

A snapshot of the city: Cultural transfer through a language learning app

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Abstract

This paper describes how a web app could be useful to promote cultural transfer and incidental learning of Italian as a Second Language (L2) on the university campus of Forlì (University of Bologna). The app, named *Forliviamo*, aims to present and promote the city of Forlì and the local culture to international students and tourists and, at the same time, to support them through the incidental learning of Italian. After giving an overall description of the app, it will be explained how cultural identity is transmitted in terms of both promoting local gastronomy, traditional events, iconic places of the city and fostering the incidental learning of Italian. Special attention will be paid to the strategies adopted to facilitate the users' approach to language and culture.

Keywords: context-aware language learning, cultural transfer, Italian as L2, learning app, mobile assisted language learning

1 Introduction

The growing availability of different models of mobile devices and the increasing accessibility of mobile networks enable people to be connected to the web almost everywhere. This facilitates the application of mobile devices to language learning, which has been underway for years. Although many studies have investigated the use of apps such as *Duolingo* (Rachels & Rockinson-Szapkiw 2017) and *Busuu* (Kétyi 2015) in facilitating language learning, the field of investigation relating to the use of apps to facilitate cultural transfer still appears to be little explored. For this reason, the aim of this paper is to present the app *Forliviamo*, that aims to facilitate incidental learning of Italian through multimedia content promoting the city of Forlì and its surroundings. After a general description of the app, it will be explained how cultural identity is transmitted in terms of touristic promotion of a city and fostering of language learning. This point will not only cover Italian, but also the local dialect. The strategies adopted to promote cultural transfer will be described in two stages. It will first be described how local recipes, traditional events and iconic places of the city, as well as ethnographic *realia* have been presented. Then the strategies adopted to create language learning activities, to present a domain-specific lexicon and to create short insights into the local dialect will be analysed, in order to show how users approach language and culture. Specific attention will be paid to the feedback obtained from users so far.

2 Cultural transfer on a university campus

The University of Bologna has a multicampus structure that, in addition to the main seat of Bologna, also includes Cesena, Forlì, Ravenna and Rimini. The Forlì campus was opened in 2001 as the completion of a process that had begun in 1989. It aimed to create a new university development model based on a ramification of Bologna University throughout the region Emilia Romagna¹. Since then, the ever-increasing number of international students on the university campus of Forlì has become more and more apparent, with growing opportunities for internationalisation offered within the degree courses and the increasing expansion of services and spaces for students. The campus offers a wide range of teaching programmes with an international identity: among them, 2 bachelor degree programmes and 5 master degree programmes offered by the 6 departments are held in English (either the whole programme or one of their curricula)². Moreover, during the academic year 2021/2022 the campus of Forlì hosted 190 international exchange students (compared to 156 in the academic year 2020/2021) and 526 international students who are fully enrolled in the degree programmes (compared to 498 in the academic year 2020/2021)³. Given this multicultural context, the necessity to present Forlì and its cultural heritage to international students and to facilitate their approach to both Italian and the local dialect has become more and more relevant over the years. This necessity created the ground for the development within the university campus of an application for mobile devices having the purposes of facilitating the learning of Italian and promoting the city of Forlì and its surroundings.

Since this project was developed in the Department of Interpretation and Translation—as will be explained in Section 3—the design of an app combining language and culture was influenced not only by previous research in the field of e-learning but also by the communicative approach that characterises the teaching in our department. Before describing how the design features relate to language learning and cultural transfer, a brief reference will be made to the theoretical framework relating to cultural transfer itself, which most closely represents the initial vision of the concept of *Forliviamo*.

The multicultural context of the university campus, characterised by international students from all over the world who decide to spend some time in Italy, seems to reflect the theory of cultural transfer launched in France in the 1980s by Michel Espagne and Michael Werner, who analysed the ways in which German culture had been transferred, i.e., spread and received, in France (Espagne & Werner 1987: 969). Espagne and Werner showed in their studies of 1987 and 1988 that each cultural exchange between different intellectual realities follows a precise strategy that takes into account both the contexts of reception and departure and the role of those who are involved in the process of receiving and transmitting a cultural exchange. In particular, they stated that "les premières manifestations d'un transfert ne sont pas des œuvres, souvent diffusées et traduites à une époque très tardive, mais des individus

¹ Campuses and structures, <https://www.unibo.it/en/university/campuses-and-structures> (Accessed: 2 March 2022).

