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Grammatica e insegnamento linguistico.  
Approccio storiografico: autori, modelli,  
espansioni

[12]

*a cura di*  
Félix San Vicente





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## ITALY ELT ARCHIVE

### A historical archive of materials for English language teaching in Italy

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**ABSTRACT:** While great strides have been made in the past few decades in historical research into the teaching of several European languages to non-native learners, historical-oriented research into English language teaching (ELT) is still in its infancy. Historical investigations have often tackled the more general issue of ELT approaches and theories. Fewer studies are, however, yet available about actual ELT *practices* in specific contexts. As a first step in the investigation of Italian ELT practices, a project has been launched at the University of Milan aiming at the creation of an archive (as both a physical repository and an online database) of ELT materials published in Italy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This article introduces the proposed archive (*ITALY ELT ARCHIVE*) against the background of the history of foreign language learning and teaching in Italy in the last hundred years and previous attempts at creating historical archives of language learning/teaching materials.

**KEYWORDS:** English language teaching (ELT), archive, history of foreign language learning and teaching, language teaching materials

**RIASSUNTO:** Mentre negli ultimi decenni sono stati fatti grandi passi avanti nella ricerca storica sull'insegnamento di diverse lingue europee a studenti non nativi, la ricerca storica orientata all'insegnamento della lingua inglese (ELT) è ancora agli inizi. Le indagini storiche hanno spesso affrontato la questione più generale degli approcci e delle teorie glottodidattiche. Tuttavia, sono ancora disponibili pochi studi sulle pratiche in contesti specifici. Effettive come primo passo nell'indagine sulle pratiche ELT italiane, è stato lanciato un progetto presso l'Università di Milano che mira alla creazione di un archivio (sia come deposito fisico che come database online) dei materiali ELT pubblicati in Italia nel XX secolo. Questo articolo introduce l'archivio proposto (*ITALY ELT ARCHIVE*) sullo sfondo della storia dell'apprendimento e dell'insegnamento delle lingue straniere in Italia negli ultimi cento anni e dei precedenti tentativi di creare archivi storici dei

materiali per l'apprendimento e l'insegnamento delle lingue.

PAROLE CHIAVE: insegnamento della lingua inglese (ELT), archivio, storia dell'apprendimento e dell'insegnamento delle lingue straniere, materiali glottodidattici.

### *0. Introduction*

At the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, English language teaching (ELT) has grown into a multi-billion dollar industry that has hardly been affected by the recent twists and turns of the economy. A major role in ELT's burgeoning expansion in the last fifty years has been played by the availability of ever more specialized ELT materials, aimed at learners of different ages, proficiency levels, specific language learning needs, as well as their teachers, with a thriving offshoot of teacher training materials (Nava 2008, Harwood 2010, Harwood 2014).

The ELT industry has taken much pride in being forward-thinking and forward-looking, always on the lookout for the next 'technique' or a more advanced teaching tool. It is, however, surprising that academia too seems to have largely bought into this 'progressive' ideology (Smith 2015, Schröder 2018). In his ground-breaking 1983 book, *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*, Stern wistfully stated that "language teaching theory has a short memory" (Stern 1983: 76). While an increasing number of academic journals are devoted to issues of language learning and teaching, investigating 'new' approaches (e.g. CLIL) or the possible impact of cutting edge technological advances (e.g. mobile-assisted language learning), less effort has yet been expended on the scholarly scrutiny of the centuries-long histories of English language teaching and, in particular, of English language teaching material production.

The work carried out by A.P.R. Howatt at the University of Edinburgh (e.g. Howatt 1984) and by R. Smith at the University of Warwick (cf. below) constitutes an important and well-known (alas not outside academia) exception. These two scholars have understandably scrutinized the contexts they know best –English language teaching in the

UK and, to a lesser extent, in some of its former colonies. Credit to R. Smith and N. McLelland, another UK-based scholar, should also be given on account of their recent attempt to bring together historically-minded researchers working in several European countries. A special issue of the journal *Language and History*, edited by McLelland and Smith, provides overviews of the learning and teaching of French, German, Spanish and English as second languages in Europe. The editors note that although “a number of detailed and well-documented studies of language teaching and learning in given periods in particular countries, at least for some parts of Europe” (McLelland and Smith 2014: 2) are now available, research seems to be more biased towards the history of theories and ideas than of the practitioners themselves (e.g. biographies of influential thinkers, teachers and material writers, language learning histories). These researchers echo a similar plea for an extension of research to the investigation of language learning and teaching practices made by Stern in 1983 – a worrying confirmation that over the last thirty years, progress in this area of research has been desultory at best.

