INFORMAL LANGUAGE LEARNING INSIDE AND BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

NEW PERSPECTIVES

UNIVERSITY OF PAVIA
NOVEMBER 12, 2021
ONLINE CONFERENCE

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

9.00 | CONFERENCE OPENING

PROF. LUCA VANZAGO
DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITY OF PAVIA

PROF. SILVIA LURAGHI
RESPONSIBLE OF THE SECTION OF THEORETICAL AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS
UNIVERSITY OF PAVIA

DR. LETIZIA AFFATATO
12TH REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION | PAVIA

9.15 | INTRODUCTION

PROF. MARIA PAVESI
DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITY OF PAVIA

NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND INFORMAL LEARNING

CHAIR: MARIA PAVESI

**9.30 - 10.30 | AGNES KUKULSKA-HULME
OPEN UNIVERSITY**
INFORMAL LANGUAGE LEARNING WITH TECHNOLOGY: WHY, WHEN AND HOW?

**10.30 - 11.10 | LETIZIA CINGANOTTO
INDIRE | FLORENCE**
LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES FOR REMOTE, BLENDED OR HYBRID TEACHING: THEORIES, EXPERIENCES AND PRACTICAL INPUTS

11.10 - 11.25 I BREAK

AUDIOVISUAL INPUT IN AND OUT OF THE CLASSROOM

CHAIR: MAICOL FORMENTELLI

**11.25 - 12.25 | SANDRO CARUANA
UNIVERSITY OF MALTA**
PRIME MOVER OR SUPPORT FOR LEARNING? INCIDENTAL LANGUAGE ACQUISITION VIA THE MEDIA

**12.25 - 13.05 | JENNIFER LERTOLA
UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN PIEDMONT**
DIDACTIC AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION: AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP INTEGRATED LANGUAGE SKILLS

13.05 - 14.00 | LUNCH

LEARNING LANGUAGES INFORMALLY INSIDE THE CONTENT CLASSROOM

CHAIR: CRISTINA MARIOTTI

**14.00 - 15.00 | DAVID LASAGABASTER
UNIVERSITY OF THE BASQUE COUNTRY (UPV/EHU) | VITORIA-GASTEIZ**
EMI AND LANGUAGE LEARNING: ARE THEY AT ODDS?

**15.00 - 15.40 | FRANCESCA COSTA
CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF THE SACRED HEART | MILAN**
ALTERNATION BETWEEN THE L1 (ITALIAN) AND THE L2 (ENGLISH) IN THREE CLIL AND EMI CONTEXTS

15.40 - 16.00 | BREAK

(IN)FORMAL LANGUAGE LEARNING: EXPERIENCES AND NEW PERSPECTIVES

CHAIR: FABRIZIO MAGGI

**16.00 - 17.00 | GISELLA LANGÉ
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION | ROME**
CLIL/EMILE AND (IN)FORMAL LEARNING

**17.00 - 17.30 | DONATELLA MAZZA
UNIVERSITY OF PAVIA**
"KOMMST DU VOM GARDALAND?" THEATRICAL TRAINING, IMPROVISATION AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

**17.30 - 18.00 | MARIA PAVESI*, ELISA GHIA°, CAMILLA DE RISO*
*UNIVERSITY OF PAVIA
°UNIVERSITY FOR FOREIGNERS OF SIENA**
EXPERIENCING INFORMAL LANGUAGE CONTACT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PAVIA: CHANGING THE BALANCE IN THE L2 LEARNING OF ENGLISH?

18.00 | CLOSING REMARKS

While in the past L2 learners' experience of foreign languages was mostly limited to the precincts of conventional educational sites, the balance may now be shifting in favour of out-of-the-classroom settings. As we witness a widespread 'expansion of affordances', traditional language learning shades into informal language acquisition and novel combinations of formal and informal learning arise, leading to new forms of multilingualism (Aronin et al. 2013). This change in linguistic landscape and linguistic ecology dramatically applies to English but also involves other L2s, calling for 'a new model of what constitutes a linguistic environment for learning' (Arnbjörnsdóttir and Ingvarsdóttir 2018). Such a drastic change in approach to individual's and communities' L2 acquisition has been coupled with researchers' amplified interest in the extent, modalities and types of L2 access beyond the formal classroom in various locations, as 'second language learning depends on the coming together of learners and languages in space' (Benson 2021). If informal learning has now migrated mostly to the online realm (Hubbard 2020), informal language learning is not restricted to the ubiquitous internet and media environments; nor can it be considered as arising only out of leisure activities. It emerges dynamically in a multitude of settings, as those created in schools and universities though English medium instruction, public pedagogy communities and environments, mediatised as well as working experiences, mobile learning environments and study-abroad contexts. Informal language learning inevitably interacts with language education, as the two tend to intermingle repeatedly and innovatively in the lives of contemporary L2 speakers.

