Impacts of international language assessments on multilingualism: evidence from an iterative impact study of Progetto Lingue 2000

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Does our presentation fit the ALTE Conference themes?

Language Assessment for Multilingualism
promoting:
- Mobility
- Linguistic Diversity
- Intercultural Communication
- Fairness & Quality
Assessment research in support of Multilingualism?

“the ways in which effective testing can encourage learning across the whole range of languages, and ... how the huge body of research on the assessment of English language skills can be applied more widely.”

ALTE Paris Conference: Language Assessment for Multilingualism
Multilingualism and language status?

An event for the fifth annual European Day of Languages, October 2012, at the European Parliament, addressed the theme ‘Is English enough?’

ALTE’s Martin Nuttall answered:

‘When we asked this question we already knew that the answer would be ’No, of course not’.

What we're trying to do is encourage discussion of the importance of teaching languages and using a wide range of languages at a time when English is becoming more and more widely used.'
Linguistic Diversity in Italy

- Standard Italian used by the vast majority, but Italy still characterised by a wide range of dialects, varieties and registers, so a relatively high index of linguistic diversity.

- A new factor in recent years: the immigration of people from poorer countries: in January 2013, there were 5,187,721 foreign nationals resident in Italy, 8.3% of the country’s population.
Could an *Impact Study* help give some answers on Language Assessment for multilingualism?

The *impact study* of a major language education project (*PL2000*) could be revealing and relevant if it emphasised attention to:

- multilingualism
- fairness and quality.

For Cambridge, remember, positive impact belongs with Validity, Reliability, Practicality and Quality Management as a *required asset* of a high-stakes exam.
In its *Progetto Lingue 2000*, the Ministry of Instruction, Universities and Research (MIUR), Italy, sought to introduce innovation in key aspects of language teaching and assessment:

- small homogeneous learning groups
- target annual learning hours in short learning modules
- new technologies
note the significant support, here, for multilingualism:

- ‘certification in four foreign languages through …. a funding agreement between MIUR and foreign exam boards, offering schools access to international certificates in four foreign language across the school system’.
The Cambridge PL2000 Impact Study: aims and approaches

With the agreement of MIUR, Cambridge English Language Assessment Research and Validation Department and its Bologna Office, a research team is carrying out the PL2000 Impact Study to:

- record and analyse PL2000 effects on learners, teachers, parents, education managers
- identify key assessment and other areas of support from exam providers.
The Cambridge English Progetto Lingue 2000 Impact Study is **iterative, carried out firstly between 2001 and 2002, and again between 2012 and 2014.**

Hence the updated name now: *Progetto Lingue 2000 Impact Study Revisited (PLISR)*
PLISR Research methods..

The *PL2000* Impact Study uses a *sequential exploratory mixed research methods* – qualitative and quantitative – design (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011):

- **Qualitative research**
- **Quantitative Research**
- **Interpretation based on qualitative + quantitative analysis**
With the impact study team collecting qualitative data through:

- interviews and meetings with teachers, heads of schools, parents, (ex)-students, officials

- classroom observations at a case-study selection of schools in northern, central and southern Italy
Semi-structured Interviews:
Using the PLISR interview Guide, including

- Introductions
- Context and orientation to PL2000 and the impact study

A set of question areas, to cover:

- Discussant views / experience of the PL2000
- Views / experience of ELT, including: changes; school actions re EL; CLT? / materials, curriculum and lesson planning; learner roles; modern technologies; T support; CLIL; assessment
- Round up and thanks.
PLISR research episodes were audio and video-recorded with permissions ...
Scale and Scope of the *Progetto Lingue 2000* Impact Study

Recorded PLISR episodes for data analysis included:

- 39 English classroom lessons, 23 at primary, 16 at middle school and secondary school levels
- *semi-structured* interviews involving 121 interviewees, (25 hrs 42 minutes), in English and Italian (incl. teachers, heads, parents, officials, ex-students)
- additional meetings with 80 participants
- *all* video- and / or audio recorded
We had rich qualitative data, but how to analyse?

Folkestad (2008:5) sees the first steps in sorting recorded qualitative data as ‘unitizing and categorizing’ using ‘a step-by-step procedure’:

- listen to, annotate and read each unit of data / episode
- assign each unit to categories
- develop category titles that distinguish each category from the others.

The analysis of PLISR data followed a similar approach.
PLISR key topics from the data analysis

The responses and observed lessons were analysed and key relevant response topics were derived from the 40,000 word summary analysis of the episodes.