A more recent follow-up to McLelland and Smith’s edited collection appeared in the first 2018 issue of the *Language Learning Journal*. The focus of each of the overviews featured in this special issue is a specific European context (Britain, the Netherlands, German-speaking countries, France and francophone Switzerland and Portugal), of which a ‘multilingual’ history is attempted – in other words, a history of which foreign languages were taught and learnt, by whom and how, over a more or less extended period of history. These overviews bring home the fact that the dominance of English as a foreign language of choice in Europe has been a relatively recent phenomenon. This may go some way towards justifying why historically-oriented research into language teaching for languages other than English (in particular, French) in Europe has a longer-standing tradition (e.g. Besse 2014).

Overall, coverage of the continental European ELT context remains patchy. The impressive amount of archival research on ELT in Germany carried out, amongst others, by Fredricke Klippel and colleagues (e.g. Klippel 1994) at the University of Munich, or by Konrad Schroeder (e.g.

1987-1999, 2018), at the University of Augsburg, contrasts with the almost blank slate that researchers wishing to take up the challenge will have to work from in several other countries, Italy included.

How much do we know about ELT and ELT material production in Italy, in particular in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the period when English slowly – in fits and starts – replaced French as the most popular foreign language?<sup>1</sup> Although a definitive history of 20<sup>th</sup> century's ELT in Italy is yet to be written, an extremely limited number of studies have been carried out (e.g. Dodd 1982, Prat Zagrebelsky 1985, 1991a, Pierini 1998), particularly since the establishment in 2001 of the *Centro di Ricerca Interuniversitario sulla Storia degli Insegnamenti Linguistici* (CIRSIL). At the University of Milan, Maria Cecilia Rizzardi and Monica Barsi (2005) have tried to deconstruct language teaching materials (including ELT materials) as a way to piece together a history of language teaching methods. The sample of materials included in the project, however, was largely based on internationally produced materials and this has meant that the actual findings yielded on the specific Italian ELT context are limited. The authors of the present paper have also been involved in small-scale projects over the past five years aiming to uncover aspects of ELT practices in Italy as embodied in materials ((e.g. Nava 2014, 2018 a,b,c, Pedrazzini 2018), although again the periods investigated in these studies are limited and the corpora of materials restricted. Lucillia Lopriore (University of Rome 3) and Paola Vettorel (University of Verona) have devoted some of their recent research to the analysis of current ELT coursebooks, with a view to identifying the extent to which they take account of developments of research into World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca (e.g. Lopriore and Vettorel 2013a). In a project aiming to investigate the portrayal of women in ELT materials (Lopriore and Vettorel 2013b) these researchers extended their remit to the 1950s -1980s. Only about half of the books targeted were, however, Italian-specific locally produced

<sup>1</sup> Up until the Second World War, French was the most studied (and in most types of the schools, the only) foreign language in Italy (Balboni 2009).

materials.

As in other European contexts, a trailblazing role in historical language teaching research carried out in Italy appears to have been played by studies of languages different from English (French and Spanish) (e.g. Minerva and Pellandra 1997, Mandich 2002, Minerva 2003, San Vicente et al. 2014, Lombardini and San Vicente 2015). On the whole, across the language spectrum, conspicuous in this kind of studies are the same two ‘issues’ that R. Smith has singled out as possibly hampering the early development of what he dubs ‘Applied Linguistics Historiography’. The first one is a still too dominant focus on ‘method’ histories, which, as Howatt and Smith (2014: 76) very cogently put it, suffer from three major shortcomings:

- (1) they tend to over-emphasize the prevalence of breaks or ‘paradigm shifts’ rather than continuity and tradition (or, at least, they highlight differences between methods rather than similarities);
- (2) they give equal weight to all the methods selected for consideration rather than indicating relative historical importance; and
- (3) they present methods as universal in relevance rather than as locally as well as historically constituted phenomena.

The second issue mentioned by Smith concerns the way works by influential practitioners (in particular, textbook authors) have been analysed. Most typically, grammars and coursebooks have been approached as if they were ‘literary works’, which has meant that they have been investigated “on their own terms” and “with little reference to ‘applied linguistic’ theory” (Smith 2016: 82). This has often led researchers to neglect aspects such as the possible insights textbook analysis can provide on the way linguistic and applied linguistic theories have been taken up and popularized in a given context in different historical periods (Besse 2014).

