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# Horizons de Recherche Research Horizons II

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Jovana Karanikikj Josimovska

## **Application of ICT Tools in Teaching Literature**

This article intends to share personal experience and present techniques for using the ICT in Literature Courses. The abbreviation ICT, which stands for Information and Communication Technologies, refers to a set of technological tools that allows for the processing and exchange of textual, visual, or auditory information in digital format. At first, it might seem that the relationship between these two terms is oxymoronic, but they can also be complementary by the proper application of the advantages that modern technology offers. In fact, the creative application of ICT tools for educational purposes is one of the main discussion topics among didactics experts recently. However, the particularity of literature as a subject limits the range of its possibilities and requires a different approach and distinctive creativity, since the new technological devices are commonly considered rivals to the traditionally accepted idea of literature. As Junior Assistant in Italian Literature, the author had the opportunity to explore various applications of the abovementioned tools, presenting the results below.

### **Italian Literature Courses at “Goce Delcev” University in Stip**

Italian Literature as a subject at “Goce Delcev” University in Stip, Macedonia is taught within the Bachelor’s degree programme in Italian language and literature. This is structured in biannual courses and provides a chronological survey of Italian literature from the thirteenth through the twentieth centuries. The form of the teaching activities normally includes traditional lecture-based classes and tutorials.

At this point, it is important to emphasize that the overall programme in Italian language and literature doesn't require any prior knowledge of the Italian Language, taking into consideration that it is not yet among the first three most taught foreign languages in Macedonia, so there aren't courses in each secondary school. This means that, besides the main goals of the particular syllabuses of these courses, such as providing a diachronic overview of Italian literature in a given period, developing students' ability to recognize its main characteristics and the students' understanding of the specific features of the literary and cultural circumstances of that period, it has the additional task of developing the students' principle language competences as well.

The practice within the above mentioned program mainly comprises textual analyses of selected excerpts of the works as well as discussions regarding works that are individually selected as reading assignments. Another traditional form of exercise is the written essay on a subject related to more than one unit which allows the students' knowledge to emerge in a creative way.

In addition to these traditional teaching tools, there is the use of basic audio-visual devices in the form of screening movie adaptations or other relevant videos, or listening to a poetry recitation. In order to introduce the students to the cultural features of a given period, images of related paintings are shown. Power point presentations are also used sometimes with the purpose of facilitating the students' oral presentation.

In relation to the use of the ICT tools in the overall management of the courses, it's worth mentioning the experience of Moodle, an e-learning platform, which is the learning management system utilized by all the teaching centers within the University. This platform makes communication among the teaching staff and students easier and it enables the transfer of various types of files, allows for conducting tests activities, and is also useful in the creation of interactive exercises, such as quizzes etc.



### Particular experience with web 2.0 tool

Another very productive experience worth sharing is that of web 2.0 tools applied in teaching. What distinguishes this kind of tool is, basically, the possibility of interaction and collaboration between the user and the so-called virtual community. There are several available web 2.0 teaching tools online. Nonetheless, the main issue remains the way it can be best applied within literature classes. The author opted for the well-known Google Maps tool, which enables the use of geographical maps from all parts of the world. This tool is quite easy to use and has been shown to be very helpful in everyday life. In fact, besides map consultation and providing directions from one point to another, over the last few years there are more and more different points of interest indicated, mainly tourist attractions and places of commercial interest, but not only. There are also photos available of the places, approved by Google, but they aren't always updated. Furthermore, the map consultation is always free of charge. Since 2007, users have even been able to create their own maps. The only requirement is having a personal Google account, through which the user can add markers within the map and insert information about the place.

The author used this tool in an activity within the Italian Novel of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century classes, a course for students in the third year of the Bachelor's degree programme in Italian language and literature. In particular, the activity was presented as georeferential reading, using the Google Maps tool. During the course, as the works of authors such as D'Annunzio, Gadda, Moravia, Pirandello, Pavese, Svevo, and Pasolini were read and analyzed, the students, were also asked to map the actual places where some of the events narrated in the novels take place. At the beginning of the course the students received detailed instructions regarding access to the tool and the available options: how to create a personal map, how to find the exact place, how to add a marker, how to add a photo or corresponding quotation from the novel etc. So, during the course they created maps of the places mentioned in Rome of D'Annunzio's *Piacere*, in Pasolini's *Ragazzi di vita* and Gadda's *Quer*

*pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana*, they then did the same for the town of Trieste as seen in Svevo's novels *La senilità* and *La coscienza di Zeno*, and the landscapes described in Pavese's *La luna e i falò*. Yet another tool available through Google Maps is Street view; this tool allows the user to see what the streets of the address they search for actually look like. For the students it was interesting to visit even in a virtual way the places mentioned in the novels. At this point it is important to underline that the majority of the students don't have the possibility to travel to Italy, due to the overall low standard of living in Macedonia. In that regard, this exercise had the opportunity to extend its purpose out of the simple classroom activity and enable the students to enrich their knowledge in Italian geography and culture in general.

