

TEACHING ITALIAN FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTENEGRO: REALITY VS. REAL NEEDS

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Abstract: Italian as a second foreign language at the University of Montenegro is studied within the programme of Undergraduate university studies both at the Faculty of Philology and at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management. This paper aims to determine the extent to which the teaching of Italian corresponds to the real needs of the students related to the labour market, which they enter after completing their Bachelor's degree. For this purpose, the paper presents the results of the analysis of the current syllabi of Italian as a second foreign language, which are linked to the results of the analysis of the attitudes and expectations of the students who take these courses. This analysis is based on the results of a survey conducted in the academic year 2020/2021, which had a total of 56 respondents. Based on the conclusions derived from the results of these two analyses, we will offer a set of guidelines for improving various aspects of the aforementioned university courses, so as to provide the knowledge and skills necessary for the effective use of Italian in the environment in which students are professionally engaged, while also taking into account the envisaged level of linguistic competence that is realistically achievable in the current teaching context.

Keywords: Italian language for specific purposes, Italian as a second foreign language, University of Montenegro

Introduction

This paper presents the results of research conducted with two main objectives. The first is to determine the extent to which the curriculum of Italian, studied as an elective second foreign language at the University of Montenegro, coincides with the needs of the students and the Montenegrin labour market. The second is to offer guidelines for creating more efficient and purposeful syllabi for the

subject, based on the obtained results, analysed within the framework of the modern methodology of foreign language teaching.

After providing an insight into the context of teaching Italian at the University of Montenegro, both at the Faculty of Philology and at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, where this language is studied as a second foreign or as an elective language, we focus on the qualitative analysis of all ten of the relative syllabi. Furthermore, we compare the obtained results with the results of the analysis of the students' needs and expectations, derived from the survey that included a total of 56 respondents, who were male and female students attending both the abovementioned faculties. When analysing the survey, both quantitative and qualitative data processing methods will be used.

By way of conclusion, the results of these two analyses will be related to the main principles of the modern methodology of teaching foreign languages for specific purposes, in order to form guidelines for revising the curriculum of Italian as a second foreign language to better respond to the needs both of Montenegrin students and of society in the given context.

Teaching Italian at the University of Montenegro: a cross-section of the situation

Italian is studied at the University of Montenegro as a first foreign language within the Study Programme Italian Language and Literature at the Faculty of Philology, at the level of Undergraduate, Masters and Doctoral studies. This is also the only programme in Montenegro that educates future teachers of Italian. However, the subject of our paper is Italian when studied as a second or elective foreign language. This possibility currently exists only at the Faculty of Philology (hereinafter FP) and at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management (hereinafter FTH).

If we compare both frameworks in which Italian language teaching takes place at these two faculties, we can notice the main similarities and differences between these two courses, as illustrated below (Table 1):

FP	FTH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Duration: All three years of undergraduate studies ■ Entry level: Absolute beginners ■ Total length of classes: Three hours a week ■ Expected output level: B1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Duration: The first two years of undergraduate studies ■ Entry level: A2 ■ Total length of classes: Two hours and fifteen minutes a week ■ Expected output level: B1

Table 1: Framework set for teaching Italian as a second foreign language at FP and FTH

Furthermore, by comparing the information on examples of the professional opportunities or career paths provided by the acquired qualification (see

Subchapter 5.2 of the *Supplement to Undergraduate Diploma* at FP and FTH), we obtained the comparative data presented in Table 2:

FP	FTH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assistant/associate in foreign language teaching in pre-school institutions and primary schools; ▪ Officer in social activities of tourist vocation (employee in tourist organizations, tourist guide, receptionist, entertainer in tourist resorts, and so on); ▪ Business Secretary, or similar. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Possibility of employment in jobs that require independent work in tourism.

Table 2: Employability of FP or FTH undergraduate graduates

By comparing the employment opportunities of FP and FTH undergraduate students, we can come to the conclusion that the main opportunities for both of them seem to open up in the field of tourism, where the knowledge of foreign languages is very important, often being a key determining factor¹ in whether or not an individual is employed.