The project for an archive of English language teaching materials published in Italy (*ITALY ELT ARCHIVE*) which is being undertaken by the authors at the University of Milan represents an attempt to extend the scope of previous historical ELT research whilst striving to overcome its main shortcomings mentioned earlier. The aim of the project is to trace

the history of English language teaching in Italy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century through the creation of an archive (both a physical repository and an online database) of English language teaching/learning materials ('texts') as well as other sources which may shed some light on why such materials came into being and how they were implemented ('contexts'). The rest of this article is organized as follows. In the next section, we will highlight a few distinctive features of the Italian language learning/teaching context in the past hundred years and will show why in this context language teaching textbooks represent an essential way into language learning and teaching practices. We will then carry out a review of existing archives and databases of language teaching materials, for English and some other European languages, available in Italy and other European contexts. Next, we will introduce the structure and organization of the *ITALY ELT ARCHIVE* and illustrate a sample of bibliographical entries. Finally, the role of the *ITALY ELT ARCHIVE* as a tool not only for researchers but also for teacher educators and practising teachers will be explored.

### *1. The context of language learning/teaching in Italy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*

The history of language learning/teaching in Italy is to a large extent still uncharted territory. Authors who have bravely had a go at this task (e.g. Balboni 1988, 2009, Pellandra 2007) have mainly focused their investigations on the analysis of official documents issued by the Ministry of Education – ministerial decrees, white papers, curricula, national syllabuses. Although we can hardly do justice to the intricacies of century-long attempts at reforming language teaching 'from above', a number of issues deserve mentioning as they are key to the development of language learning/teaching in the Italian context in the last hundred years: the role of modern foreign languages vis-à-vis classical languages, the dichotomy between practical usefulness and educational value of modern foreign language study, the qualifications (or lack thereof) required of the language teacher, the conflicting nature of national syllabuses.



As regards the first issue, historical researchers seem to agree that the learning/teaching of modern foreign languages played second fiddle in school and university curricula in Italy vis-à-vis that of classical languages throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In lower secondary schools, more hours were indeed devoted to the study of Latin compared to modern foreign languages until the 1960s, and some kinds of upper secondary schools did not include any modern foreign language teaching in their curricula beyond the first two years well into the 1990s. At university level, compared to, for example, Holland, where chairs in modern foreign languages started to appear in the 1880s (Wilhelm 2018), courses in 'modern philology' (i.e. modern literature) were offered within faculties of Letters only from 1910 (Pellandra 2007). Full-standing degrees in Foreign Languages and Literatures were not established until the mid-1930s, and these were initially offered only in a limited number of Faculties of Economics and Business and in the lower-status Faculties of Education (Prat Zagrebelsky 1991b).

The dichotomy between the practical usefulness of modern foreign languages and their possible formative/educational role was for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and to some extent still is) an issue that (often negatively) impacted the way foreign languages were learnt/taught in Italy. Developments in science and technology and an increase in international travel and international communication in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century meant that a communicative competence in modern foreign languages became a fundamental skill of all educated citizens and was no longer viewed as the preserve of sales representatives and lowly company clerks. However, this utilitarian view of language learning clashed with the equally pressing need to establish and maintain the status of modern foreign languages as respectable academic disciplines, on a par with classical languages. The main way the educational value of modern foreign languages was asserted, in syllabuses for both upper secondary schools and universities, was through the teaching of the foreign language literature (Pellandra 2007: 112), which meant that more practical communication needs were usually sidelined.

Another key issue in the development of foreign language

learning/teaching in the Italian context concerns the status and preparation of teachers. For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was no guarantee that a language teacher working in a secondary school actually mastered the target language to a level that enabled them to use it throughout their lessons, let alone that they had acquired a methodology to teach it. Well into the 1960s graduates of a range of courses (e.g. Law, Economics, Letters as well as Foreign Languages and Literatures) were allowed to acquire ‘qualified teacher status’ in a modern language as a result of sitting ‘competitive exams’. It was not until 1972 that a degree in Foreign Languages and Literatures became a requirement for candidates who aspired to become language teachers (Balboni 2009). An Italy-wide survey carried out in the late 1970s (Dodd 1980) revealed, however, that hardly any university offered methodologically-oriented or applied linguistics courses within their curricula for Foreign Languages and Literatures degrees. At an institutional level, the training of modern foreign language teachers did not start until postgraduate training courses for secondary teachers (SISS) were set up in 1999, which – and this is recent history – have, alas, turned out to be a short-lived experiment.

