"Updating" language teachers:
Educators, techno-educator, edurectors?

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Abstract

In training courses, trainees and language teachers are mostly concerned about how to harness meaningfully *the educational value of ICTs. They do not distrust their potential* per se, *but said they ask for a formula to capitalize* efficiently *on technological resources.*

European documents and guidelines have already encouraged to integrate media education into language teacher training curricula; the profile of the language educator, *in fact, also involves a targeted education to technologies, and not just* through *technologies: the language educator should become a* techno-educator *for colleagues and, most of all, learners.*

Ideally, the figure of the language teacher is becoming more and more multi-faceted: he or she (as recent literature suggests) has to be able to "perform" as an educator, a techno-educator, a facilitator, a tutor. Can the edurector *(a blend of "educator" and "director") metaphor help to outline a new and more easily achievable profile?*

Key words: ICT, teacher training, language education policy, language educator, edurector

Résumé

Pendant les cours de formation, stagiaires et enseignants de langue se préoccupent surtout d'exploiter au mieux *la valeur éducative des TICE. Loin de se méfier de leur potentiel, ils sont en quête de stratégies d'enseignement efficaces, leur permettant de profiter de ces ressources technologiques.*

Les recherches et les directives européennes en la matière soulignent, à maintes reprises, que les éducateurs linguistiques devraient non seulement être informés du potentiel incontestable des TICE dans le domaine de l'enseignement des langues, mais aussi promouvoir un emploi conscient de ces ressources parmi les collègues, et surtout parmi les élèves. Donc, ils devraient devenir des techno-éducateurs, *à savoir des enseignants qui éduquent* aux *technologies et non seulement* avec *les technologies.*

L'enseignant de langues est censé évoluer au fil des ans de façon à devenir de plus en plus polyvalent : il ou elle — comme nous le rappelle la littérature la plus récente — doit être capable de jouer des rôles différents : éducateur, techno-éducateur, facilitateur, tuteur, etc. Est-ce que la métaphore de l'éducteur (un mot-valise issu de la fusion de « éducateur » et « directeur ») peut contribuer à amorcer un nouveau profil plus accessible ?

Mots-clés : TICE, formation des enseignants, politique d'enseignement des langues, éducateur de langue, éducteur

Introduction

Nowadays, ICTs are becoming increasingly intertwined with the very social fabric we live in. Educational institutions are struggling to keep up with the pervasiveness of technologies, and demand for teachers who are able to use ICT for educational goals correctly.

Language teacher trainees ordinarily use computers and smartphones for their own professional activities, social relations, planning, leisure. They frequently acknowledge how important these tools are to them and would prefer not to give up using them when they eventually get to teach in a school. However, an investigation conducted in 2010 (Bosisio, 2010) has showed that newly-appointed language teachers tend to cautiously start off with their teaching by using old-fashioned lessons and techniques. According to survey answers, this happen mainly because:

- they were educated without ICTs and have achieved good results anyway, and

- they do not know how to use ICT in the language classroom *efficiently*; they see the educational potential of computers, tablets, IWBs, but they ask for specific training in the use of these technologies for language teaching.

European legislators, decision-makers and consultants have been promoting since the early 2000s several non-normative papers that encourage focused training in the technologies for (language) education. Attention will be turned here to three documents that represent crucial steps in the integration of ICT in schools and in the teacher's toolkit: *Education and Training 2010* (2003–2004), the *European Profile for Language Teacher Education* (2004), the *A.N.D.R.O.M.E.D.A.* guidelines (2010). In the end, we will propose a new profile of the language teacher, which foundation is largely grounded on the recommendations of these documents.

"Work with knowledge, technology and information":
Education and Training 2010

Published as a first draft in 2003 and as a final version in early 2004, *Education and Training 2010* (Council of the European Union, 2004) is an official document whose aim is to pursue the agenda set out after the Lisbon Strategy (2000), the 2001 European Council in Stockholm and the 2002 European Council in Barcelona. Among its many objectives, *Education and Training 2010* states that the quality of teacher training and the conscious use of educational technologies should be fundamental goals. In response to the recommendations and challenges laid down in the document, the European Commission has developed a series of *Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications* (European Commission, 2007). The *Principles* specify that "the European Union views the role of teachers and their lifelong learning and career development as key priorities" (p. 1). The document follows:

