self-learning. In this case students were asked to choose individually 3 texts within the same section, as long as they were 1 basic, 1 intermediate, 1 advanced level content, and to carry out reading and listening comprehension activities at home.
In both cases, at the end of the activities, students were submitted a questionnaire aimed to collect opinions on their comprehension of the contents and their perception of pleasantness and usefulness for learning Italian of both the specific contents consulted and the app as a whole.
What emerges from observing the data collected is the perception that the app made a clear contribution to learning new information on gastronomy, familiarising themselves with Forlì and Italian

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culture and also to improving the knowledge of Italian. Just to give a few examples, 38% of respondents said that they learnt “a great deal of information about the typical dishes and wines of Romagna”, 47.6% responded "a lot of information ", 4.8% " enough information ", and 9.5% "few". Moreover, all participants said they learnt new words and listed numerous examples in their free answers. Moreover, 43% evaluated the app as “very useful for improving Italian” 47.4% as “useful", 4.8% “so-so” and 4.8% “of little use". Similarly, the app is “very useful for discovering the city” for 57%, “useful” for 28.5%, 'so-so' for 9.5% and “not at all' for 5%.
The feedback received from users provided several suggestions for implementing the app, that are now being developed by the IT section of the Forliviamo team, such as: improving geolocalisation, adding audio files with the pronunciation of the words given in the pop-up windows and a lot more.
In conclusion, it emerges from the analysis of these data that the app was highly appreciated. Users rated it as a very useful tool from both a didactic and a tourist point of view for the discovery of gastronomy and its Italian and Romagnolo vocabulary, and for the improvement of Italian language skills.

3.3 Use of Podcasts in LSP Teaching and Learning

A *podcast* is any *downloadable digital file*, in audio, video or audio-text/video-text format, usually released in a series of episodes that forms a collection. Podcasts are popular technological products, which help teachers to bring more variety to the tools they use in their teaching (Indahsari, 2020, p. 104).

3.3.1 Why Podcasts?

Given their popularity, podcasts have been adopted in language teaching, as an incorporated technological support for developing competences (cf. par. 2.1, European Commission, 2018, p. 2). Audio or video podcasts (being available everywhere and any time) may aid students and teachers link together out of the classroom situations as well as bringing real-world situations into the classroom, keep the contents of the teaching action up-to-date (motivation enhancement), help improve listening, introduce socio-cultural aspects of the target language (the latter being especially important for specific professional or disciplinary areas such as medicine, nursing, tourism, social sciences), and illustrate LSP terminology and grammar with real voices.
However, the search for quality podcasts of Italian for special purposes (ISP) is not easy, given the overwhelming amount of material in EnglishSP. Teachers must therefore carefully search for and select appropriate podcasts for their teaching activity. Collections can be found on web-radio, web-TV, specific podcast internet sites, or applications (Spotify, Audible).
What we propose here is a classroom activity where a podcast from a web-radio (https://storielibere.fm) is used (podcast content: interviews with breast cancer sufferers).

3.3.2 Exploitation of Podcast for LSP

The activity was used in a class of intermediate (B1) students of ISP at the University Language Centre (Bologna University): 7 students of Medicine and Surgery and 2 students of Pharmacy, all in their twenties. These types of students are used to spending a great deal of time studying, memorising specific lexis, and transferring into practice the notions learnt. Furthermore, they were about to start their training experience in Italian hospitals, where they have to interact with Italian (native/non-native) speakers (patients and staff).
The teaching aims were therefore to improve listening and writing skills, because these features both in students’ in-hospital training and in their university classes. The activities were global listening (to grasp the general meaning); discrete listening (filling the gaps in the first transcribed part, and dictation

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of the second part, slowing down the original podcast); paragraph division and title insertion in the transcription, for summarising skills; oral summary of the whole podcast.
In order to gather the students' opinions on the podcast activity, an anonymous questionnaire with closed and open questions was administered via Google module. The reactions from the students were unanimously positive about the listening and writing activities (e.g., dictation). Students also found useful the final summarising activities.
The main difficulty encountered by the lecturer was to select a suitable podcast, to download it, and to manipulate it. Even though the preparation is extremely time-consuming, compared to ready-made audio, podcasts are more attractive and more informative for learners, reaching the goal of enhancing motivation and facilitating learning.

3.4. *Deutsch im Job – Profis Gesucht:* Enhancing Sector-Specific Discourse

The OER *Deutsch im Job – Profis gesucht* is a web course provided by the international broadcaster Deutsche Welle (DW). It helps learners and language teachers to approach sector-specific discourse and vocabulary by means of authentic spoken language material as well as contextual learning tasks.