The final aspect that needs to be mentioned with regard to ‘institutional’ language teaching history in Italy focuses on the nature of the most important type of documents (for primary and secondary education) issued by the Ministry of Education, national syllabuses. As a rule, attempts at reforming the Italian school system throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. *Riforma Gentile*<sup>2</sup> (1923), the establishment of ‘comprehensive’ middle schools (1963)) went in tandem with the publication of updated national syllabuses. Syllabuses for modern foreign languages issued for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have been accused of being

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<sup>2</sup> *Riforma Gentile* was a major overhaul of the Italian education system carried out by the neo-idealistic philosopher Giovanni Gentile in 1923, during his tenure as Minister of Education during the Fascist regime.

too vague<sup>3</sup> and/or inconsistent and of offering little practical help to the teacher (Prat Zagrebelsky 1985, Pellandra 2007, Balboni 2009).<sup>4</sup> In particular, a gap has been found to exist between the more general introductory sections of such syllabuses, which attempted to account for methodological developments in language teaching, and the year-by-year syllabuses, which often only mentioned the types of tests to be administered.<sup>5</sup> With regard to this ‘mismatch’, Pellandra (2007: 126) offers an interesting and entirely plausible explanation:

possiamo azzardare tranquillamente l’ipotesi che la redazione delle due parti fosse affidata a persone diverse: le avvertenze generali a “specialisti” e l’articolazione dei programmi a funzionari forse anche consapevoli delle difficoltà di una classe insegnante generalmente impreparata a seguire direttive richiedenti competenze che l’università non forniva ed una strumentazione quasi sempre inaccessibile.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> “Manifesti pedagogici” (“pedagogical manifestoes”), as Balboni (2009: 104) put it.

<sup>4</sup> It was not until the end of the 1970s – when new syllabuses for lower secondary schools (1979) were published – that a sea change took place in the way language teaching syllabuses were conceived of (Prat Zagrebelsky 1985, Pedrazzini 2018).

<sup>5</sup> An early example is shown here, taken from the syllabuses for ‘foreign languages’ for the ‘exams’ that students were required to take at the end of lower secondary schools to be allowed entry into upper secondary schools (in this case, ‘quarta ginnasio’, the first year of grammar school): “Prova scritta: Traduzione nella lingua straniera d’un facile passo d’autore italiano (15 righe). [...] Prove orali: 1. Scrittura alla lavagna sotto dettato di facili proposizioni. 2. Lettura e spiegazione di un passo d’autore. 3. Facile conversazione tra esaminatore e scolaro, su argomenti famigliari, nella lingua straniera. 4. Notizie generali intorno alla civiltà che si collega alla lingua prescelta. [...]” (“Written test: Translation into the foreign language of an easy passage by an Italian writer (15 lines) [...]. Oral tests: 1. Dictation of easy sentences to be written on the blackboard; 2. Reading and commenting on an easy literary passage; 3. Conversation in the foreign language with the examiner about familiar topics; 4. General notions about the foreign language civilization [...]”) (*Supplemento alla Gazzetta Ufficiale*, n. 207, 14 November 1923: 8).

<sup>6</sup> We may well hazard the hypothesis that the writing of the two parts was entrusted to different people: the general remarks to ‘specialists’ and the

The complexity of the Italian context as highlighted by the issues illustrated above brings home the fact that the perusal of official documents, although a needed first step in sketching out the background, can hardly provide a fine-grained picture of actual English language learning and teaching practices in Italy. For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, secondary school learners were faced with modern language teachers with little if any methodological training having completed, in the best possible scenario, a university course which emphasised the educational value of foreign languages through the study of literature over any practical applications. A budding modern language teacher did not find much help in national syllabuses which, as illustrated above, provided conflicting messages and little in the way of practical guidelines. For teachers in this predicament, it could be plausibly argued that the only ‘lifeline’ was provided by textbooks and other teaching materials, which turned out to be the real syllabuses for modern language teaching and, in the hands of methodologically naïve teachers, the blueprint for classroom practice.

It is for these reasons that a history of ELT in Italy should arguably be a history of ELT *materials* produced in Italy and used in the Italian context. The *ITALY ELT ARCHIVE* is meant to be the first step towards writing such a history.