Summarizing all the above information, we might conclude that the presumed communication needs of students of both faculties about Italian as a Foreign language for specific purposes (FLSP) almost completely overlap (Table 3). Furthermore, this might bring us to the assumption that the curriculum of the Italian language in the second and third year of undergraduate studies at FTH and FP could (or should) coincide, especially in terms of introducing and developing knowledge of the Italian as a FLSP – most especially in the field of tourism and business correspondence.

FP and FTH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The age and mother tongue of the students (approximate / the same) ▪ Total number of hours of Italian language classes per week (approximate: 3 hours vs. 2 hours and 15 minutes) ▪ The initial level of the knowledge of the Italian language (different, but the same for enrolment in the final year of studying Italian - A2.2) ▪ The expected level of language competence at the end of the courses (the same - B1) ▪ The employment opportunities for students with a Bachelor’s degree is greatest in the tourism sector – this requires active knowledge of a foreign language at least at the B1 level.

Table 3: Similarities in the curriculum framework and employment opportunities of undergraduate students at FP and FTH

¹ The Law on Tourism and Hospitality (amended in March 2021) stipulates, for example, that “a manager and all other people employed in a travel agency office have to be able to speak at least one foreign language at B1 level, while in addition to a license, an entertainer and a tour guide have to speak at least one foreign language fluently.” (<https://www.paragraf.me/proposisi-crnegore/zakon-o-turizmu-i-ugostiteljstvu.html>)

Syllabus analysis

Regarding syllabus content, Anthony (88) explains “[a] syllabus specifies the content and sequencing of language, genre, and skills for an individual course (in addition to information about materials and evaluation procedures)”. This content should be established on a detailed curriculum based on real needs and should seek to guarantee the achievement of the realistic teaching goals and learning outcomes outlined by them.

In this case, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Living Languages (CEFR)

[s]tatements of the aims and objectives of language learning and teaching should be based on an appreciation of the needs of learners and of society, on the tasks, activities and processes that the learners need to carry out in order to satisfy those needs, and on the competences and strategies they need to develop/build up in order to do so. (CEFR 131)

Therefore, a needs analysis has to be the starting point in relation to which the teaching outcomes, content, linguistic and non-linguistic goals, strategies, and techniques are further elaborated². Concerning the main teaching goals, the modern methodology of foreign language teaching (Krahnke 1987, Ciliberti 1994, Mezzadri 2003, Faravani 2018) distinguishes several basic types of syllabus: a *structural (formal) syllabus*, which focuses on grammar and vocabulary; a *notional/functional syllabus* based on linguistic acts; a *situational syllabus* based on a series of situations in which the language is used and in which a student can find himself or herself in real life when using a foreign language; a *skill-based syllabus* aimed at acquiring a range of specific targeted language skills that the speaker has to master and that are not relevant to specific situations; a *task-based syllabus*, which involves teaching based on a series of complex and purposeful tasks that students need to perform using the foreign language they are learning; a *content-/topic-based syllabus* focused on the content of a topic related to a specific area or discipline; and a *genre-based syllabus* which is based on an acquisition of written and oral communication skills in a given professional field.

Bearing in mind all of the above, we might suggest that the syllabi of the Italian language at FP and FTH could be organized around the same goals and key target skills. As such, the main aim of teaching Italian at FP and FTH should be instruction aimed at use of Italian as a FLSP in performing the envisaged professional activities: an employee in a travel agency, a tourist guide, a tourist entertainer, an organizer of cultural events, or a business secretary. Therefore, the following key communication skills should be focused on: oral and written communication with clients, providing information, making reservations, han-

² See Gotti (21-23)

dling complaints, providing guidance, and giving explanations; compiling tourist offers for package tours itineraries; the basics of business correspondence; mastery of the professional vocabulary and grammar structures that are characteristic of certain genres of Italian for tourism; and the non-linguistic knowledge necessary for appropriate intercultural communication. Thus, such a professional syllabus should be based primarily on a combination of situational, skill-based, and task-based types of syllabi, to the extent that this level of language competence allows. This might imply a gradual introduction of grammatical structures and specific vocabulary, both pertinent to the language of tourism, as well as to basic notions of business correspondence.