The conference will bring together issues pertaining to both school and university students' increasingly diverse language learning trajectories by focusing on three main topical areas:

1. The impact of the digital revolution on the informal learning of an L2 in and beyond the classroom
2. The access to audiovisual, digital and interactional media as a form of language immersion in second language acquisition and foreign language learning
3. CLIL and EMI as privileged environments of informal language learning within educational spaces.

ABSTRACTS AVAILABLE AT:

https://studiumanistici.unipv.it/?pagina=p&titolo=ling-Attivita

SCIENTIFIC AND ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

MARIA PAVESI (UNIVERSITY OF PAVIA), MAICOL FORMENTELLI (UNIVERSITY OF PAVIA), ELISA GHIA (UNIVERSITY FOR FOREIGNERS OF SIENA), FABRIZIO MAGGI (UNIVERSITY OF PAVIA), CRISTINA MARIOTTI (UNIVERSITY OF PAVIA)
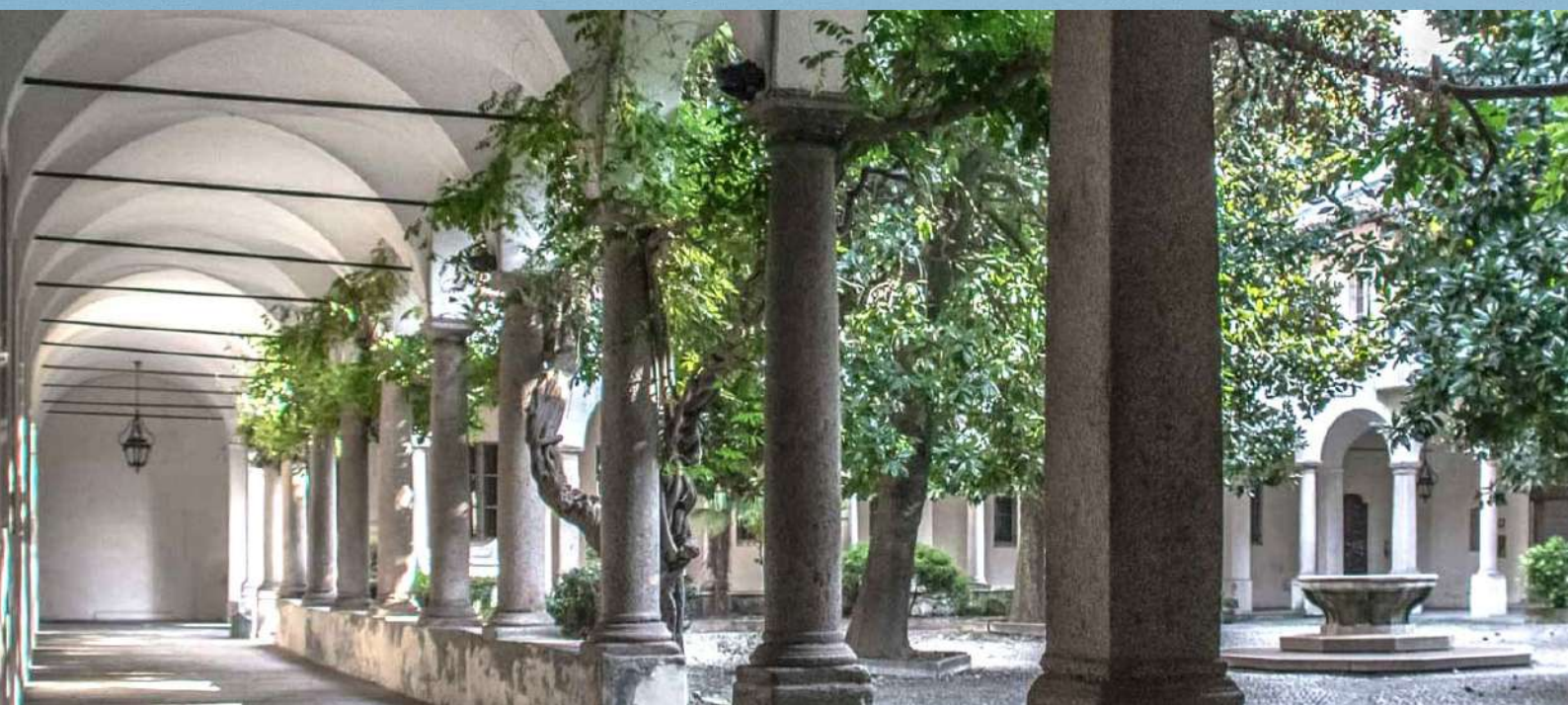
ABSTRACTS