## *2. Historical archives and catalogues of second language learning and teaching materials*

In this section, we will review two archives of teaching materials (textbooks, grammars, dictionaries, etc.), which provide interesting examples of historiographical research into the learning and teaching of modern languages in Europe. These examples have directly inspired our

syllabuses to ministry officials. The latter may well have been aware of the problems that were faced by teachers who were not ready to follow guidelines requiring competences that their university courses had not trained them for and who almost always lacked the necessary teaching equipment.

idea of starting a project for the *ITALY ELT ARCHIVE* which is aimed at tracing the history of the materials for English language teaching in Italy between 1900 and 2000. The first example that will be considered is the *ELT Archive*, which was founded by Richard Smith at the University of Warwick; the second, *Contrastiva*, is a project coordinated by Félix San Vicente at the University of Bologna. These archives are the outcome of individual initiatives within the academic context and have been directly or indirectly supported by the research carried out by their founders within associations for the history of language learning and teaching. This review aims to present the main features of each archive highlighting a number of issues that may come into play in the design and organisation of a historical archive of language learning and teaching materials, for example, the selection of sources and types of text genres (textbooks, grammars, dictionaries, etc.), the identification of historical periods (by year, by decade, by method, etc.), the contextual information provided (authors' biographies, bulletins, reviews, reports, etc.) and the type of access to the archive and its use (access on site or/ and online).

The *ELT Archive* <[http://www.warwick.ac.uk/elt\\_archive](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/elt_archive)> was set up by Richard Smith at the University of Warwick. The archive is located in the Centre for Applied Linguistics and provides a stand-alone, browsable historical collection of published and unpublished materials relating to the teaching of English as a foreign language and the development of applied linguistics covering a period of about a hundred years (c. 1880-c. 1980). The collection was recently expanded to include materials published from 1980 onwards. The archive, which officially opened in 2005, has gradually increased the number of its resources through donations from other universities (such as the prestigious Edinburgh Dakin Collection), ELT associations and professionals. Housed on mobile shelving in the Centre, it consists of a wide range of teaching and learning materials such as coursebooks, readers, audio- and audio-visual materials, teacher's books, pedagogical grammars, learner dictionaries and manuals on teaching methodology. It also includes primary resources such as journals, newsletters, official reports, letters, recorded interviews, which provide additional historical background information to

the ELT materials in the archive. Despite being clearly oriented towards British and to a lesser extent American texts and documents, the archive also aims to respond to specific research interests into the development of ELT/TESOL in the 'periphery' by keeping a selection of ELT materials from countries such as Japan and India. Three alphabetical lists of the catalogued items (published material up to 1979, archival/unpublished items, selected items published from 1980 onwards) are available on the archive webpage.

Research into the history of English language teaching has traditionally been very limited in the UK with relatively little impact on ELT teacher training (Howatt and Smith 2014). In a recent interview, Smith explains that his interest in undertaking research into ELT history was first stimulated in the early 1990s when he was in Japan, where he had been teaching English for some years.<sup>7</sup> A comment by one of the professors of English teaching methodology he got acquainted with ('Well, you native speaker teachers don't necessarily know much about your own history of ELT – what do you know about Harold E. Palmer, for example?') made him realise how little in fact he knew about the history of ELT. The meetings he had the opportunity to attend at the Institute for Research in English Teaching (IRLT), which Palmer had founded in Tokyo in 1923, made him gradually become aware of the need for a 'historical sense' in ELT professionalism and once back to the UK in 2000 he put his ideas into practice by setting up an ELT historical collection. This is how the *Warwick ELT Archive* came to be established (Smith 2013). His parallel research into different areas of the history of ELT since then (for example Smith 1999, 2003, 2005; Howatt and Smith 2000, 2002) has contributed to the implementation of the archive. Selected findings of his research have been used to feed the materials for the section 'Hall of Fame', which introduces the life and works of a number of key figures in the development of the ELT. The background information provided in this

<sup>7</sup> The interview is reported in a blog post available on <<https://richardsmithelt.wordpress.com/>>

section is useful to shed light on the cultural and pedagogical context of a number of teaching materials in the archive. In this respect, the use of cross-referencing could highlight the connection between this section and the actual archive. As mentioned, the *Warwick ELT Archive* implies a consultation on site and its web page simply serves the purpose of providing information on the resources available. However, on account of the huge amount of resources the archive offers, the web page could be implemented by including thematic guides on ELT history and methods to facilitate the consultation by teacher trainers, teachers and students. Finally, a number of research projects carried out by Smith with other researchers (for example the projects funded by the British Council on the 'UK-funded ELT projects' and 'ELT and the British Council') have contributed to enhancing the structure of the archive leading to an increase of the number of materials in the collection. Since 2015, the archive has also gained visibility through the activities promoted by Smith himself within *HoLLT*, the AILA Research network for History of language learning and Teaching.<sup>8</sup>