² Programme Catalogue 21/22, <https://www.unibo.it/en/campus-forli/studying-at-forli> (Accessed: 20 January 2022).

³ AlmaRM, <https://almarm.unibo.it/almarm/welcome.htm> (Accessed: 7 February 2022).

échangeant des informations ou des représentations et se constituant progressivement en réseaux."⁴

As specified by Espagne and Werner (1987), those individuals who exchange information ("des individus échangeant des informations"), i.e., those who in the past enabled cultural exchanges between different cultures, generally belonged to quite different professional groups, e.g., writers, journalists, artists, musicians, booksellers, diplomats, agents, merchants and—as in the specific case dealt with in this paper—teachers and scholars. The application of the theory of Espagne and Werner to the context of cultural transfer referred to in this paper makes it possible to identify the participants involved in the process of receiving and transmitting a cultural exchange. On one hand, there is the Department of Interpretation and Translation of the University of Bologna in the role of sender through a tourist/language learning app, and on the other, in the role of recipients there are international students coming to Forlì within mobility programmes or who are fully enrolled in the different departments of the Forlì university campus, who need to get acquainted with Italian and local culture. The cultural exchange was, therefore, realised through the development of the app *Forliviamo*, described in the following section.

3 The Forliviamo app

Forliviamo⁵ is a free web application for language and culture incidental learning that provides the users with language, culture and practical information related to the city of Forlì and its surrounding areas (see Cervini & Zingaro 2021). The name 'Forliviamo' is based on a play on words, that is a combination of the ancient name of the city (Forum Livii, then Forlivo and today Forlì) and the ending '-iamo', the first-person plural ending of Italian verbs in the present tense. Therefore, the overall meaning can be 'let's make/ discover/ live Forlì together'. The Forliviamo application was designed within the CALL-ER⁶ 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 paper.

The concept of context-awareness within the title of the project is defined in the field of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (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,

⁴ "The first manifestations of a [cultural] transfer are not works, often disseminated and translated at a very late stage, but individuals exchanging information or representations and gradually becoming networks." (Espagne & Werner 1987: 984, my translation). See also Espagne & Werner 1988, and Espagne 2012, 2014. As for the specific aspects of intercultural relations (e.g., language, culture, learning) in teaching of foreign language and, more specifically, the forms of cultural transfer in both Italian and Slovak philological and cultural context, see also the research from Šuša (2016, 2022).

⁵ *Forliviamo*, <http://www.forliviamo.it/> (Accessed: 20 January 2022).

⁶ I want to thank the participants to the CALL-ER project, all affiliated to the University of Bologna, namely: Silvia Bernardini, Cristiana Cervini, and Patrick Leech for the supervision in the content development and Federico Garcea and Daniele Negretti for the IT development.

Introduction section, para. 1). Since mobile devices are multimedia tools connected to the web, they can be used in education to perform tasks related to the surrounding environment (e.g., searching for places of historical and cultural interest by using geolocalisation and learning more about those places through app content).

The app is mainly targeted at a very heterogeneous audience of 'tourist-learners', i.e., international students arriving in Forlì for a short period of study within mobility programmes or who are fully enrolled at the University of Bologna (Forlì Campus), for whom it is useful to discover and get acquainted with local culture. However, the app topics could also be of interest to native speakers of Italian, who might be interested in a new way of discovering an area they do not know.