Informal language learning with technology: Why, when and how?

Agnes Kukulska-Hulme, Open University (keynote speaker)

The rise of personal, social, and AI-powered technologies is providing unprecedented opportunities for informal language learning as a supplement to formal classes or as a substitute. Incremental yet notable changes in people's digital viewing, listening and participation practices in multiple languages suggest that a new paradigm is emerging, recently described as Mobile Open Social Learning for Languages (Read, Kukulska-Hulme, Barcena & Traxler, 2021). This paradigm highlights the integration of learning while mobile, with access to and creation of learning resources in an open way and the ability to take part in social interactions on the internet. When learners are chatting on social media, following influencers, sharing photos, making videos, playing games or collaborating informally, they are vastly broadening the scope for observing language, capturing how it is used and getting more practice. Yet many of these activities are likely to be unconnected to what they are doing in a language class. Drawing on recent research studies, this presentation first considers learners' motivations for informal technology-supported language learning, where personal interests, aspirations, affiliations and friendships shape individuals' choices and practices. Second, allied to motivations are their personal circumstances which influence when and how they go about their learning. Place, time, and variety of activity are increasingly aspects that are under the learner's control, although contexts in which learners are resource-poor and marginalised present particular challenges. Furthermore, language learners do not necessarily have well-developed abilities to self-regulate and to exercise self-control. In the emerging landscape of digital exploration and adventure, language learners still need guidance and support. Challenges for language educators and curriculum designers include how to take account of everyday digital learning practices, understand and support learners at the point of need, and perhaps rethink everyone's roles.

Learning technologies for remote, blended or hybrid teaching: Theories, experiences and practical inputs

Letizia Cinganotto, INDIRE

Starting from the theoretical background, with reference to the literature in the field of learning technologies in formal, non formal and informal learning, the presentation will highlight some experiences and good practices carried out by Italian teachers during the pandemic. Suggestions and practical inputs about learning technologies for language learning in flexible educational scenarios will be provided, also taking inspiration from the initiatives carried out by INDIRE to support teachers with remote, blended and hybrid teaching and learning. Particular reference will be made to the "Library of innovation", an initiative carried out by INDIRE, a repository of videos, learning material, tutorial, digital content, which can inspire teachers in any educational scenario they will have to teach.

Practical ideas and suggestions on innovative methodologies and strategies for language learning and CLIL will be provided, mentioning examples of good practices from the so-called "Avant-garde" Educational movement, a school network promoted by INDIRE, involving more than 1200 schools at the moment. It is a community of practice sharing ideas, materials, practices about all the different subjects, including foreign languages and CLIL, with the aim to innovate and reshape the traditional model of schooling, also combining formal, non formal and informal learning. Examples of methodologies and strategies for innovation in language learning that will be highlighted during the presentation are, in particular, debate in EFL and CLIL, project-based learning and phenomenon-based learning, video-annotation, collaborative commenting and Hyperdocs for EFL.

Prime mover or support for learning? Incidental language acquisition via the media

Sandro Caruana, University of Malta (keynote speaker)

Empirical research carried out in different countries confirms that audiovisual input (AVI) is effective for L2 acquisition and learning. The efficacy of different modalities of input - be it through 'traditional' media, such as television and cinema, or through web-based sources - has also been investigated thoroughly. Studies report a wide spectrum of outcomes, often highly dependent on the context in which they were carried out. The aim of this presentation is firstly to reflect critically on research dedicated to AVI via the media, also by providing some background on the context/s in which it was held. This will lead to some observations on the extent to which this input can lead to incidental L2 acquisition, also by discussing whether specific linguistic competences benefit from it. Age and cognateness will also feature in these observations, especially in consideration of their possible effects on acquisition when AVI is not accompanied by language learning. This will allow me to focus more specifically on some cases in which AVI acts as 'prime mover' for language acquisition, also by referring to a specific case of which I have first-hand experience, as a learner, as a teacher and as a researcher: AVI in Italian in Malta and its effects on acquisition, accompanied by reflections on the relevance of this experience to the field of SLA.