At the end of the course the students were given questionnaires in order to evaluate the success of the activity and to apply certain modifications, if necessary, for future generations of students. Each student assessed the level of difficulty of the activity's implementation, the comprehensibility of the given instructions, the impact of the activity on their overall ICT experience, the impact on their reading interest, the level of participation in the Italian literature practice classes, the level of interest towards Italian literature in general, and the level of knowledge towards Italian culture and geography of Italy in general after the activity experience.

The students responded that they found the instructions clear and comprehensible and therefore they didn't have any difficulty doing the activity, nor did they have to spend much time doing it. Even though the literature course for that semester was demanding in terms of the quantity and variety of the activities included (excerpts analysis, oral presentation, homeworks etc.), they still found all these activities, especially the mapping one, very productive and interesting. In addition, they stated that the mapping activity was also very helpful, since it helped them more easily memorize what they had read. They found the exercise also very participative and engaging, and they would prefer these kinds of teaching methods to be applied during the literature classes in the future.

What the author considers as the major impact of this activity is that, according to the students, it represented a learning experience that goes beyond the limits of the course itself. The level of the students' interest in reading and in Italian literature has increased, and it means that one of the objectives of the exercise has been reached. They said that the exercise allowed them to «enter» more profoundly into the narration and to feel more engaged within it, which influenced and enhanced their imaginative capacity. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the activity also allowed the students to broaden their knowledge in the geography of Italy. A great number of the students hadn't used the mapping tool before, and in that regard, it had a positive impact on their ICT skills as well. To sum up, the students have shown support for the activity and its overall impact has been profound.

### Experience beyond the course

The activity's success brought about the expansion of its use even beyond the Italian Literature course. Actually, the same year during the Italian Language week in the world, the students who participated in the activity and who were already in the fourth year, together with those from the third and the second year, prepared a presentation for the students and the staff from the Faculty of Philology, entitled *Itinerario letterario italiano: dal Nord al Sud (Literary itinerary of Italy: from the North to the South)*. The number of authors, works and photos has been extended, as has the number of genres. In particular the students have made a virtual itinerary of the bigger Italian cities starting from the north of Italy and proceeding to the south, using the novels and poetry of Italian authors of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century where these places are mentioned. Each quotation has been read in Italian, accompanied by the translation in Macedonian, the corresponding image of its position in Google's Map of Italy, and related images of the places, be they streets, bridges, squares or simply landscapes. Besides the above mentioned works and authors, which were used for the

activity, for their presentation the students also used Umberto Saba's poem dedicated to Trieste, Dino Campana and Giorgio Caproni's verses dedicated to the city of Genova, again Campana's verses together with those of Carlo Betocchi inspired by Florence, while Rome was seen, besides the one in the works of D'Annunzio and Pasolini, through the eyes of Cesare Pavese in his poem, and the view of Naples was described via Giuseppe Marotta's *Loro di Napoli*.

It was an opportunity not only for the students from the Italian Language and Literature to broaden their knowledge and learn about works and authors that are not included in the Course programme, but also to introduce the staff and the students from other departments to Italian literature, to increase their level of interest and knowledge in that regard, and just as importantly, to allow them to enjoy Italy's historical and cultural heritage and natural beauty through the selected images accompanied by the melodious Italian language.

## Conclusion

The literature classes are commonly considered among the students as the most demanding, but the least interesting. Technology nowadays gives us plenty of opportunities, and a little bit of creativity can transform the devices, applications or online resources, often taken for granted, into very helpful and incredibly productive teaching tools. The literature itself has already come out of the traditional printed books and is integrating itself into the digital world through e-books and all the other respective devices. What the students need to understand is that literature is not only there in their literature courses: it is out in the streets and in many aspects of our everyday life. The classes' purpose is actually to make the students see that relation, even on the Map and beyond.

Jovana Karanikikj Josimovska