The Italian language of tourism - Teaching opportunities at level A2-B1

We have concluded that teaching Italian as a FLSP is necessary at both FP and FTH. However, considering the given teaching framework (the total number of classes, and so on), the question can be asked whether it is possible to talk about the introduction of the foreign language for specific purposes at lower levels of language competence (specifically at the A2 - B1 levels)

It is known that the centres for attesting the level of knowledge of Italian as a foreign language, based on the descriptors formulated by the CEFR, define B2 as the level at which it is possible to introduce Italian for specific purposes. In addition, B2 is the level of language competence required to enrol in Italian universities, to participate in mobility projects, to use Italian state scholarships and to do an internship in Italy. (Bistacchia 50)

However, in practice, Italian universities often offer courses of Italian for specific purposes, regardless of the level of the students' knowledge of the Italian language - the University of Foreigners in Perugia and the University of Foreigners in Siena are examples of such practice (Bistacchia 52).

When it comes to the Italian language of tourism (as a FLSP), it is necessary to refer to a few of its main characteristics, so that we can draw some tentative conclusions about introducing some elements into the Italian curriculum at FP and FTH.

Maria V. Calvi (2011b: 154) distinguishes three main areas of using the Italian language of tourism, each of which has its own linguistic specifics, but which all retain certain common features in textual and grammatical structure and vocabulary:

1. Tourism-related sciences - theory (communication between experts in the field)
2. Tourist activity – the practical use of the language in tourist activity (communication between experts, but also with the public)
3. Publishing and marketing - describing and promoting tourist destinations (communication with the public)

The author also adds the language that is spontaneously used by travellers (consumers of tourist services) on social networks and the Internet to the “professional” use of language described above.

Regarding textual genres, the same author (2011a: 35), depending on the function of the text, distinguishes three basic genres:

- Informative - providing practical information but also information related to the topics of art, history, culture, gastronomy and so on;
- Directive - guiding consumers through various tourism processes;
- Persuasive - persuading the customer to use a service or buy a particular product.

In dealing with the same textual genre, Graham Dann (135-170) distinguishes tourist textual types through the prism of their time dimension:

- Pre-trip - promotion and marketing: brochures, flyers, websites, catalogues, programs, and itineraries, as well as reservations, insurance and so on;
- On-trip - tourist guide, information panels, brochures in tourist resorts;
- Post-trip – traveller reviews, recommendations and suggestions (among travellers by “word of mouth” – on the internet, through forums or social networks).

In terms of the linguistic features that characterize each of these genres, most of the peculiarities are reflected in the level of vocabulary and morphosyntax. The lexicon of the Italian language of tourism is characterized by the use of acronyms, anglicisms, collateral tecnicisms such as *catena*, *last-minute* arrangements, and so on. In addition, the vocabulary is characterized by a connection with the target culture - exoticisms in the field of gastronomy, history, tradition and customs, crafts, and in other areas (Elia 125, 126). When it comes to morphosyntax, the Italian language of tourism is characterized by the nominal style, the use of impersonal verb forms with impersonal “si” (*si impersonale*), the emphasized use of adjectives (especially superlatives), personal, temporal and spatial deixis, and the emphasized use of certain verb tenses and structures (present indicative, future, imperative; past tenses only for descriptions related to historical events).³

Therefore, this relates to specific vocabulary and linguistic structures, with the latter largely provided up to level B1, except for implicit constructions, passives and impersonal verbs, which may be familiar to the students, but only at the receptive level.

³ See Elia 2018.

Syllabus analysis

The Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management

The analysis of the syllabus of the first year (covering the first and second semester) has shown the following:

The syllabi are of a purely structural/formal type, based on grammar structures and the general Italian language, and structured according to the content of the intended textbook (instead of *vice versa*). The learning outcomes listed in the syllabus are general.

