



The role of pronunciation and intonation in teaching Italian as a foreign language:

How Italian textbooks deal with segmental and suprasegmental training

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This poster aims to explore the recent results of my doctoral research which concerns the role of pronunciation and intonation in teaching Italian as a foreign language and it investigates possible teaching strategies to be adopted to enhance the attention on these skills. Chiefly, drawing from previous studies in this field (Nuessel 1989; Mason 1993), this poster revises and discusses the pronunciation and intonation-focused explanations and activities offered by fourteen textbooks widely used in the last fifteen years (2005-2020) to teach Italian as a foreign language to university students and adults. The study focuses on four main issues related to the pronunciation and intonation sections: 1. the location of the pronunciation and intonation explanations and exercises (i.e. introductory units, units through the text, appendix); 2. the focus on segmental or suprasegmentals, or both; 3. the presence of explanations and the theoretical approaches used (i.e. articulatory, contrastive, or perceptual); 4. the types of exercises offered.

AIMS

- To define the status of the pronunciation and intonation training in textbooks commonly used to teach Italian as a foreign language at present
- To identify future directions for a more systematic, inclusive, and appropriate coverage of these skills in academic curricula, through both in and out-of-class practice

OBJECTIVES

- the identification of the theoretical approaches commonly used for the elaboration of pronunciation and intonation activities offered by primers;
- the naming of the types of exercises generally included in coursebooks to train Italian pronunciation and intonation for the different CEFR levels;
- the evaluation of the textbooks' explanations and exercises provided for the training of Italian pronunciation and intonation

METHODOLOGY

- Qualitative and quantitative analyses of pronunciation and intonation units, explanations and activities, explanations used to introduce specific segmental and suprasegmental features
- Contrastive analyses of all these aspects between the primers analysed

RESULTS

- Out of the fourteen textbooks analysed, ten primers have sections related to pronunciation and intonation training in their central units
- Out of the fourteen textbooks revised, nine primers offer exercises and activities for the training of both pronunciation and intonation features. In fact, the data collected highlight a very little interest in focusing only on one of these two features, and they demonstrate a largely shared segmental-suprasegmental orientation
- The exercises are mainly based on both the articulatory and the perceptive approach and the most frequent types of activities ask the students to listen to a recording and: 1. to repeat the sounds or phrases; 2. to complete lists of words with the phonemes present in the audio files; 3. to distinguish sounds or groups of sounds that are easily mixed up; 4. to complete the phonological rules concerning specific phonemes; 5. to recognise different phrases according to the intonation of the utterances; 6. to write down the intonation marks or punctuation, and 7. to express various emotional states by doing role plays.
- Out of the fourteen textbooks analysed, only three primers offer explicit explanations regarding pronunciation and intonation. The activities are usually based on both the perceptive approach and the articulatory approach

FUTURE WORK

1. how to include in a more appropriate way pronunciation and intonation training in the academic curriculum?
2. how can technology positively influence the teaching of Italian pronunciation and intonation?
3. Which digital tools could be included to support autonomous pronunciation and intonation training?

REFERENCES

- Mason, K. (1993), «Pronunciation Coverage in First-Year Italian Textbooks». *Italica* 70, n. 2, 153.
- Nuessel, F., (1989), Guidelines for the objective evaluation of Italian pedagogical textbooks. *I1 Forneri* 3.2.67-85