The second example of archive which inspired the design of the *ITALY ELT ARCHIVE* is *Contrastiva* <<http://www.contrastiva.it>>, the outcome of an ongoing project into the history of teaching and learning of Spanish as a foreign language developed by Félix San Vicente at the University of Bologna. While the *Warwick ELT Archive* has been conceived mainly as a physical archive, *Contrastiva – Portal de lingüística contrastiva español-italiano* is essentially a web portal that aims to give a single access to two online historical archives of grammars and dictionaries for the learning of Spanish and Italian published over a period of five centuries (1500-1900). The two archives were previously stored on separate web repositories (*Hesperia* 2005 and *Contrastiva* 2010). As pointed out by San Vicente (2017: 184), grammaticography has investigated the key role of grammars

<sup>8</sup> HoLLT (<<https://www.hollt.net>>) gathers different language-based associations in Europe engaged in the promotion and dissemination of historical research (APHELLE, CIRSIL, the Henry Sweet Society, PHG, SEHEL and SIHFLES).

in the development of lexicographic works and “in some specific periods and for specific authors we can observe a phenomenon of osmosis between lexical-oriented grammars and bilingual dictionaries”. The new portal, available since February 2018, is thus intended to facilitate consultation highlighting the connection between lexicographic and grammaticographic research. Moreover, one of the main assets of *Contrastiva* is that most of the works archived can also be accessed in their digitalized form. The portal, which presents a very user-friendly interface, consists of three main sections, each fully searchable through its own engine. The first two sections are designed in the same way, each providing a bibliographic inventory of all the catalogued items and a library of selected downloadable items. The bibliographic inventory in both sections can be searched by author and by year of publication. The first section – Gramaticografia – includes an archive of grammars, thus excluding manuals or other texts that do not conform to this genre. Its inventory comprises 277 bibliographic entries of grammars of Spanish for Italian learners and grammars of Italian for native Spanish learners. The bibliographic details provided by each entry can be expanded to include additional notes on number of editions, the list of contents, the reference to reviews and the actual collocation of the book (if available). To date, 131 grammars that are considered a landmark in the Spanish-Italian grammaticography are available for downloading. The second section – Lexicografía – has an inventory of 324 bibliographic entries for bilingual Italian-Spanish dictionaries whose publication ranges from 1570 up to the present. The inventory includes both general and specialised dictionaries. Besides the lexicographic data for each dictionary, in a number of entries additional information is supplied in relation to the number of editions, contents of the preface, reviews and success of the dictionary; a digitalised front cover of the actual dictionary is also included. Finally, the third section of the portal features a searchable bibliographical database of studies on contrastive Spanish-Italian linguistics and applied linguistics which is intended to support specific research into the history of the grammars and dictionaries catalogued on the *Contrastiva*.

As for the case of the *Warwick ELT Archive*, the project for



*Contrastiva* was started as an individual initiative within the academic context. The research carried out by San Vicente and his group of young scholars has aimed to investigate two main genres – grammars and dictionaries – for the learning and teaching of Spanish as a foreign language in the Italian context, focusing in particular on features of contrastive linguistics, the influence of European linguistic and cultural traditions, and methodological issues related to genre description and analysis (for example, San Vicente 2010, San Vicente et al. 2014, Lombardini and San Vicente 2015). Moreover, their involvement in the activities promoted by CIRSIL (*Centro Interuniversitario per la Ricerca sulla Storia degli Insegnamenti Linguistici*), a research network of Italian universities engaged in research into the history of language learning and teaching, has contributed to promoting *Contrastiva* in the academic community.

This section has aimed to review two examples of historical archives of second language learning and teaching materials. Despite showing different features in terms of aims, structure and organisation, the projects for the *Warwick ELT Archive* and *Contrastiva* have provided interesting insights into the issues involved in developing an historical archive of materials aimed at documenting the history of the learning and teaching of different languages in Europe. Our project for setting up the *ITALY ELT ARCHIVE* was also inspired by the histories of these archives and will be illustrated in the next section of the paper.