By analysing the syllabus of the second/final year (covering the third and fourth semester) we have noticed the following:

Both syllabi state the following goals: “to enable students to communicate in Italian (orally and in writing) with the acquisition of specific vocabulary and speech acts in the field of Tourism and Hospitality.”

The method of teaching and mastering the learning material includes the communicative approach (teaching communication and communicating) with the use of audio-visual means (CD-players, DVDs or the internet).

The literature is as follows: in addition to a textbook for the general Italian language, which is used in the first year of study (Marin, T, Magnelli, S. *Nuovo progetto italiano* Roma, Edilingua, 2008; Quaderni CILS, Livello B1 Perugia, Guerra Edizioni Edel), older specialist textbooks are also introduced into the literature (Corso multimediale di lingua e civiltà italiana. Roma, Edilingua, 2008; Ballarin, E., Begotti, P. “Destinazione Italia”, Bonacci, Roma, 1999).

Each week, the curriculum is based on the textbook. As such, lesson titles and grammatical units are lifted directly, while the planned skills include the following: “business correspondence; to apologize and to respond to apology; express surprise, disbelief; business correspondence; offer, travel description; to talk about past events; to give advice on healthy lifestyles; to talk about your habits in terms of a healthy lifestyle”.

Although it is based primarily on linguistic structures, the syllabus lacks precisely those structures that are typical of the Italian language of tourism, notably impersonal verbs, implicit constructions with the past participle and the passive. Moreover, in the programme for each week there is no indication of a specific vocabulary, although its acquisition is stated as one of the goals of teaching.

The target level according to the CEFR is not explicitly stated but level B2 is recognized through the grammatical content, which does not seem realistically achievable, bearing in mind the context of teaching that was discussed earlier in the paper.

The same outcomes are stated for both the third and fourth semesters: “After passing this exam, by using the Italian language, the student will be able to: describe the geographical and cultural-historical specifics of Montenegro;

present the city/town he or she comes from (providing information about the history, monuments, climate, and places of special tourist importance); provide the guest with information and advice regarding a specific destination; provide basic information about the local gastronomic offer; participate in a conversation on the topic related to the Italian art, culture and lifestyle.”

The analysis of the syllabi clearly shows that the outcomes, towards which the teaching and learning activities should be oriented, are not in correlation with the curriculum developed and presented each week, within the lectures and practical FLSP instruction.

The Faculty of Philology

The Italian language is studied in all six semesters of Undergraduate studies at FP. The curriculum sets out the teaching objectives as follows:

Italian 1 and Italian 2: Mastering the basics of the Italian language in the field of phonetics and morphology. Communicating at the elementary level.

Italian 4: The acquisition of new content from the grammar of the Italian language, and the acquisition of new knowledge about Italian society and culture.

Italian 3, Italian 5 and Italian 6: Mastering the basics of the Italian language in the field of phonetics, morphology, and syntax.

The method of teaching and mastering the learning material includes lectures, exercises, tests, tutorials, homework, and consultations; all of this is carried out through an overarching communicative approach to teaching Italian as a foreign language.

The literature and textbook used are as follows: 1. Marin, T, Magnelli, S. *Nuovo progetto italiano 1, 2* Roma, Edilingua, 2008. 2. Saša Moderc – Gramatika italijanskog jezika.

The curriculum each week is based exclusively on the textbook and language/grammar structures.

Thus, the syllabi for the Italian language at FP are of a structural or formal type, based primarily on grammar and general Italian, with no indication of the elements of the language for specific purposes. It can be assumed that teaching based on such a curriculum does not provide students with language skills that they can effectively use in the expected job environment immediately after they complete their Bachelor’s degree.

The analysis of the student questionnaire

The analysis of the real professional needs of Italian language teaching, as mentioned in the introductory section, was also based on the results of the questionnaire examining the needs and expectations of students who chose to learn Italian as a second foreign language. The questionnaire was anonymous,

and offered to participants via the *Google forms* application. It contained 26 open-ended and closed questions (which used mainly multiple-choice, Likert scales and grading), with the opportunity to comment on individual questions. For the majority of the multiple-choice questions, it was possible to select more than one of the offered answers. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents at the end of the academic year 2020/2021, in the period between May and July 2021. There were a total of 56 respondents, of which 23 were male and female students who studied at FP, while 33 were male and female students of FTH.

