



Second National NELLIP Workshop

“Promoting innovation in the development of linguistic skills in connection with the European Language Label”

Report

**Florence
28 February 2014**



Programme of the Second NELLIP National Workshop

Promoting innovation in the development of linguistic skills

in connection with the European Language Label

The Workshop will be held on Friday 28 February 2014 at Pixel – Via Luigi Lanzi 12 – 50134 Florence

9.30 - Introduction

Speaker: Elisabetta Delle Donne (Pixel)

Introduction to the Workshop

Brief introduction to the NELLIP project

9.45 - Discussion on the topic: "Innovation in the development of linguistic skills"

Rapporteur: to be defined during the Workshop

- Discussion
 - Examples of topics to be discussed:
 - Definition of innovation for the development of linguistic skills as key competences for the lifelong learning
 - Criteria and strategies for innovation implementation
 - Solutions
 - Examples of best practices
 - **Identification of the key elements for the promotion of innovation in linguistic contexts**

10.45 – Coffee break

11.00 - Work team, analysis of projects and development of operative plans

Rapporteur: da definire durante il workshop

- Presentation of linguistic projects focusing on possible criticalities and strategies identified for innovation development (3 minutes per participant)
- **Discussion and production of an operative plan for the promotion of innovation in linguistic contexts**

12.40 - Workshop Evaluation

13.00 – Lunch

End of the Workshop



Presentation of the participants

Maria Norton, British Council

Maria Norton is Regional Business Development Manager for the British Council. She is responsible for the implementation of English language initiatives. She has been involved in several projects for the promotion of English language. Through those projects, she has been cooperating with several Ministries in Korea, Tunisia and now Italy.

Daniela Muresan, British Council

Project Officer at British Council, she works at the English Strategic Business Unit. She is responsible for creating products, services and partnerships aimed at the achievement of the British Council objectives. She organizes international conferences on the following subjects: RPD (regional policy dialogue) and CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning).

Marco Guidi, Università di Pisa

Professor of History of Economic Thought at the University of Pisa. He is author of numerous publications and coordinator of the EE-T European project (Economics and-Translations into and from European Languages) funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme - Erasmus.

Monica Lupetti, Università di Pisa

Researcher at the Department of Philology, Linguistics and Literature of the University of Pisa, where she teaches "Language and Translation: Portuguese and Brazilian Languages".

Luisa Panichi, Università di Pisa

Teacher of English Language at the University of Pisa since 1991. She was the scientific coordinator of the AVALON project (KA3 LLP) for the Language Centre of the University of Pisa. She is coordinator of the Euroversity Network (KA3 LLP) for the University of Hull, UK.

Massimo Moneglia, Università di Firenze

Associate Professor of Linguistics at the University of Florence. Coordinator of European, National and Regional Projects (C-ORAL-ROM, complain, IMAGACT) in the following fields: education, training, development of language resources in modern technologies (HLT).

Chiara Cappa, Liceo Scientifico "L. Respighi" di Piacenza

Teacher of English language at "L. Respighi" High School in Piacenza. Reference person for the CLIL area. Cambridge International Examinations Officer at "L. Respighi" High School in Piacenza. Trainer at Indire. Blogger on insegnoinglese.orizzontescuola.it.



Paola Gherardelli, ISIS “Leonardo da Vinci” di Firenze

She is the author of several books about education and teacher of English as specialized language. For several years, she has been conducting training for adults and teachers and bringing forward innovative initiatives aimed at increasing students' motivation. She is currently working on a project for the creation of interactive learning materials for teaching English, Chinese and Russian in various professional fields.

Cristiano Sanna, Centro Machiavelli

Member of the certifying body for linguistic skills at Centro Machiavelli, Florence.

Elisabetta Delle Donne, Pixel

President of Pixel. Coordinator of the NELLIP European Network. She managed around 100 European projects. External evaluator of several European projects. Head of the scientific committee of international conferences. Trainer in the framework of international seminars. Author of books and articles.

Antonio Giordano, Pixel

Assistant Project Manager. He is responsible for providing support to the coordination of European projects and the organization of international study visits. Tutor of the International Master “European Project Planning and Management”.



On Friday 28 February 2014, the second National NELLIP Workshop “*Promoting innovation in the development of linguistic skills in connection with the European Language Label*” took place in Florence, in the framework of the NELLIP project, the Network of European Language Labelled Initiatives, funded by the European Commission - Lifelong Learning Programme – KA2. The National Workshop was organized by Pixel.