### *3. ITALY ELT ARCHIVE: a project for a historical archive of learning and teaching materials*

As highlighted in the previous sections, compared to the extensive research into the history of French and Spanish teaching and learning materials carried out in Italy, studies into the history of ELT materials (either externally or locally produced) are still scarce. Historical research into French manuals, grammar books, dictionaries, theoretical works, and bilingual works in different historical periods has mainly led to the compilation of detailed bibliographical inventories (Minerva and

Pellandra 1997 for the period 1625-1860, Minerva 2003 for the period 1861-1922, Mandich 2002 for the Fascist period). On the other end, the output of research into Spanish learning and teaching materials carried out by San Vicente and colleagues is also available on *Contrastiva*, the web portal described in the previous section. Both these strands of historiographical research on modern language learning and teaching have significantly contributed to the development of this domain of enquiry in the Italian context in terms of both scope and use of methodological tools. The project for the *ITALY ELT ARCHIVE* that will be presented in this section intends to contribute to the field by opening a new avenue of research on the development of ELT in Italy.

What is the purpose of the *ITALY ELT ARCHIVE*? It aims to archive English language teaching/learning materials produced in Italy and used in the Italian context in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both the authors have been involved in carrying out small-case studies aimed at building a picture of ELT in the Italian scenario, especially in relation to aspects of localization in the attempt to uncover the innovative processes started by the ELT movement but also the conservative reactions it happened to cause (Nava 2014, 2018 a, b, c; Pedrazzini 2018). The creation of an archive is therefore considered essential to stimulate and support this type of historiographical research, which, taking up Howatt and Smith (2014)'s suggestion, aims to provide an alternative "to prevalent 'method histories'" (p. 92) and to respond to "a need for further decentering and localization of ELT history via accounts of practice and theory in multiple contexts" (p.93).

The *ITALY ELT ARCHIVE* is intended as an archive of primary sources supplied by different types of materials or texts (written, audio and video) and genres (textbooks, pedagogic grammars, activity/practice/self-study books, learner dictionaries) for the teaching of English language to different groups and levels of learners and for different levels of education ranging from primary school to university. On account of the typology of sources for applied linguistic historiographical research proposed by Smith (2016: 81), the *ITALY ELT ARCHIVE* also aims to collect a variety of additional primary sources relating to a) history of ideas

(theoretical writings, prefaces of and advertisements for textbooks, reviews and articles from professional and academic journals), b) contextualization of ideas (interviews to authors, written reports, photographs, blog texts), c) policy and curriculum (official papers, policy documents, school and academic syllabuses) and d) teaching, learning and training practices (reports, lesson plans, accounts by teachers, etc.). These sources are thought to provide information not only about the contexts in which ELT materials were actually produced and implemented but also in relation to the rationale for the specific design options adopted, the needs and expectations these materials aimed to fulfil or the type of reception these materials had with teachers and learners. In this respect, the materials collected in the archive should also provide the opportunity to investigate the key role of a number of Italian authors in their effort to ‘popularise’ breakthrough ELT principles and ideas through their works. The archive, therefore, is meant to support research into ELT history by facilitating the triangulation of different types of sources and by helping highlight the relationships between the learning and teaching materials themselves and the broader context in which they were produced and used (Mandich and Ranzani 2007). According to Smith (2016: 82) one of the main challenges of applied linguistic historiography is indeed to assess “the wider significance of the materials under consideration, for example, by relating them to applied linguistic ideas, on the one hand, and to contexts of actual use – to ascertain impact – on the other”. The ‘immersion’ in a variety of primary sources provided by the *ITALY ELT ARCHIVE* makes it a suitable resource not only for researchers and academic students but also for EFL teachers alike with a view to facilitating a liaison between research, teaching and teacher training activities.

The process of setting up a historical ELT archive according to the features and aims illustrated above has led the authors to take principled decisions on a number of challenging issues which have had a bearing on the selection of cataloguing criteria. The first issue pertains to a necessary distinction between what is the intended target learning level of the teaching material and the context in which it is actually used. With

reference to the Italian context, at least up to the 1990s, courses and grammars designed for lower secondary school learners were often used in high schools as well. This implies that the information stated in the preface or the blurb would need to be checked with other related sources such as school syllabuses, teachers' accounts or interviews to authors in order to identify the real use the material was put into. Another issue the authors have tackled is strictly related to the availability of the ELT texts used in the academic context. As a matter of fact, it was not until the beginning of this century that the teaching of a foreign language in the Italian universities began to be conceived as an independent academic course. The EFL class, traditionally taught by a native speaker tutor, was considered ancillary to the main literature course and the texts and materials used during these language classes were not always specified in the official course programmes. Finally, the reference to clear-cut genres for cataloguing purposes may be problematic when dealing with a historical corpus of ELT materials as what is sometimes labelled as 'a course' in the title turns out to be 'a grammar book' or viceversa (see example in the bibliographical entry).