We will now present an analysis of the answers to the key questions, which will provide us with an insight into the issues that are the subject of this paper.

The vast majority of FP students state that, after completing their Bachelor's degree, as their preferred profession are a teacher at elementary school, a teacher at secondary school or a teaching assistant and translator; one person stated that they would like to work as a tourist guide, one as a content writer and three people mentioned the job of a receptionist as a possibility of employment.

Since the Bachelor's degree does not enable independent work in the field of education, and the target level of language proficiency for all foreign language study programmes is not sufficient for performing the activity of professional translation, only the remaining professions listed in the students' answers are realistically possible after completing their undergraduate studies. These professions are envisaged by the Bachelor's degree, and they relate to the tourism sector. This especially relates to the aspect of the use of a second foreign language, which is not studied at subsequent levels of any of the degree courses offered at FP, i.e. at higher levels of university education.

On the other hand, when answering the same question, the vast majority of FTH students mentioned the jobs of receptionist and tourist guide. They also highlighted the following professions: hotel manager, travel agency employee, teacher, translator, travel agency owner, event manager, content writer, concierge, civil society and human rights activist and marketing manager, while one respondent stated that their undergraduate degree did not provide them with any employment opportunities. From the point of view of learning a foreign language, the need to introduce FLSP, in this case Italian for tourism, seems obvious.

When asked why they chose to learn Italian, it was possible to choose from several answers. 51% of respondents stated that the choice was influenced by prior knowledge acquired at previous levels of school education; 41.1% opted for the course out of love for the Italian language and culture, while 25% of respondents thought that knowledge of Italian could increase the possibility of employment, and 21.4% believed that the Italian language was important for

their future profession. Only 5.4% of respondents did not find a suitable answer from those offered to them. These results, in addition to the lack of student awareness of the potential positive correlation between foreign language skills and employment opportunities, indicate the existence of motivation to learn Italian, which is an important prerequisite, though not the only one, for a successful teaching and learning process.

When asked which language skills they considered most important to acquire in a university Italian language course, 71.4% answered that it was oral communication in private situations, while 51.8% thought it was necessary to master communication in formal or business situations. 42.9% believed that it was necessary to master the understanding of the Italian language in formal situations, and 46.4% believed that it was necessary to master the formal correspondence in the Italian language.

Regarding the existing curriculum, 82.1% of respondents estimated that the focus of teaching was on grammar, which was also clearly shown by the previously conducted analysis of the syllabi. The same issue was indicated by students' comments related to the textbook used in teaching, which was primarily criticized for the excessive focus on grammar and the lack of professional vocabulary. Additionally, it is important to point out that the same textbook is also used within the Montenegrin school system, and we believe that its use at the university level can negatively affect the maintenance and development of motivation of the students who come with prior knowledge acquired by using the same textbooks.

When asked which type of course would be most useful for them, 53.6% thought it was a combination of Italian for general and specific purposes, while a quarter of respondents thought it should be a general Italian course. Approximately 18% of respondents opted for Italian as a FLSP. An insignificant number of students stated "other" for the answer.

In order to have more successful studies or future employment, 80.4% of students believed that it would be necessary to enhance speaking activities, 50% believed that it was necessary to enhance lexical exercises, while approximately a quarter of respondents believed that grammar, written activities, written and audio professional text genres should be enhanced.

The comparison of Montenegrin and Italian culture and language is considered a very important segment in mastering the Italian language and understanding its culture by 85.7% of respondents, while only 8.9% of them considered this aspect irrelevant, and the remaining percentage did not provide an answer.

General conclusions of the research

Based on our analyses, it could be concluded that Italian as a FLSP is not taught at the University of Montenegro, which, on the other hand, is clearly shown as a need imposed by the social context. It is evident that the existing syllabi of Italian as a second foreign language did not arise as a product of considering either the social or job market related needs and possibilities related to the teaching Italian in the current Montenegrin context.