> [Teachers] need to be able to work with a variety of types of knowledge. Their education and professional development should equip them to access, analyse, validate, reflect on and transmit knowledge, *making effective use of technology where this is appropriate*. Their pedagogic skills should allow them to build and manage learning environments and retain the intellectual freedom to make choices over the delivery of education. *Their confidence in the use of ICT should allow them to integrate it effectively into learning and teaching*. They should be able to guide and support learners in the networks in which information can be found and built. They should have a good understanding of subject knowledge and view learning as a lifelong journey. Their practical and theoretical skills should also allow them to learn from their own experiences and match a wide range of teaching and learning strategies to the needs of learners.
>
> (European Commission, 2007, pp. 3–4)

The italicized sections are particularly relevant — as they represent one of the first institutional attempts to integrate new technology-based tools into the teachers' portfolio of teaching tools and materials. Moreover, the focus is on the *effective* use of ICT, that is the introduction of ICT in the classroom only when its employ is needed in order to achieve a determined result. According to the 2007 guidelines, in fact, ICT should be used in teaching/learning processes appropriately: not as a tool for eye candy, but rather as a way to reach wider didactic goals — as it allows teachers and learners to perform activities, routine and exercises heretofore impossible, while also reaching a broader "audience".

Of course, teachers should be made aware of model uses of ICT in language learning, as well as instructed in the best practices; that is why further EU-related projects have started to consider media education as an additional skill to develop during teacher training. The foundational document, in the con-

text of language teacher training, is the *European Profile for Language Teacher Education* (Kelly and Grenfell, 2004).

The European Profile for Language Teacher Education

The Profile was developed by a team at the University of Southampton, UK, led by Professor Michael Kelly and Dr. Michael Grenfell, supported by the European Commission. It was developed in consultation with a group of international teacher educators and draws its findings from a range of teacher education programmes currently in operation across Europe.

<div align="right">(Kelly and Grenfell, 2004, p. 3)</div>

The *European Profile for Language Teacher Education* is a document providing guidelines and recommendations for European policy makers and language teacher educators. The *Profile*, as stated in its final report, is meant to be "a firm but flexible foundation for improving the education of language teachers in Europe" (Kelly, Grenfell, Allan, Kriza and McEvoy, 2004, p. 19). It presents 40 main points (called "items"), divided into four sections: Structure, Knowledge and Understanding, Strategies and Skills, and Values.

The theme of technology for language teaching is developed throughout the text, and especially in items 17 and 18, both part of the Knowledge and Understanding section — i.e. the section that lists the competences and skills that newly-trained teachers should know and possess after their early and in-service education. Item 17 (Training in information and communication technology for pedagogical use in the classroom) looks into the effective use of ICT in the language classroom. According to this guideline, trainee teachers should be able to:

- learn how to integrate ICT into other teacher areas and [be] aware of how it contributes to several learning outcomes at once;
- use ICT as a support and resource, not as an end in itself;
- encourage learner autonomy, combining ICT with tasks and projects that highlight how it can be used independently outside the classroom context as part of ongoing learning.   (Kelly et al., 2004, p. 51)

Item 18 (Training in information and communication technology for personal planning, organisation and resource discovery) focuses on ICT as professional tools for:

- organising workloads;
- creating and archiving lesson plans;
- tracking progress within a framework of reflective practice;
- communicating and exchanging ideas with colleagues.

<div align="right">(Kelly and Grenfell, 2004, p. 22)</div>

According to the authors of the *Profile*, the integration of technology into the language teacher curriculum also takes place in the personal domain of the teacher. The aim is to help trainee teachers to get accustomed to, and to promote in turn, a meaningful use of ICTs as:

- tools for a more efficient preparation and planning of classroom activities, and
- tools to find information and to build and maintain networks with colleagues and institutions abroad.

This "broader vision" of the role of ICT is adopted and further developed in a later work inspired by the *Profile*: the *A.N.D.R.O.M.E.D.A.* project.

A.N.D.R.O.M.E.D.A.:
Towards the institutional profile of a language educator

Published in 2010, the *A.N.D.R.O.M.E.D.A.* guidelines for a European language teacher education (Bosisio, 2010) introduce a manifesto for training language educators.