Finally, the *ITALY ELT ARCHIVE* has been conceived as both a physical repository located in the department of foreign languages and literatures of the University of Milan, and an open access web portal. In this regard, the *Warwick ELT Archive* and *Contrastiva* reviewed in the previous section have provided interesting examples for the development of this project in terms of design and organisation. The identification of the primary sources carried out so far has led to the compilation of bibliographical inventories of ELT materials produced in Italy for specific historical periods. Materials are in the process of being catalogued according to a number of set criteria, some of which may change according to the type of primary source, as illustrated by this sample bibliographical entry. A database of the collected materials is also being developed to allow future online consultation of the archive.

Title		<i>Grammatica della lingua inglese</i>
Author/s		A. Zanco, G. Caliumi

Type of author	Academic, Italian
Type of material	Coursebook
Level	Beginner to advanced
Target learner	Adult
Teaching/learning context(s)	University, upper secondary school
Year of publication	1966
Edition	Third
Origin	Italian
Place of publication	Varese-Milano
Publisher	Istituto Editoriale Cisalpino
Volume	Single
Pages	439
Method	Grammar-Translation
Teacher's guide	Not available
Supplementary materials (audio, video, workbook, etc.)	Not available
Cover	
Preface/ Introduction	
Sample pages	
Audio/video	Not available
Reviews/advertisements	
Author biography	A. Zanco: < <a href="http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/aurelio-zanco_%28Enciclopedia-Italiana%29/">http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/aurelio-zanco_%28Enciclopedia-Italiana%29/</a> > G. Caliumi: former professor of English literature (Università Commerciale Bocconi, Università degli Studi di Parma)

#### 4. Concluding remarks: what uses can the ITALY ELT ARCHIVE be put to?

The ITALY ELT ARCHIVE project has the ambitious goal of cataloguing ELT materials published in Italy with a view to tracing this country's history of ELT. Although the remit of the project is limited to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the amount of work ahead of us is intimidating. By way of comparison, about 800 French language teaching textbooks published in Italy have been identified for the Fascist period (1923-1943) alone (Mandich 2007, Mandich and Ranzani 2007). Sociopolitical events (Mandich 2007) or issues affecting the publishing industry (Ranzani 2007) have been known to lead to 'ebbs and flows' in educational publishing. That said, given the increasing importance that the English language gained in Italy from the

end of the Second World War into the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is more than likely that the Italian output of ELT materials remained steady, if not actually showing an upwards trend throughout this period.

How can this wealth of material be put to use? In other words, what kind of impact can the *ITALY ELT ARCHIVE* actually have on research and teaching at different levels in the Italian context? We shall identify a few areas of investigation which we believe *the ITALY ELT ARCHIVE* may make a significant impact on in our context.

The first is one that, as was mentioned above, is very often disregarded in the analysis of ELT materials. To what extent can materials tell us something about the evolution of the English *language*, in particular about how it has been codified and described in Italy? In a recent study, Swiggers and Szoc (2017) show how the scrutiny of language teaching materials can provide important insights on the study of terminology related to grammatical categories (for Italian as a foreign language), and argue that the methodology developed in their study may be employed to investigate the conceptualization and the description of any language through their representation in teaching materials in given contexts. As shown by Anderwald (2016), data gleaned from pedagogical materials can also be fruitfully complemented by corpus linguistics, for example to investigate how teaching material represented – i.e. in a more or less prescriptive fashion – linguistic phenomena which, according to diachronic corpus studies, were undergoing change at a given period of time and to determine whether pedagogical materials might themselves have played a role in such linguistic changes.

The second area concerns the study of the ‘popularization’ of applied linguistic ideas: how have language learning theories and language teaching methods been taken up and/or adapted in the Italian context? What role has been played in this process by specific authors (academics, secondary school teachers, teams of academics and teachers) and specific publishers? This is undoubtedly an area of investigation that might more directly involve as users of the *ITALY ELT ARCHIVE* not only academic researchers, but also teacher educators as well as trainee and practising teachers. Despite calls to develop historical awareness among language

teachers (e.g. Smith 2013), historical-oriented language teacher education is still far from a reality, at least in Europe (Santos 2018) and Inner Circle (USA, Australia, New Zealand) countries. With its rich, contextualized bank of materials *the ITALY ELT ARCHIVE* would provide an ideal starting point for teacher educators to develop data-based awareness tasks that would enable trainee and practising teachers to appreciate the implementation of ideas and approaches ‘in action’ throughout history and hone their practical skills at material evaluation, thus helping to bridge the gap between language teaching theories and actual practices.

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