3.4.1 Features of the Web Course

The Audio and video material provide learners with real-life situations and convey information and terminology regarding five different professional sectors: tourism/gastronomy, retail industry, nursing, installation engineering and facility cleaning. It is worth underlining that the comprehension of spoken German is a crucial competence for L2 learners, especially in degree programmes such as those at the Department of Interpreting and Translation (DIT), University of Bologna, which focus on linguistic mediation.
In this section, we will examine the module on gastronomy. The online language teaching resource comprises multimedia learning content in the form of (subtitled) video and audio material, as well as exercises with a focus on listening comprehension and vocabulary. Thus, all essential language skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) are covered by the course, to some degree. The focus on the vocabulary which is conveyed via different channels (spoken, image, written) is in line with Koeppel's (2013) claim that the multimodal processing of new vocabulary is more efficient. Although the aim of the resource is rather to convey sector-specific vocabulary and typical phraseology, each of the seven units also deals with grammatical issues that are contextually embedded and particularly relevant for the gastronomy sector, e.g., informal imperative (unit: staff meeting), time and date formats (unit: booking), modal verbs (unit: ordering), subjunctive II as a polite form (unit: paying the bill).

3.4.2 Testing: Students' Responses

The resource has been tested by 13 intermediate level students of the Department of Interpreting and Translation. The students were asked to complete the online learning path on the topic of gastronomy. In advance, they were given a questionnaire with both open and closed questions. The students were asked to comment on whether they found the learning materials to be intuitive, motivating and useful, and whether they thought they contributed to the development of their German language skills.
All students evaluated the learning unit positively and found it both user-friendly and motivating. One student tested the course on a smartphone and reported that the navigation was user-friendly, thus confirming the responsive nature of the design. They appreciated the diversity of input and exercises as well as the immediate feedback on completed exercises. Several students underlined their appreciation of a story-driven approach supported by video clips providing authentic spoken German in real-life contexts. The provided transcripts and subtitles were found to be of great help in aiding comprehension.

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As for the development of students' German language skills, expansion of their vocabulary (through cloze tests and matching exercises) and listening skills (through comprehension exercises) were mentioned most frequently by students (85%), while communicative competence and grammatical knowledge were mentioned by only a few (15%). This might be explained by the fact that grammar issues are only explained and not trained by the exercises, and that the speaking exercises do not provide the student with feedback. While learners had the means to autonomously assess their performance for listening and vocabulary exercises, the missing feedback for speaking exercises and pronunciation tasks can be bridged by the native speaker teacher in the classroom, as will be shown in the following paragraph.

3.4.3 Going a Step Further: Integrating the OER

Although the OER *Deutsch im Job – Profis gesucht: Gastronomie* can be used very effectively for self-learning, there are some skills that might be further developed through additional classroom activities. In fact, in an L2 German language class, within a bachelor's degree course in Intercultural and Linguistic Mediation at the DIT, we used some of the transcriptions to simulate dialogues and analyse the communicative structures. The aim was to strengthen students' communicative competence. In fact, both Imo (2013) and Bachmann-Stein (2013) claim that the analysis of spoken language based on transcripts enhances the communicative competence. Moreover, the text formats (interviews and real-life conversations in a professional setting) of this OER are especially suitable for role play exercises.

This approach has proven to be efficient in enhancing the students' speaking abilities and applying the previously acquired knowledge from the module (sector-specific vocabulary and typical phraseology) in a communicative context in the classroom. Hence, the combination of digital resources and focused class-room activities increased both efficiency and attractiveness of the language teaching.

4. Conclusion

This chapter focused on the opportunities related to the use of digital resources as integration or as an alternative to classroom activities in Higher Education language courses. It addressed the challenges in the use of digital resources in teaching, with respect to current theoretical approaches and the ongoing need for lecturers and all actors in educational institutions to continuously expand their knowledge and be flexible to the permanent change to which digital resources are subject. It described the strategies adopted to use digital resources to increase language teaching effectiveness and attractiveness by providing practical examples of 4 case studies on the use of digital resources for learning Finnish, German and Italian in university language courses.

This contribution aimed to show the advantages, criticalities and challenges faced by lecturers today in using technology as a supplement and/or alternative to the classroom. In doing so, we hope that these reflections shared here may be useful to all those involved in educational institutions to encourage reflection and stimulate further investigation.

Links to External Resources

Digital Competence of Educators: https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/digcompedu_en

ICT for language Teachers: http://ict4lt.org/

EQUALS: https://www.eaquals.org/

QUILL, Module 2, case study 2: https://quill.pixel-online.org/TP_module02.php?st=7#guide

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

Project Number: 2020-1-PT01-KA226-HE-094809

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Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The paper is the result of the collaboration of the authors. In particular, Anna Zingaro wrote the introduction to section 2 and 3, subsection 3.2 and the conclusions to the chapter, whereas the general introduction to the chapter is a joint work with Sandro M. Moraldo; Luisa Bavieri wrote subsection 2.1; Paola Polselli wrote subsection 2.2; Teresa Quarta wrote subsection 2.3; Jürgen Ferner wrote subsection 2.4; Sanna Maria Martin wrote subsection 3.1; Marina Artese wrote subsection 3.3; Sandra Nauert worked at subsection 3.4. General supervision and proofreading were carried out by Sandro M. Moraldo, Sandra Nauert and Anna Zingaro.