1. Introduction

The workshop started with an opening speech by Elisabetta Delle Donne, Pixel President , who welcomed the guests, thanked for their participation, and described the aim of the initiative: to provide experts in linguistics the opportunity to improve the contribution that innovation can ensure as support to initiatives in the framework of teaching and learning languages. For this reason, participants reflected the profile of the target groups the workshop was addressed to: University (45%) , schools (33%), cultural institutions (11%), education centers for adults (11%).

Participants briefly presented themselves, referring to those activities they have been involved in with reference to the main topic of the workshop.

Luisa Panichi, English professor at the University of Pisa, explained how lately she has been dealing with the use of innovative tools in language teaching, virtual reality and Second Life above all.

Paola Gherardelli , English teacher at ISIS "Leonardo da Vinci " in Florence, wrote several books about the teaching process of foreign languages. Then she has been involved in a more unconventional approach to teaching, based on the use of modern technologies.

Chiara Cappa, teacher of foreign languages at Liceo Scientifico "L. Respighi" of Piacenza, is an expert of the CLIL approach to teaching.

Assessor and language teacher at Centro Machiavelli, Cristiano Sanna has always been involved in the development of new methods for language learning, having technology as a valuable support.

Mary Norton and Daniela Muresan, both business manager at the British Council , explained how the institute, which has always been famous for its contents, is now looking for new approaches to teaching.

Marco Guidi, Professor of History of Economic Thought at the University of Pisa, and Monica Lupetti, researcher at the Department of Philology, Linguistics and Literature of the University of Pisa, have recently been involved in the development of a Portuguese language course in iBooks format .



Massimo Moneglia, Associate Professor of Linguistics at the University of Florence, has long worked in the production of linguistic resources with computer support, for example the development of a lexicon based on the film images, with the intent to test how these tools can be effective in languages' teaching and learning.

Elisabetta Delle Donne, Pixel President, made reference to her experience in the organization of the International Conference entitled "Information and Communication Technologies for Language Learning". Then she made reference to the experience gained in carrying out European projects in the framework of language teaching and learning.

2 . Comparison and discussion on the topic “Innovation in the field of language learning and teaching”

The first contribution to the debate was represented by the attempt to answer the question - what is meant by innovation in language teaching and learning. This question allowed an in depth discussion about the main theme of the workshop.

According to Luisa Paninchi (University of Pisa) for innovation is meant to be represented by those changes which guarantee an added value to the involved parties (student or teacher) . The primary target should be represented by learners, who are often victims of a cultural heritage that leads them to refer to outdated teaching stereotypes (eg. Grammar should be explained according to “the old way”). Innovation turns away from these stereotypes, like the one according to which innovation can be measured in terms of computers available in a classroom. Innovation can be made also by a chalk and a blackboard, not necessarily with a whiteboard and a pc. For this reason, innovation is reached when “old style” teachers are accompanied by a coach, helping them to develop a more direct and practical approach to technology.

For Paola Gherardelli (ISIS "Leonardo da Vinci") to innovate means to redesign the classic roles of the learning process: the teacher becomes a guide, while the learner becomes an independent traveler in the field of language, able to autonomously use the contents offered by the most innovative tools. However, in this process innovation always conflicts with the tradition and- especially in Italy - with the absence of adequate resources and specific investments. Anyway, Italy is also able to offer a lot of interesting realities, ready to be properly exploited and disseminated.

According to Chiara Cappa (Liceo Scientifico "L. Respighi") innovation should have a meaningful impact on people, on their everyday life and on their way of thinking. In spite of this consideration, however, in Italian schools too much is left to the individual will and there is a more than obvious gap between the few excellences and the substantial backwardness of the majority of schools.

Autonomy of the learner, motivation of the teacher, playful aspect of the learning process: these are the key words provided by Cristiano Sanna (Centro Machiavelli) in order to give a definition of innovation. Teachers should help students to develop an original and personal method of learning. For this process, innovative tools may have a strategic role.



According to Mary Norton and Daniela Muresan (British Council) innovation means technology (students oriented tools), practicality (how to learn languages in a concrete context), simplicity (transparent contents to be shared), motivation (of both teachers of learners) and networking. Only by focusing on these elements, it will be possible to make a cultural change and to overcome the obvious gap in terms of use of innovation between teachers and pupils.

While stressing the chronic lack of investments in schools, according to Monica Lupetti and Marco Guidi (University of Pisa) this should not become an alibi for teachers, whose role is essential.

A more targeted approach to the topic was provided by Massimo Moneglia (University of Florence): innovation becomes crucial when responding to practical needs and allows us to better understand unknown aspects . Innovation means using new tools starting from real and practical needs.

Once expressed those different points of view, participants reached a shared definition of innovation in language learning and teaching.