The notion of *language educator* already has a tradition in European scientific literature: it describes the profile of a language teacher whose aim is not just to *teach*, that is to convey knowledge and information into the learners' head. The (language) educator, as the very etymology of the word (*ex-ducere*, to bring out) suggests, promotes a maieutic process of knowledge (Gabrinetti, Lombardi and Ricchiuto, 2010). The language educator is in fact aware that learners are not passive while learning, but rather they are *actors*, who use their cognitive and intellectual resources to discover, understand, process and eventually learn. In order to learn, then, they rely on their pre-existing knowledge and experience. The *educator* is therefore a figure who acknowledges the active role of the learners in the classroom context, and does not establish himself or herself as the *magister* — i.e. the "didactic centre" — but rather plays the role of *unus inter pares*, one among equals. He or she is aware that being a *language* educator does not (only) mean lecturing on the grammar of a foreign language and to present vocabulary; the language educator knows that his or her final goal will be to promote the development of plurilingual communicative competence by highlighting the social, pragmatic, intercultural, paralinguistic and non-linguistic aspects of target foreign language(s) (Angelis and Henderson, 1989; Balboni, 2012).

The core of this document is its acronym, *A.N.D.R.O.M.E.D.A.*, which stands for:

- *Aggiornamento/apprendimento* (refresher courses/lifelong learning)
- *Nuove tecnologie* (new media)
- *Didattica delle lingue* (language teaching methodology)
- *Ricerca-azione* (action research)
- *Organizzazione* (organization)
- *Mentore* (mentor)
- *Esperienze europee* (European/abroad experiences)
- *Diversità di lingue e culture* (diversity of languages and cultures)
- *Autovalutazione* (self-assessment)

The acronym lists the main points that, according to the authors, a qualified, modern, "up-to-date" language teacher education program should include.

The second entry, *new media*, is particularly relevant to the topic discussed in this paper as it highlights the importance of ICT not only in schools and for teachers' professional development, but also on a wider, socio-cultural scale. The authors claim that new media are nowadays unavoidable parts of the society we live in: their use in everyday activities (e.g. transport, economy, medicine) is so firmly entrenched that it has become impossible to think of a world without technology (Gabrinetti et al., 2010). Furthermore, we are getting more and more used to thinking through ICT — we are building a "cybernetic brainframe" (De Kerckhove, 1991) which shapes our view on the world. This is especially evident with mobile phones and smartphones, which are by now starting to be perceived no longer as new technologies, but rather as everyday simple, ordinary and essential tools: they are becoming *transparent*, as stated by Gabrinetti et al. (2010). Almost everyone now uses ICT daily for leisure and work, and they would likely not be able, or struggle greatly, to perform the very same daily activities without the aid of computers, the Internet, mobile phones, eBook readers and gaming devices. Ultimately, such technologies are taken for granted: they are *embedded* in the society.

While ICT has become very pervasive, schools, on the other side, have had the tendency to stand as "ramparts of tradition", conservative settings where well-tested methodologies are proposed, unchanged since the last major technological revolution (i.e. the book, in the 16th century). Unfortunately, as a large number of scholars and educators (among others: Prensky, 2001a, 2001b; Johnson, 2005; Pedrò 2006; Rivoltella, 2006; Lombardi, 2012a) suggest, the school as we know it is not responding anymore to learners' needs. Furthermore, it is also starting to create a gap between the formal assumptions onto which the school itself is built and the way the "New Millennium Learners" (Pedrò, 2006) organize and structure their cognitive, social/relational, communicational and learning behaviours (Veen and Wrakking, 2006). Most authors

agree that this "paradigm shift" has been fostered mainly by the impact of new media.

According to Gabrinetti et al. (2010), the goal of a language educator in such a fast-paced changing pedagogical scenario should be that of challenging and reconsidering his or her own skills and moulding these skills on the learners. By rethinking identity and role, the language educator is likely to find a way to reconnect with learners and fill this "generational" gap. The practical way to accomplish this goal is an appropriate training in ICT for both language educator and students — i.e. they should reflect together on the *value* of technology as a tool for instruction, education, and life.

The language educator, therefore, not only knows how to use ICT for his or her own needs and how to harness the educational potential of ICT in the classroom, but also *understands the importance* of ICT both in school and out of school. He or she is well aware of the psychological, ethical and social issues that these tools introduce. As a point of reference in the digital age, the language educator is able to perform as a *techno-educator*, for both students and colleagues.