One element that emerges as a clear pedagogical, teaching related need is the need for the revision of the existing syllabi, which, considering the students' needs and the labour market, should be aimed at reaching the B1 level of language competence (according to the CEFR) and which should consist of a combination of general Italian with elements of business Italian and the Italian language of tourism.

In addition revising the syllabi, in order to improve the efficiency of the teaching process and maintain and encourage student motivation for learning, it would be necessary:

1. To provide a total of at least three hours of teaching per week, which is currently not the case at the FTH;
2. To organize classes by the initial level of Italian of the students on starting at the two faculties, which could be determined by diagnostic entrance level tests for Italian as a FL, proposed at the very beginning of the course, which would result in a division of students into appropriately graded groups of language learners (beginners, advanced beginners, intermediate users, and so on);
3. To replace the existing textbook with teaching material that would be help to achieve the teaching/learning goals and outcomes specified by the syllabus, and not *vice versa*.

Implications for the revision of the existing syllabi

Starting from the position that the syllabi of modern foreign language teaching should consist of (linguistic and non-linguistic) teaching goals and outcomes, as well as their corresponding content, goals, strategies and techniques designed and determined upon a detailed analysis of the needs, we conclude that in our case it is necessary to take into consideration the following steps:

- To formulate the goals and outcomes of teaching more precisely - formally and essentially: the outcomes have to arise unambiguously from the teaching plan presented each week in the ECTS catalogues;
- To replace the existing formal-structural/grammar-based syllabi with syllabi based on a combination of situational, skill-based, and task-based syllabus types, to the extent that the expected target level of language

competence allows. Such syllabi should guarantee learning through tasks in order to acquire the relevant language/communication skills in FL/L2 and FLSP necessary for coping in situations in general and professional life;

- To introduce topics related to tourism, culture, travel, gastronomy, and other relevant material into the syllabi;
- To gradually introduce grammatical structures and terminology pertaining to the language of tourism and of business expertise in the tourism area;
- To pay attention to the skill of formal business correspondence, together with its basic grammatical structures and the vocabulary/terminology that is typical of this genre;
- To develop speaking skills more extensively (both in formal and informal situations) through dialogues and role-play tasks related primarily to the business environment; and
- To include the development of intercultural communication competence, by comparing the cultural and linguistic characteristics and peculiarities related to Italy and Montenegro.

To conclude, it seems important to note that the research process presented in this paper, the results related to the analysis of teaching needs, as well as its implications for syllabi revision, can be also applied to other foreign languages studied as elective foreign languages at the Faculty of Philology and the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management of the University of Montenegro.

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INSEGNAMENTO DI ITALIANO SPECIALISTICO PRESSO L'UNIVERSITÀ DEL MONTENEGRO: LA REALTÀ VS. LE REALI ESIGENZE

L'italiano come seconda lingua straniera attualmente viene insegnato nell'ambito dei corsi di laurea triennale presso la Facoltà di Filologia e presso la Facoltà di Turismo e Gestione alberghiera dell'Università del Montenegro. L'obiettivo di questo lavoro è di stabilire in che misura l'insegnamento di italiano corrisponde agli effettivi bisogni degli studenti rispetto al mercato di lavoro a cui si avviano.

Il presente contributo, quindi, si concentra sull'analisi dei curricula di lingua italiana presso i succitati corsi di laurea. I risultati dell'analisi vengono messi in relazione con i risultati dell'analisi delle considerazioni e delle aspettative degli studenti riguardo ai vari aspetti dei corsi di italiano che hanno frequentato durante l'anno accademico 2020/2021.

In base alle conclusioni tratte da questo confronto, si cercherà di offrire indicazioni per il miglioramento di tutti gli aspetti del corso in modo tale che possa assicurare agli studenti l'acquisizione delle competenze necessarie per un uso efficace della lingua italiana nel loro ambito professionale, al livello di competenza linguistica prevista e raggiungibile nel dato contesto universitario.

Parole chiave: l'italiano specialistico, l'italiano come seconda lingua straniera, Università del Montenegro