Didactic Audiovisual Translation: An opportunity to develop integrated language skills

Jennifer Lertola, University of Eastern Piedmont

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the exposure to audiovisual communication thus offering more opportunities of contact with English and other foreign languages. Informal exposure can take place through self-organised access to the media or self-directed activities. Audiovisual Translation (AVT) – the transfer of verbal language in audiovisual media aimed at making audiovisual products accessible – allows language learners to interact with multimodal material that combines verbal and non-verbal elements in an innovative and motivating way (Lertola, 2019; Talaván, 2020). AVT activities can be carried out independently and therefore foster autonomous learning outside the classroom. In particular, learners can carry out an AVT task and obtain a tangible result (e.g., a subtitled or dubbed video) that they can share with others for entertainment or social purposes. Recent empirical research has shown the benefits of didactic AVT practice on the development of individual and integrated language skills as well as its potential to foster creativity (Talaván, 2020). Language transfer in AVT does not necessarily imply translation since it can be intralingual (L2-L2); interlingual standard (L2-L1) and reverse (L1-L2), and intersemiotic (non-verbal to L2). This paper will briefly present the state of the art. Then, it will provide an overview of the most used didactic AVT modes, namely subtitling, Subtitles for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, creative subtitling, dubbing, creative dubbing, Audio Description, voice-over and free commentary. Finally, the paper will describe TRADILEX (Audiovisual Translation as a Didactic Resource in Foreign Language Education), a recent international project funded by the Spanish Government. The project aims to determine the improvement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) promoted by didactic AVT.

EMI and language learning: Are they at odds?

David Lasagabaster, University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) (keynote speaker)

Although English-medium instruction (EMI) has become a key part of the language policy of universities around the world, it is conspicuous how little attention has been paid to the training of teachers in many higher education institutions. This has often led content teachers to complain about their taking the EMI plunge without much support from their institutions. With this in mind, in this talk I will first briefly summarize those surveys that have analysedEMI teacher preparation, to later on focus on the skills that are widely believed to be necessary to teach subjects in English. With the main topic of this conference in mind, special heed will be paid to language proficiency, one of EMI teachers' primary concerns as attested by research in the field. Studies reveal that EMI teachers tend to be worried about their lack of communicative English skills, particularly spoken fluency and informal interaction skills, and this irrespective of the discipline. Linguistic limitations may thus impinge negatively on how classes progress, to the extent that they may hinder the rapport between lecturers and students, and they can even become too much of a hurdle that may cause teachers to avoid certain classroom interactive scenarios. As a result of this, EMI classes run the risk of being more monologic and less interactive than L1-medium classes because teachers feel more vulnerable. With a view to overcoming this vulnerability, EMI teacher development should come to the fore and professional development courses should be implemented. Institutions must be aware that, if they want their EMI programmes to be effective, content teachers demand support and institutional language policy makers should be open to provide it.

Alternation between the L1 (Italian) and the L2 (English) in three CLIL and EMI contexts

Francesca Costa, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart

For years, the alternation between the L1 (Italian) and the L2 (English) was banned in language classes, since it was thought that this would impair the learning of the second language. In recent years, however, there has been a recognition of the validity of alternation. This presentation aims at investigating the alternation of the L1 and L2 in CLIL and EMI contexts at three educational levels (primary, secondary, tertiary) in Italy. CLIL and EMI contexts are particularly relevant because language learning could be seen as an incidental outcome of learning a discipline through English (Basturkmen and Shackleford 2015; Aguilar, 2017; Basturkmen and Hong 2020; Pavesi and Ghia, 2020). The alternation of the L1 and the L2 in particular can be seen as type of incidental focus on form (Aguilar and Rodríguez, 2012; Laufer and Girsai, 2008) seen as "the incidental attention that teachers and L2 learners pay to form in the context of meaning focused instruction" (Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen, 2001: 407). To explore this use of alternation a mixed-methods research approach was applied with a quantitative part (teacher questionnaire n=40) and a qualitative part (observation and transcriptions of lessons; number of words=47,353). The results of the study point to the function of alternation between the L1 and the L2 and to its role in terms of incidental language learning. Alternation played a mainly lexical role to explain specific lexis or at least to provide the students with lexis in both languages (English and Italian).

