COMBINING DIFFERENT TECHNOLOGIES IN A FUNERARY ARCHAEOLOGY CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING (CLIL) COURSE

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to describe a project in which Italian undergraduate students at the Palaeopathology Division of Pisa University will attend a two-year Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) course combining the study of funerary archaeology with English as vehicular language. At the presence of a subject and language teacher working together, the trainees will use different types of technology including devices such as electronic blackboards and Word applications with user-friendly interfaces (Excel, Powerpoint, etc.), audio tapes, DVDs, videos taken from important satellite television programmes (BBC, Discovery Channel, National Geographic, etc.). The activities will range from reading parts of funerary archaeology texts scanned and put onto the computer, to gap-filling exercises by listening to a recording, matching words with their definitions, jumbled sentences, etc. A number of resources will be prepared by the learners, for example a bilingual glossary of archaeology terms with definitions extracted from authentic texts, as well as an English grammar with examples-in-context of the basic grammar items, to be exploited by the students of future courses. While performing the different tasks, the learners will be involved in the learning of funerary archaeology content, in improving their language skills, and in understanding how to use different technological tools. In the summer period at the end of the first year, more sophisticated technology will support the students during the explorations at an archeological site in the small village of Benabbio in northern Tuscany. In particular, the excavations of 14th century bodies on the one hand, and of corpses of people who were victims of the 1855 cholera epidemic on the other, will be carried out using surveying tools that can contribute to the understanding of the underground features. Such tools include geo-radars which help the archaeologists collect information about the location of past human cultures in a particular area; G.I.S., the science that allows to view, interpret, and visualize data concerning maps, globes, reports, and charts; aerial photography, by which it is possible to detect traces of buried structures that are not visible at ground level. Finally, some of the bodies will be submitted to computerized axial tomography (C.A.T.) for a more thorough investigation that can reveal and clarify certain types of information that would have been impossible to obtain in the past. Understanding of the different technologies used for geographic inquiry and treatment of the bodies will also be part of the content course in funerary archaeology held by the subject teacher. The students will be able to experiment the tools, exchanging ideas, sharing experiences, and speaking about their work with British peers from the United Kingdom, who are spending the summer period at Benabbio on exchange courses, and graduating in funerary archaeology in their country. The final exam will consist of a dissertation written in English in which the students will describe particular tasks in which they have been involved, as well as an oral Powerpoint presentation illustrating a particular phase of the excavation activities. Technology-supported tools have become increasingly available in educational contexts, allowing trainees to learn from practical experiences, to be engaged in authentic tasks and build up their self confidence for communication in real life situations.