Innovation means:

- Change of roles: the teacher becomes a guide and the student becomes an autonomous traveler
- Learning beyond the classroom to impact on the environment
- Encourage the learner autonomy
- New approaches to teaching based on the development of cultural and recreational dimension of learning
- Exploitation of new technologies by overcoming the resistance of the teachers and the lack of technological resources
- Act on teachers through the promotion of their motivation and their autonomy. It would be important also assigning him/her an "innovation coach"
- Provide answers to practical needs of learning
- Enhancement of the resources which are available

3. Work team, analysis of projects and development of operative plans

After reaching an organic definition of innovation, workshop participants presented those language in which they have been involved in, focusing on the innovative aspects and the difficulties met in relation to the promotion of innovation. The intent of this sharing activity was the development of an operative plan to improve innovation in language teaching and learning. Many of these projects were awarded the European Language Label.

Cristiano Sanna (Centro Machiavelli) presented the project entitled "Psychodrama", which uses a purely psychological method to understand what are the basic skills a trainer should develop: being a team player, ability to communicate and to create a positive environment, allowing students to have an active role in the classroom.



The strength of this initiative is to consider interaction between people as a tool for learning. The weak point is the transfer of innovative contents to teachers who often show a certain reluctance to apply them.

How to overcome this resistance? According to Luisa Panichi (Pisa University) the first meeting with teachers is fundamental to motivate them, explaining the benefits of using technology. According to Marco Guidi (University of Pisa), it would be necessary to create specific professional figures, whose role is to convince teachers about the advantages linked to innovation. For Paola Gherdelli (ISIS "Leonardo da Vinci") it is necessary to show how a lesson based on innovation may be more interesting and more interactive.

"IMAGACT" is the name of the project presented by Massimo Moneglia (University of Florence). The project aims at promoting language teaching through an innovative method based on images. Translated into Italian, English, Chinese and Spanish, the project aims at explaining the lexical infrastructure through the use of images.

The strength of "IMAGACT" project is the multilingual approach that allows end users to compare the acquisition of vocabulary in different languages. The weakness concerns the fact that the acquisition of lexical constructions often belongs to specific rules which are not interchangeable from a language to another. Technology can definitely help to overcome this criticality.

The solutions offered by the participants are the following: to use simple technologies, to promote equality between new tools (personal computers) and old ones (eg. the), to encourage children to use their own PCs in the classroom, to create an Internet corner where anyone can access.

The project presented by Luisa Panichi (University of Pisa) is entitled "Euroversity", a network of professionals who use virtual worlds in education.

The project allows the emergence of interesting realities to be further exploited. The weakness lies in the fact that the virtual world too often tends to replicate the training tools that already exist in the reality. And this fact goes against the original idea of the virtual world, which should be based on innovation.

Different solutions were proposed by workshop participants: to overcome the boundaries of the classical educational programs, to encourage the use of MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) and Coursera (online courses made available by the Universities; to modify the stereotyped idea of teaching and learning.

"Hands On" is the project presented by Paola Gherardelli (ISIS "Leonardo da Vinci"). It is based on a pragmatic approach, by asking students to prepare a project to be evaluated by a committee composed by the students themselves. All activities have been carried out in English.



The advantage is represented by a wide sharing of both methods and contents, with a new and different relationship between teachers and students and a first approach to the labour market. The same project allowed a positive collaboration between teachers of English and teachers of other subjects, thanks to the CLIL approach. The disadvantages of the current project are: the poor visibility of the initiative and the non-inclusion of this method in the curricular programs.

Participants agreed on the need to include the inclusion of innovative projects in the school curricula and the need to promote the added value represented by innovation.

Maria Norton and Daniela Muresan have presented an online language training course for teachers and trainers, for which the British Council has been awarded the European Label of Languages.

The weak point is that most of the teachers began the course with great enthusiasm, and then quitted.

The solution indicated by the working group focuses on the ability of trainers to engage and motivate the users through an attentive and focused tutoring, through the enhancement of students' resources, through the use of tools designed to increase participation.

Marco Guidi (University of Pisa) presented a Portuguese language course in iBook format , aiming at providing students with materials that can help them twork independently.

The major benefit is to add referrals hypertexts, videos, forums with the author. The criticalities are the following: to regulate access to the forum, to convince teachers and students, to ensure cross-platform open source options.

The indicated solution is to implement and emphasize the synergy between the resources used at home and those available in the classroom, thus promoting the recognition of innovation.

The latest projects were presented by Chiara Cappa (Liceo Scientifico " L. Respighi"): the first on the digital storytelling allowsthe definition of a real 3.0 classroom; the second is devoted to extensive reading.

Again, the main problem is represented by the lack of participation by teachers. The proposed solution is to convince teachers to get involved by the enthusiasm of the students and by the results they get.