The occurrences of each topic were labeled, colour-coded and counted.

Numbers of references to each category indicated their prominence in the recordings of the PLISR episodes.
Key impact topics emerging ...

1. communicative approaches to ELT (as proposed in the PL2000 and as seen now) (399)
2. language assessment and exam provider approaches, services, influences (245)
3. computer-based and other technological approaches and ELT (119)
4. teacher training and support (81)
5. changing sociolinguistic context of English in Italy (60)
6. teacher >< student relations (55)
7. influences of parents (53)
8. content and language integrated learning (CLIL) (31)
PLISR: the quantitative dimension

We checked the qualitative findings from interviews, group discussions, classroom observations, against more quantitative data, through PLISR teacher questionnaires.

Here, key findings from around 350 returns from trialled 2014 teacher questionnaires followed up qualitative data collected in 2012-13. We shall be following up our survey further.
The PLISR Questionnaire Responses

The questionnaires came mainly from teachers at lower and upper secondary Schools (90%)

Q6 What type(s) of school are you teaching at now?

Answered: 342  Skipped: 2

- scuola primaria: 9.06%
- scuola secondaria di primo...: 25.15%
- scuola secondaria di second...: 64.91%
- istituto comprensivo: 3.80%
- private language school: 8.19%
- università: 2.05%
- other English teaching, if any: 3.51%
- from a full range of Italian regions
- mainly (90%) female [Note that July 2011 Eurostat information, shows 94% female language teachers at primary level, 71% at lower secondary and 60% at upper secondary]
- 75% with 15 or more years teaching experience
- 51% teaching 18 or more regular English lessons a week

Interestingly, for a Project now 15 years old,

- 56% of the teachers claimed to be very or quite strongly aware of PL2000.
### Findings on Key Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Very Strongly</th>
<th>Quite Strongly</th>
<th>Only a Little</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicative Language Teaching</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External English Exams</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New ideas from textbooks</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing position of English in Italy</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers and other ELT technologies</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher in-service meetings, support</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with your ELT colleagues</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLIL</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent attitudes</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introducing CLIL
(L’introduzione della metodologia CLIL i nei Licei Linguistici; Rapporto di monitoraggio nelle classi terze dell’a.s. 2012/2013)

Figure B9: Existence of CLIL provision in primary and/or general secondary education, 2010/11

Source: Eurydice.
Languages for CLIL
MIUR 2014 - DG Ordinamenti scolastici e per l'Autonomia scolastica
Gruppo di lavoro Monitoraggio introduzione della metodologia CLIL nei Licei, p.17

Lingua straniera dell'insegnamento

CLIL

- Inglese 70%
- Francese 21%
- Tedesco 4%
- Spagnolo 4%
- Altro (specificare) 1%

Cambridge English
Part of the University of Cambridge
PLISR participants catching the Multilingual Essence?

- ‘Students of the early PL2000 era were always with their noses in books’. Now they’re encouraged to use the new technology, seeing ‘real life’ all the time….The Internet etc means they want ‘real language’. PL2000 was practical, forward-looking. It got local authorities, parents, schools aware of the importance of the certification of learning …’ (English teacher)

- ‘In this school, whose main subjects are economics, marketing, finance, we are talking about a language certification, not only in one language, but in two or even three languages’ (School Head)
‘Will CLIL strengthen over the next ten years? Like being in frequent action in ten years time? It should be’ (Head of English)

‘CLIL methodology is used, to integrate EL using interdisciplinary models. In primary school, they do Science, Maths and Italian in English’. (School Head)

‘University students have studied some of their courses in English, listen to music in English, surf the net in English and write to their penfriends in English….’ (Language School Director)
We watched a 17-18 y.o. students’ joint teacher >< student multi-media presentation (Interactive whiteboard, PowerPoint, words with interpretation, live and onscreen, individual and pair performances, music and singing), in a student-created WW1 classroom remembrance show. With key facts, features, pictures, music, and readings aloud of Great War poems. It was very moving, ending with a rendition of Sting’s ‘Children’s Crusade’.
Recall the broad scope of the Progetto Lingue 2000

*PL2000* aimed “....to innovate the teaching and learning of foreign languages by promoting the acquisition of precise communication skills by pupils of all levels of school”.

http://archivio.pubblica.istruzione.it/argomenti/autonomia/progetti/lingue.htm

*Definitely* multilingual in essence.
Thank you.

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