The code used for its design is open source, so it can be reused also for the design of other similar apps. Most of the structure and the features of the application are inspired by a previous project, called ILOCALAPP⁷, that involved a highly international and interdisciplinary network of European universities (Ceccherelli & Valva 2016; Ceccherelli et al. 2016). It was set up in 2010 and developed in the period 2015–2018 within the Erasmus+ Programme, Key 2-Strategic Partnerships in Higher Education. It enabled the realization of several European projects aimed at designing technological platforms and devices, among which it is worth mentioning the UniON! mobile applications, that were geolocalised in different European cities, including Bologna. In this regard, the app UniON!_IT was aimed at incidental and context-aware learning of Italian as a second language (L2) in Bologna (Cervini, Solovova, Jakkula & Ruta 2016; Valva, Mirri & Salomoni 2018; Cervini 2018). Forliviamo takes up the principles of context-awareness and incidental learning that were at the basis of the design of the UniON!_IT app, aimed at promoting both context-aware mobile learning and incidental learning, with the latter being defined later in this text. The idea taking inspiration from the ILOCALAPP project also involved the adoption of the same general topics that were dealt with in UniON!_IT in the choice of cultural content to be transmitted through Forliviamo (see Section 4).

The app has been developed with specific features aimed to foster meaningful, mobile, context-aware learning of Italian as an L2, as well as to facilitate the approach to both Italian and local culture, according to the latest innovations in the field of MALL (Ferguson et al. 2019).

Mobile devices prove to be an excellent tool for performing activities and delivering content that is particularly relevant in each environment, since due to the rise in the availability of open WiFi networks the opportunities to use these tools in different contexts and to use them as a support for the learner in case of need have considerably increased (Naismith, Sharples, Vavoula & Lonsdale 2004: 14). In this regard, the above-mentioned concept of context-awareness is defined in MALL as the activity of collecting information about one's surroundings to provide data on what is happening at a specific time around a user

⁷ Ilocalapp (Incidentally Learning Other Cultures and Languages through an App), <http://www.ilocalapp.eu/>. (Accessed: 20 February 2022).

and a device. This also makes mobile devices excellent tools for transmitting the culture of a given place.

Another concept that fits the Forliviamo app is the so-called incidental learning. It has been defined in general terms as "a byproduct of some other activity, such as task accomplishment, interpersonal interaction, sensing the organizational culture, trial-and-error experimentation, or even formal learning" (Marsick & Watkins [1990] 2015: 12). In this regard, the main aim of the users of the Forliviamo app will not be the improvement of their Italian language skills according to quantifiable criteria, as is the case for example with Duolingo or Busuu. Rather, it is hoped that the users will improve their Italian indirectly, through new oral and written input linked to the places they visit during their time in Forlì, because alongside the language, the app mainly embeds content that aims to raise students' awareness of Italian culture.

Section 4, which is an update of the 2021 study by Cervini and Zingaro, will provide an overall description of the structure and the features of the application.

4 Structure and features

The content is organized into six main categories (see Figure 1 below), that branch out into several subcategories: 1) University life: studying at Unibo, libraries and meeting places; 2) Eating and drinking out: Romagna's recipes, traditional recipes of the region Romagna and, more specifically, of Forlì, restaurants offering local cuisine; 3) Itineraries: architecture of the fascist era, medieval route; 4) Practical life: telephone and internet, health, money and post office; 5) Places: culture (museums, historical places), leisure and entertainment (theatre, music, cinema); 6) Events: festivals, fairs etc. The content includes both texts and multimedia (images, audio, videos), and also links to external resources.



Fig. 1: Homepage. Source: Forliviamo, 2022

The choice of these six content categories was made with the specific purpose of firstly conveying the local culture in terms of gastronomy, traditional fairs, religious feasts, monuments, architecture etc. of both the Romagna region and the city of Forlì (see categories Eating and drinking, Events, Places, Itineraries) and of, secondly, providing information that may be useful at a national level: the main services offered by the Italian postal service, mobile telephony, the Italian university system and the national health system (see categories Practical life and University life).

These specific content categories draw inspiration from the design of another app aimed at the incidental learning of Italian through the promotion of a city, namely the previously mentioned UniON!_IT app, which focused on Bologna. The exchange of ideas that had arisen between the UniON!_IT app developers at the University of Bologna and the local authorities of the area of Bologna had led to the identification of a set of topics (University life, Getting around, Eating and drinking, Places, Entertainment, Sport and nature, Practical life, Shopping and, finally, the Word of the Day) that were considered adequate to convey both the local and the Italian cultures.