CLIL/EMILE and (in)formal learning

Gisella Langé, Ministero dell'Istruzione (featured speaker)

Recent years have seen significant advances in the formal development of CLIL/EMILE in Italy where non-linguistic subjects can be offered in English, French, German, Spanish and other languages. Since 2014/15 a subject taught in a Foreign Language is mandatory in the last year of Italian upper secondary schools. In addition, in 2015 a new Law proposed that CLIL be introduced, although not compulsorily, at all school levels - in primary, lower secondary and all classes in upper secondary schools.

The introduction of CLIL into mainstream education is proving to be a real change agent in Italian schools and formal and informal initiatives vary considerably. Inter-disciplinary dialogue has offered the opportunity for a fresh look at attitudes and practice which have evolved throughout the country reflecting a high level of 'bottom-up' expertise. These have included:

- school-led experiences (e.g. pairing, clustering, international networking) both in class and out of class
- wider scale regional development (e.g. pilot experiences, centres of good practice, dissemination of experiences, training courses).

In many schools "CLIL teams" see foreign language teachers, language assistants and subject teachers work collaboratively in designing and implementing integrated learning pathways. Large "CLIL communities of practice" have developed in Italy thanks to the use of digital technologies both in formal and informal contexts, thus ameliorating the process of learning non-linguistic disciplines in a foreign language.

Universities, trainers, teachers, training and educational material providers plus agencies for study abroad programmes are working collaboratively in assisting, guiding and supporting headteachers and teachers in developing CLIL vertical curricula. From primary to upper secondary schools innovative learning/teaching materials and new models of teacher training are connecting formal and informal practices.

The CLIL/EMILE Community's main aims are now: a) rethinking learning environments in terms of physical locations, contexts, etc.; b) offering digital informal spaces where students can practice content learning in a foreign language; c) expanding significant provision of CLIL audiovisual sources (on streaming and live) also thanks to RAI/Ministry of Education programmes.

A final statement: If you want to empower learners, use CLIL/EMILE to build bridges between formal and informal education!

'Kommst du vom Gardaland?' Theatrical training, improvisation and language acquisition

Donatella Mazza, University of Pavia

Theatrical training activities are still a sporadic practice in foreign language teaching but are regarded by many as an extraordinary tool with great potential for both strengthening grammar acquisition and transferring cultural as well as aesthetic specificities inherent in language use. The methodology developed over the years by the German-language theatre workshops "alles paletti!", organized within the Department of Humanities at the University of Pavia, pays special attention to the unfocused repetition of sentences and linguistic structures. The present contribution analyses how those structures are reused by learners in free production while taking part in the improvisation sessions of the workshops.

Experiencing informal language contact at the University of Pavia: Changing the balance in the L2 learning of English?

Maria Pavesi, University of Pavia
Elisa Ghia, University for Foreigners of Siena
Camilla De Riso, University of Pavia

In recent years, several dubbing countries have experienced a change in the way audiovisual products and other media are accessed in terms of preferred languages and supports (Sockett 2014; Kusyk 2017, 2020; Muñoz 2020). A similar trend appears to be underway in Italy, with young audiences more widely accessing subtitled telecinematic materials (Perego et al. 2015, 2016; Pavesi, Ghia 2020) and a variety of online media in English. Systematic data on Italian young audiences' preferences and exposure habits are still limited and wide-scale investigations are called for to document ongoing trends and potential shifts in receptive and interactive behaviour, concerning for instance frequency of access, privileged input types, preferred supports and viewing modes.

In this talk, we will compare the results of two questionnaire-based surveys aimed to explore Italian postgraduate students' exposure patterns to English media and carried out in 2016 and 2020 respectively, focusing on access to audiovisual input in the two samples over time. The data show that informal contact with English-language media is frequent among the participants, and access to subtitled audiovisuals even increases over time among non-language specialists. Driving motivations involve viewers' search for authenticity, sociability and an overall orientation to language. The study triggers further reflections on audiovisual input in second language acquisition, growing media affordances and changing L2 learning environments in contemporary Italy.