ICT in school and language educators training: The edurector metaphor

As discussed so far, training a language educator means to create a *multifaceted* profile. The language educator is fundamentally a *language teacher* and an *expert* of the foreign culture he or she teaches. The language educator is also a *facilitator*, in the sense that he or she does not impose his or her personality to the classroom, but rather works together with the pupils, in order to make the experience of language learning closer to everyone's previous knowledge and learning habits. In addition, the language educator is a *tutor*. From the latin verb *tueri*, to protect, the word has shifted meaning to indicate the stick used to support grafted plants; likewise, the language educator is a support and an active guide for the learner.

One possible embodiment of this theoretical profile is the *edurector* metaphor (Lombardi, 2012a, 2012b, 2013). Edurector is a blend of *educator* and *director*: two well-known roles whose professional specificities provide insights for how to balance instruction, classroom management and technologies. The metaphor outlines the practical profile of a language educator whose aim is to:

- *direct the "players"*, i.e. look after students, support their motivation, point their attention towards elements of significance, watch over involved social dynamics, hold the reins on the group, suggest and organize activities, and share with "actors" the responsibility for the fulfilment of established didactic ends;
- *educate*, and [is] therefore [...] aware that a teacher's final task is not *just*

to teach (a second or foreign language), but rather to actively contribute to the development of a human being, to accompany a project of life: *non scholae sed vitae*;

- *promote values*, instead of mere information.   (Lombardi, 2012a)

Metaphor aside, this profile has a solid theoretical background, in terms of language education approaches and methodologies. It is based on a humanistic-affective approach to language teaching (Caon, 2006), which acknowledges the role of the learner as an active person who shares his or her individuality "with the social context in which [his or her] language learning is taking place" (Mitchell and Myles, 2004, p. 27). It also mirrors some aspects of a ludic (or playful) methodology for language teaching, i.e. the integration of game-like elements and techniques in order to create a friendlier and more collaborative environment, like that of movie sets (thus the "director" element). Lastly, it involves the use of ICTs as tools with a specific gravity — that is, ICTs are employed when their peculiarities are functional to the goal (e.g. creating motivation, enhance interaction), and always in a way that is meaningful both to the language educator and the learners. As stated by Moss and Jewitt (2010), in fact, the presence of technology in the classroom does not automatically lead to better teaching, or to better learning results for students; results are obtained when technology is used in harmony with teaching and learning goals. Examples of such meaningful use of technological resources include:

- the acknowledgement of computers in the classroom as tools for productivity, and not for entertainment — even when the teaching techniques requie the use of entertaining materials such as simulations and serious games;
- the use of interactive whiteboards as digital hubs (Moss et al., 2007) — i.e. in a way that fosters their interactive and connected nature (otherwise IWBs would be just a fancy, shiny new version of blackboards, with no added value);
- the critical research and adoption of online resources, and the production of new content to be shared on the Web;
- the openness to social media: the use of blogs, wikis, social networks;
- the *natural* integration of smartphones and tablets in the language classroom as devices for an integrated learning environment.

(Dillenbourg and Jermann, 2007)

Another advantage of this profile, which is noticeable from the examples, is its practical foundation. It is conceived as a direct response to the concerns of trainee teachers about how to capitalize on new media in the language classroom.

Conclusion

In this paper we traced back the role of ICT in the main documents, dedicated to (language) teacher training, published in Europe in the last ten years. From the directives of *Education and Training 2010* and *Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications*, through the *European Profile for Language Teacher Education*, to the *A.N.D.R.O.M.E.D.A.* guidelines, we extrapolated and listed the most relevant ideas to integrate ICT in the language teacher training curriculum. Along the same lines, we proposed a new profile for the language educator, which is represented by the metaphor of the *edurector*: a language teacher who is sensitive to "integrate teaching with particular attention to the pupil's personal sphere" (Lombardi, 2012b, p. 71) and able to move deftly among the many technologies and resources for organizing and teaching.

Currently, a research group within the Catholic University of Milan is developing a language teacher training course which relies on this metaphor. This course will feature built-in modules and workshops on the socio-pedagogical value of ICTs, the natural integration of technological devices in the classroom, and the efficient use of the most common ICTs for specific purposes of language education.

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