On these grounds, the design of the Forliviamo app has followed the principles that guided the realisation of UniON!_IT (Cervini et al. 2016; Valva et al. 2018; Cervini 2018) also in the adoption of the general topics to be dealt with. What makes Forliviamo different is that inspiration was drawn in general terms from those topics, but they have been adjusted to the culture of the city of Forlì and, more generally, of the Romagna region (e.g. totally different culinary traditions and traditional events compared to Bologna, specific places and events in Forlì) and, most of all, the novelty of including the Romagnolo dialect in the app)⁸.

Therefore, the choice of the six main categories is based on retracing the habits of international students both in their daily life as university students and also as young adults living abroad and on facilitating their process of becoming familiar with the local culture. For this reason, not only institutional places (university, libraries, public offices, etc.) and entertainment places (restaurants, cinemas, etc.) are included but ample space is also given to the local culture, always taking great care of enriching the culture-bound content with explanations, synonyms and definitions that were given either within the text itself or through the pop-up window system (see Section 5.1).

This app design, coupled with a series of strategies aimed at presenting and explaining culture-bound content and promoting language learning (e.g., lexical quizzes, reformulations and pop-up windows providing definitions: see Section 5), was instrumental in realising the goal of implementing cultural information and language learning in a portable device.

The menu allows for full accessibility of the content: 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 content can only be unlocked and accessed through activities based on the concept of gaming, such as taking a quiz (see

⁸ Although Emilia-Romagna is a single region from a political-administrative point of view, the two sub-regions, Emilia and Romagna, have different traditions and dialects. This is why the content of the UniOn!_IT app with a focus on Bologna (Emilia) does not fit the purposes of describing the local culture of Forlì (Romagna).

Section 6). Giving the right answer allows users to unlock extra content, such as additional texts or multimedia. This choice was made in accordance with previous studies, for example the study of 2016 by Castañeda and Cho, that has shown that the integration of a game-like application in a classroom contributed to the improvement of student accuracy and confidence in conjugating Spanish verbs.

Moreover, research has shown that foreign language study can be improved through easy access to resources selected to be adequate for individual interests or needs (Kukulska-Hulme 2013). In order to ensure that the content of the Forliviamo app would meet the requirements of its potential end-users and that the idea itself of an app would be appreciated, the opinions and expectations of the potential end-users were collected. More precisely, 21 mobility students in Forlì (in the academic year 2020/2021) were invited to fill in an anonymous online questionnaire and the representatives of 4 of the main local tourist organisations and cultural associations that might be interested in making their services better known to the public were given the choice between an anonymous questionnaire and a telephone interview⁹. After establishing the topic area of the main categories on the basis of the results of the questionnaire/interviews, the second stage consisted in finding effective strategies to achieve cultural transfer through a digital tool.

5 Cultural transfer through an app

The creation of content adequate for incidental language learning through experiential tourism implies focusing on several aspects: the creation of content that could be adequate both to the promotion of the area and to language learning, without relying on explicit grammatical insights, the understandability of this content, the learning goals to be achieved, as well as the technical features of the electronic devices on which the application will be run.

5.1 Cultural transfer in accordance with different competence levels

Since the potential users of the app may include mobility students, international fully enrolled students as well as native speakers of Italian, they may have very different linguistic profiles and levels of knowledge of Italian. Given that the app is free, written and audiovisual content will be available to users. One of the most challenging issues in the development of the app was, therefore, to produce content that is addressed to the whole community of users, independent of their competence in the target language (i.e., beginners as well as more advanced students or even native speakers). This deeply influenced the writing strategies and led to the development of a series of guiding principles.