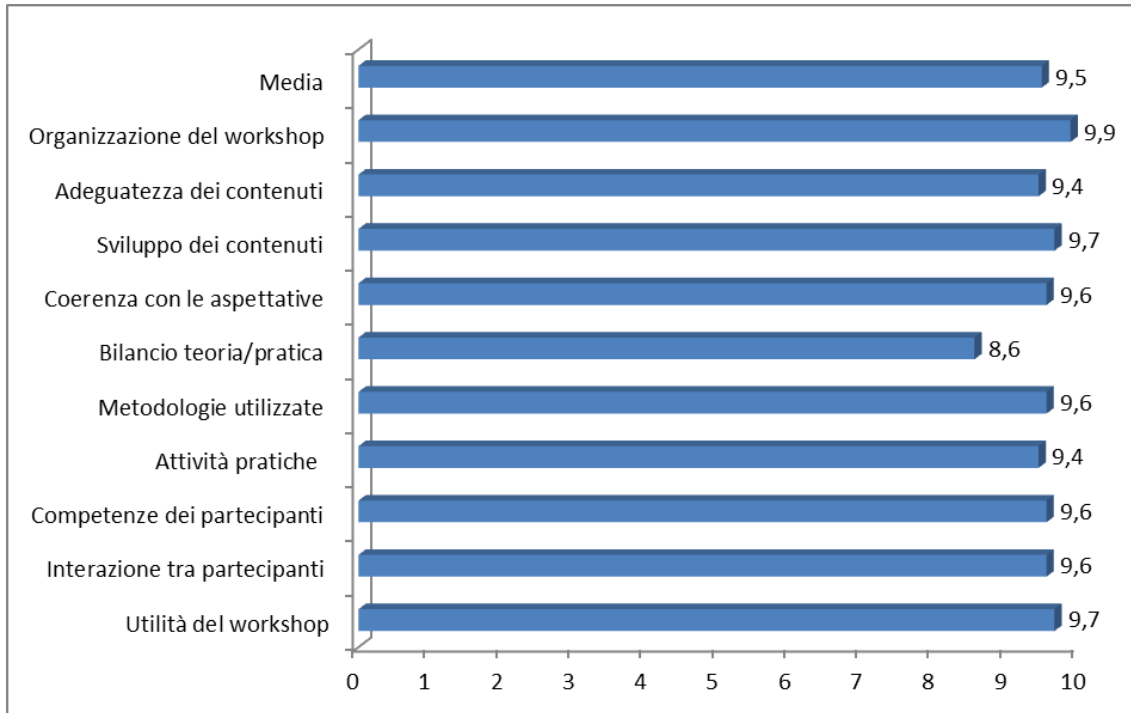
Summarizing the findings of the joint debate, an operative plan has been realized, aiming at implementing innovation in language teaching and learning.

Problem identified	Proposed solution
Teachers' resistance to use technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To motivate teachers • To invest in high-profile trainers • To help teachers with specialized tutors in the use of technology: "innovation coaches" • To demonstrate the best results - in terms of enthusiasm and involvement - obtained by students who have used new technologies
Educational programs are not innovation oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To insert innovative tools in the existing programs
Innovation based on ICT is limited by the lack of technological resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To invest in simple technologies • To encourage children to use their PCs, smartphones, tablets, etc., according to an approach "bring your own device" • To create technological corners to be shared
Innovation tends to replicate the existing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To rethink language teaching and learning in a more modern and pragmatic way
Education is not always receptive to new approaches like CLIL, self-assessment, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To realize schools curricula including the obligation to refer to innovative training projects • To encourage an equal recognition in favor of those who make innovation
Low motivation of teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To constantly follow the participants in the training courses (eg, via Skype, email, etc.). • To establish an in-service training contract with clear objectives, expected results, timing, etc.

4. Workshop evaluation

The results achieved in the framework of the practical sessions were jointly discussed. Workshop participants received a certificate attesting their participation and their active involvement in the activities of the NELLIP network.

At the end of the meeting, all participants completed the questionnaire evaluation of the workshop, which showed a good level of appreciation. The details of the evaluation are reported and commented in the graph below:



Participants appreciated the organization of the workshop (9.9 / 10) and the contents developed (9.7 / 10). "I found it particularly useful to compare the experiences of innovation between different educational sectors and the emergence of solutions to identified problems": this is one of the comments that best sum up the point of view of the participants, confirmed by the positive score obtained by the interaction between the participants (9.6 / 10). Contents have been considered as appropriate (9.4 / 10), in line with the initial expectations (9.6 / 10) and well developed (9, 7). The result is a very good score average of 9.5 / 10.