

## Communication as a strategic resource to promote Italian Institutes of Culture<sup>1</sup>

GRAZIANO SERRAGIOTTO\*, GIUSEPPE MAUGERI  
Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia

Received 16 November 2014; received in revised form 2 February 2015; accepted 1 May 2015

### ABSTRACT

**EN** One of the ways in which Italy presents itself to the world is through the Italian Institute of Culture (IIC), an institution that aims at offering a cross-section of the Italian world and at the same time disseminating the rationale for its own existence. The IIC acknowledges and embraces the historical, political, and linguistic evolution of Italy and regards these as constitutional factors of its identity. In this article, we first provide background information about the Institute and display the key principles that determine how communication with outside communities takes place. Next, we adopt a theoretical model of communication in order to show how communication in and of itself has the potential to lead individuals on a path of cultural appreciation, as well as towards an appreciation for and acquisition of the Italian language.

**Key words:** SYSTEM, PROMOTING ITALIAN LANGUAGE, COMMUNICATION, PROSUMERS.

**ES** Uno de los medios por los que Italia se da a conocer al mundo es a través del Instituto Italiano de Cultura (CII), institución que pretende ofrecer una muestra representativa del mundo italiano a la vez que difundir la razón de su existencia. El CII reconoce y acoge la evolución histórica, política y lingüística de Italia, refiriéndose a estos factores como constituyentes de su identidad. En el presente artículo se proporciona, en primer lugar, datos generales sobre el Instituto junto a una exposición de los principios clave que determinan su proceso de comunicación con otras comunidades en el exterior. A continuación, basándonos en un modelo teórico de la comunicación, se muestra cómo la comunicación en sí misma alberga el potencial de guiar a los individuos hacia una apreciación cultural, así como a un aprecio por la lengua italiana y su adquisición.

**Palabras clave:** SISTEMA, PROMOCIÓN DE LA LENGUA ITALIANA, COMUNICACIÓN, PROSUMIDORES.

**IT** Per promuovere sé stessa nel mondo, l'Italia ricorre spesso all'Istituto Italiano di Cultura (IIC), un'istituzione che ha come obiettivo presentare uno spaccato della cultura italiana e al tempo stesso far conoscere i motivi che giustificano la propria esistenza. L'IIC riconosce e fa propria l'evoluzione storica, politica e linguistica dell'Italia, considerando tali fattori come elementi fondamentali della sua identità. L'articolo offre, in primo luogo, alcune informazioni generali sull'Istituto ed espone i principi chiave che regolano la comunicazione con le comunità esterne. In secondo luogo, adotta un modello teorico di comunicazione al fine di dimostrare che la comunicazione in sé e di per sé è in grado di condurre chiunque su un cammino di valorizzazione culturale, così come verso la valorizzazione e l'apprendimento della lingua italiana.

**Parole chiave:** SISTEMA, PROMOZIONE DELLA LINGUA ITALIANA, COMUNICAZIONE, PROSUMER.

<sup>1</sup> The conceptual contributions of this article are the result of collaboration by both authors. Specifically, sections 1-3 written by Giuseppe Maugeri and sections 4-11 are attributed to Graziano Serragiotto.

\* Contact: [serragiotto@unive.it](mailto:serragiotto@unive.it)

## 1. The Italian Institutes of Culture

One of the ways in which Italy presents itself to the world is through the Italian Institute of Culture (IIC), an institution that aims at offering a cross-section of the Italian world and at the same time disseminating the rationale for its own existence. The IIC acknowledges and embraces the historical, political, and linguistic evolution of Italy and regards these as constitutional factors of its identity. Consequently, the IIC has been viewed as a premiere Italian cultural and social organization, around the world and in the region of the world in which each IIC is located.

In this article, we explore two questions worthy of consideration:

- a. How should the Italian Institute of Culture communicate with host countries?
- b. To what extent is dialogue between the Institute and a host country capable of developing the identity of the IIC in specific, local contexts?