Firstly, each text was marked with a label related to the competence level: 'Livello facile' (easy level), 'Livello intermedio' (medium level) and 'Livello difficile' (difficult level). To further distinguish the texts, labels are in three different colours that are reminiscent of traffic lights: green for easy texts, orange for those of medium difficulty and red for high

⁹ I am grateful to Enrica Romano, who in her Master thesis focused on developing the questionnaires, interviewed the contact persons for the local tourist organisations and analysed the collected data.

difficulty. The labels may be perceived as reading suggestions: it is up to the users to choose texts suitable for their language skills, or to challenge themselves with higher difficulty levels. This strategy is aimed at avoiding the users' demotivation or boredom.

Secondly, techniques for writing highly comprehensible texts have been applied. The small screen of electronic devices was a key factor in planning short-length texts, ranging from 100 to 300 words. For example, the texts classified as easy or medium consist of short and coordinated sentences. Moreover, the lexicon was carefully chosen and composed mainly of high-frequency words. Less frequent words, such as idiomatic expressions or terms belonging to a specific domain (e.g., architecture, bureaucracy, gastronomy) are usually followed by reformulations and/or synonyms, to enhance understanding and in some cases they are highlighted in blue and are hyperlinked to a pop-up window containing a definition (see Figure 2 below). These strategies, which show how cultural information and language learning are implemented in a portable device, were used to achieve cultural transfer through lexical insights, that involved domain-specific terms both in Italian and even in the Romagnolo dialect, the latter being very likely to be heard in everyday conversations in the street or local shops and to be found in the menus of restaurants offering local specialities.

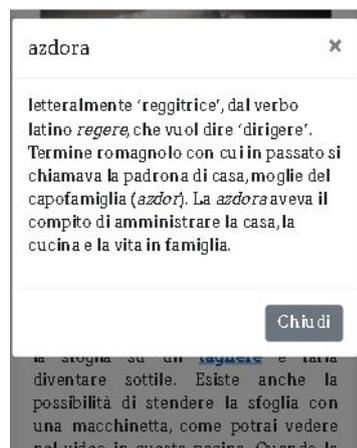


Fig. 2: Pop-up window with a definition Source: Forliviamo, 2022

5.2 Cultural transfer of *realia*

The process of content creation implied re-examining the already existing content of the UniON!_IT app, in order to see if some of them could fit the purposes of the Forliviamo app. This was the case, for example, for the category 'University Life', in which a general overview of the University of Bologna and its services are also adequate for Forlì. Therefore, the texts were kept more or less in their original form, and only a few edits were necessary to adapt the content to the local context of Forlì and to update it with data related to the academic years 2020/2021 and 2021/2022. The same procedure was used for content related to public services, the health system, etc. In contrast, the content related to places, events, itineraries

and even gastronomy¹⁰ have been written from scratch, since they are strictly related to the cultural identity of Forlì and its surroundings.

Creating content for the promotion of an area also implies handling culture-bound concepts, the so-called *realia* (Vlahov & Florin, 1970: 432), i.e., words and expressions for culture-specific material elements¹¹. Vlahov and Florin classified *realia* into various categories, some of which play a key role in the content of the app, in particular it is worth mentioning ethnographic *realia*. They include everyday life material elements and they are widely represented in the app in the following subcategories: 1) gastronomy: all the different kinds of home-made pasta, whose names are indicated first in Italian and then in the Romagnolo dialect (e.g., pasta/*mnèstra*; *passatelli/pasadèin*; *cappelletti/caplèt*), *piadina* or *piada*, i.e., a typical local bread-like food (*piada/pjè* in the cities of Ravenna, Faenza and Forlì, whereas in Ravenna it is also called *pjì* or *pjida*; in the cities of Cesena and Rimini *pida* and in Rimini *pièda*), local kitchen tools (*testo romagnolo/tègia*, i.e., a tool similar to a pan, that is used to make a *piadina*; *ferro per passatelli/e' fer di pasadèin*, i.e., a tool vaguely resembling a potato smasher, that is used to produce a kind of home-made pasta, named *passatelli*: see Figure 3 below), *azdora*, i.e., a term of the Romagnolo dialect that defines a housewife who prepares local specialities; 2) work (*Carabinieri*, i.e., a separate branch of the Italian Armed Forces, which primarily carries out domestic policing duties; *Guardia Medica*, i.e., an emergency medical service); 3) culture-bound concepts related to university services and customs (*ricevimento*, i.e., a dedicated hour in which a teacher receives a student in his or her office to give clarification on study subjects (an office hour); *buchetta*, i.e., a sort of letterbox of the teacher (pigeonhole); *quarto d'ora accademico*, i.e., quarter-hour break between lectures). *Realia* related to politics and society include administrative divisions (*regione, provincia, comune*), political and social life (*partigiani*, i.e., armed groups fighting against a dictatorial government. In this context, a fighter of the Italian Resistance against Nazi-Fascism in the Second World War). The strategies adopted in the app design with the specific purpose of presenting and explaining these culture-bound elements are basically the insertion of pop-up definitions and explanatory reformulations and, where possible, the integration of written texts with pictures, audiofiles or videos containing additional information or short interviews with students and people from the area. In this regard, the combination of different semiotic resources, such as moving/still images, speech and writing has been used to promote the development of integrated skills, to favour different cognitive styles and to create a more engaging experience for users and it also represents a significant innovation compared to the UniON!!_IT app.

