

ICT Resources, Immigrant Students and the Teaching of Italian as a Second Language (L2): a Survey

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Abstract

This paper discusses around the teaching of Italian as second language (L2) and, in particular, it also deals with the actual use of ICT resources made by Italian school at this end.

We tackle this issue starting from a survey conducted within a number of Italian primary and lower secondary schools. Although new technologies have an increasingly important role in education, there is still an evident gap between the number and the variety of available ICT tools and their actual employment in schools; this is true also and especially as far as the teaching of Italian as a second language (L2) to immigrant students. Nevertheless, all European countries face the challenge of providing immigrant students with adequate education and ICT tools are widely considered as very "promising" tools to foster language learning and help immigrant students acquiring the language of the receiving country, which becomes the "language of instruction".

The research reported in this paper was aimed at understanding whether and how software products are currently used in Italian compulsory schools with the intended purpose. A further objective was to understand which specific products are actually used and which are the teachers' feelings about their use: potential, effectiveness, strengths and weaknesses...

The survey was carried out by means of a specific questionnaire, which is illustrated in detail in this paper. As a matter of fact, it explores different issues linked to the teaching of the Italian language to immigrant students. It is divided into three main sections: 1) general information about the specific school context (location, school level, number of Italian and foreign pupils, etc.); 2) educational methods adopted to teach Italian to immigrant students; 3) type of educational resources employed (specific focus on ICT- based tools).

In the first two sections, some variables that may play a role in the use of ICT to teach Italian L2 are investigated such as the presence/absence of a computer lab in the school and the actual availability of other ICT tools (Interactive Whiteboard, school platform, etc.); some further information is also required pertaining to the actual role of teachers, types of intervention that are usually carried out to sustain the inclusion of new -immigrant students, type of language teaching programs (basic literacy, enhancement courses, L2 courses aimed at supporting the study of curricular subjects, etc.)

These issues need to be thoroughly explored because the Italian school system leaves single schools free to differently tackle the issue of language teaching to immigrant students. A number of significant difference are therefore found as to the tools adopted and other relevant situations/aspects specific of each school: figures involved , type of interventions implemented...

In the third section the specific learning objectives pursued by means of ICT resources are investigated and the actual use of ICT to teach L2 is explored, in particular as far as e-learning resources and educational software are concerned.