¹⁰ As mentioned in footnote 8, the two sub-regions, Emilia and Romagna, have different culinary traditions. This is why the Eating and Drinking content of the UniOn!_IT app with a focus on Bologna (Emilia) could not fit the purposes of describing the culinary tradition of Forlì (Romagna).

¹¹ The word *realia* derives from medieval Latin, in which it originally meant 'the real things', i.e. material things, as opposed to abstract concepts (see e.g. Vlahov & Florin 1970: 432). On the strategies to be adopted with the rendering of *realia* in translation, see e.g. Osimo's (2015) translation studies.



Fig. 3: Ethnographic realia: passatelli and their related tool. Source: Forliviamo, 2022

5.3 Cultural transfer of a 'dissonant' past

While choosing the places of the area to be promoted through the app, attention was also paid to unusual places that are specific to the area but do not fall within the traditional tourist destinations. For this reason, the category 'Itineraries' offers two routes: an unusual route dedicated to the architectural heritage of the fascist regime in Forlì and two other neighbouring cities (Predappio, which was the hometown of Benito Mussolini, and Castrocaro) and a more traditional route, dedicated to the medieval architecture. The decision to include these buildings in the app is due not only to their massive presence in the region, but also due to various studies, led by the ATRIUM¹² association, that has the purpose of investigating and managing the so-called 'dissonant' architecture of the regimes of the 20th century. Handling the highly controversial and divisive topic of the architectural heritage of the fascist regime has been one of the greatest challenges of this project, since it is very difficult to give a description of buildings and monuments without risking to celebrate their historical period. Therefore, the aim of that itinerary is to take a trip through Forlì and other places in Romagna to rediscover the styles, shapes and colours of the architecture of the period within a brief historical interpretation. This was done through the recording of short interviews with a historian and expert of the architecture of Fascism, which were included in the app as short videoclips, and through theoretical and documentary supervision by the ATRIUM association.

¹² ATRIUM [cit. 2022-02-03], <https://www.atriumroute.eu/>



Fig. 4: Example of a short videoclip. Source: Forliviamo, 2022.

6 Testing

The resource underwent informal and formal testing and in both cases it was used for self-learning activities. The team that worked on the Forliviamo app deliberately did not set criteria for selecting students, so as to simulate a real-life situation: that is, any international student may come across the app and use it. Therefore, international students were selected on a voluntary basis. The first testing of the app was conducted with a sample of 8 international students of the Unibo who registered for the treasure hunt organized in Forlì at the *European Researchers' Night* (24th September 2021). On this occasion, 2 itineraries were proposed, in which students could discover Forlì and its culture during the different stages of the path.

At the end of the activity, a short informal interview was carried out focusing on their perception of the usefulness of the app. Participants said that, overall, they were happy with the experience. They listed all the new words and the information that they had learnt during the treasure hunt. They also suggested that in the next edition of the treasure hunt the app should be used not only to search for information and to move around the city, but also to provide players with the various clues that lead to the treasure. The IT section of the Forliviamo team is currently updating the app according to this suggestion. The second testing was conducted with a sample of 10 intermediate level students attending a course of Italian as a Second Language held by the author of this article and who volunteered to participate in testing. The app was used to supplement classroom teaching with self-learning activities. Each student chose one of the 6 content categories of the app and, within it, they chose 3 items of content (text + multimedia). In doing so, they also took quizzes based on multiple-choice questions aimed at testing the reading or listening comprehension of specific content of the app (e.g., a text or a video or an audio file) or the lexical comprehension of Italian or local dialect words, idioms or domain-specific words or the user's general knowledge of

Italian and regional culture. These quizzes unlocked extra multimedia content and allowed students to learn more about Italian and regional culture. At the end of the activity, they answered a questionnaire aimed at testing their learning of vocabulary (e.g.; 'List all the new words you have learnt.', 'Were the definitions given in the pop-up windows clear and useful to your understanding?' 'Did you find difficult words that did not have a definition in the pop-up window? If so, can you list them?' etc.), new content ('what have you learnt about ...[subject of the content]?') and also their overall appreciation of the app, which was generally very enthusiastic. All students said that the app was helpful in familiarising themselves with Forlì and Italian culture and that they found it very useful to learn new vocabulary, also due to the presence of pop-up windows containing the definitions.

The participants gave very comprehensive answers about their language and cultural learning. In their free answers, they noted down all the new words they had discovered by using the app. They also indicated the unknown words that, in their opinion, needed a definition in the text. This information was very useful for the Forliviamo team to further improve the quality of the app. Furthermore, great attention was paid to the cultural elements learned. Their answers mainly concerned the procedures for preparing typical local dishes (e.g. *piadina*), the importance of gastronomy to better understand the identity of the Romagna region, also in contrast to Emilia (e.g., *piadina* is the symbol of Romagna culture, whereas *ragù* (meat sauce) is typical of Bologna), the Romagnolo gastronomist Pellegrino Artusi and his contribution to the diffusion of the Italian language as the official language of the then Kingdom of Italy, and so on.

The feedback received from users provided several suggestions for improving the app, such as: improving geolocalisation, suggesting new places to be included in the content (e.g. the open-air cinema Arena Eliseo), listening to the pronunciation of the words having a definition in the pop-up window, enriching—where possible—the pop-up windows with images and, to conclude, assigning definitions in the pop-up window also to some words listed by the respondents that do not currently have any. All these suggestions are now being developed by the IT section of the Forliviamo team.

Since both testing phases involved two very small groups, it is important to point out that the purpose was to carry out initial tests of an app whose design would have been completed one month after the treasure hunt and which was tested in the classroom two months after its actual completion. These small-scale testings have been carried out to assess the operation of its functions and multimedia and the general perception of its effectiveness in terms of usefulness and motivation for learning the language and discovering the culture. This was done with a view to further use the app to supplement classroom teaching.

7 Conclusion

In this paper the development of the Forliviamo application was described and how a web app can be useful to promote cultural transfer and incidental language learning, more specifically the learning of Italian as a second language on the university campus of Forlì (University of

Bologna). The paper also presented the strategies adopted to construct texts accessible to all users—regardless of their starting level of language proficiency—to convey ethnographic and political *realia*, to describe a controversial architectural heritage, that of the fascist era, and to provide the necessary insights into the Italian language and the Romagnolo dialect. According to the feedback collected so far, the app is perceived as adequate to present and promote the city of Forlì and the local culture to international students and, at the same time, to support them in their incidental learning of Italian. From this point of view, using the app will be a win-win strategy both for language learning and tourism. It will hopefully enhance the creation of a network between the university, local authorities and regional associations, for the promotion of cultural and educational activities outside the classroom. Further investigation will be needed in order to better understand the effects of the use of an app in language and cultural transfer. This will be the object of future developments within the project team.

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