In order to respond to these two questions, we first provide background information about the Institute and then display the key principles that determine how communication with outside communities takes place. We then present some of the results achieved in an action-research at IIC in Tokyo in order to highlight the advantages of an innovative communication strategy, while noting potential areas for improvement. We adopt a theoretical model of communication in order to show how communication in and of itself has the potential to lead individuals on a path of cultural appreciation, as well as towards an appreciation for and acquisition of the Italian language.

## 2. The organizational model of the IICs

The methodological introduction to this section describes the organizational model of the Italian Institutes of Culture (henceforth referred to as IICs). We draw on specific scientific fields, such as glottodidactics and cultural-and-business marketing, to offer an epistemological definition of the technical characteristics of IICs. In so doing, we seek to outline a preliminary theoretical framework and identify the purpose of these institutions.

### 2.1 *The frame of reference*

Efforts have gradually been undertaken at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) to account for the political and cultural complexities of today's world. New organizational models and tools are being developed to respond to present needs and challenges, and these changes concern the IICs' organizational framework as well, as it deals with the management of the Italian language and culture as if it were a system, or even, a network. In the section 2.2 we consider the institutional context to which the Institutes belong. Section 2.3 aims to properly define the concepts of 'cultural system' and 'network' in an effort to avoid potential misunderstandings of these terms. This section also works to identify the organizational characteristics implied by each term and simultaneously prompts us to think about the model to which IICs belong.

### 2.2 *The diffusion of the Italian language*

The spread of the Italian language abroad is one of the primary cultural goals of the MAECI. This mission is supported by 89 IICs, in addition to Italian schools and bilingual programs, 206 lectureships in Italian at universities, and the Dante Alighieri Society. For the IIC, language teaching represents the principal means to export the Italian model (Giovanardi & Trifone, 2012). MAECI signed an agreement with the Certificato Lingua Italiana di Qualità (CLIQ) Association in 2012. This association aims to develop a common set of standards in Italian language instruction and coordinates efforts by its members to ensure quality instruction, and language programs that adhere to CLIQ standards are granted a CLIQ quality certification. CLIQ standards aim at replacing existing institutional certifications for Italian language programs and providing a common benchmark for teaching quality. According to an analytic report from MAECI (2014), this unique system of certification is a useful indication for students of Italian, ensures quality language learning, and overcomes inconsistencies in past pedagogical models.

### 2.3 The cultural system and network

The cultural programs of the IICs are coordinated by the center and governed by law n. 401, 1990 (Totaro-Genevois, 2005). This regulation affects the systems approach, influencing the organic design and territorial autonomy of IICs. Moreover, since 2012, efforts have been made to adapt to the contraction of economic resources and to simultaneously and selectively increase financial support for Italian culture abroad, where there is potential for economic growth and interest in Italian culture. For this reason, the adoption of a cultural and strategic approach is considered crucial.

In order to clarify the cultural framework of IICs, first, it is necessary to provide a proper interpretation of the concepts of 'cultural system' and 'network' so as to avoid potential misunderstandings of these terms, identify the organizational characteristics implied by each term, and simultaneously reflect on the model to which IICs belong.

In response to possible misunderstandings generated by this terminology as it pertains to IICs, we would like to outline the main differences between the concept of 'system' and that of 'network':

- System: the system includes a vertical structure, a hierarchic structure of skills related to seniority. Besides, the system requires the recognition of the authority and a formalization of the working procedures. Therefore, in the system standard and defined processes prevail;
- Network: IT is an organic context continuously redefined by contents and objectives to be achieved. In particular, the conditions of organizational and economic balance require a coordinated plan among the organizations which translate a customized management model into a specific location. Therefore, network is distinguished by its adaptability to new situations, the integration of the organizations and horizontal communication (Decastri, 2014).

From this perspective, the relationship that the IIC establishes with the surrounding environment becomes the key factor: the more it impacts the local community through use of targeted communication and mitigation of social conflicts, the more successfully it surpasses other competitors and the more value it acquires in the eyes of the local citizens (Seddio, 2013: 5).

### 2.4 The cultural system of the IICs

The means with which IICs analyze the cultural and instructional needs of a local environment together with the results of their intervention, lead us to believe that the Cultural System represents an ideal setup model. This organizational model is represented by Figure 1 below.

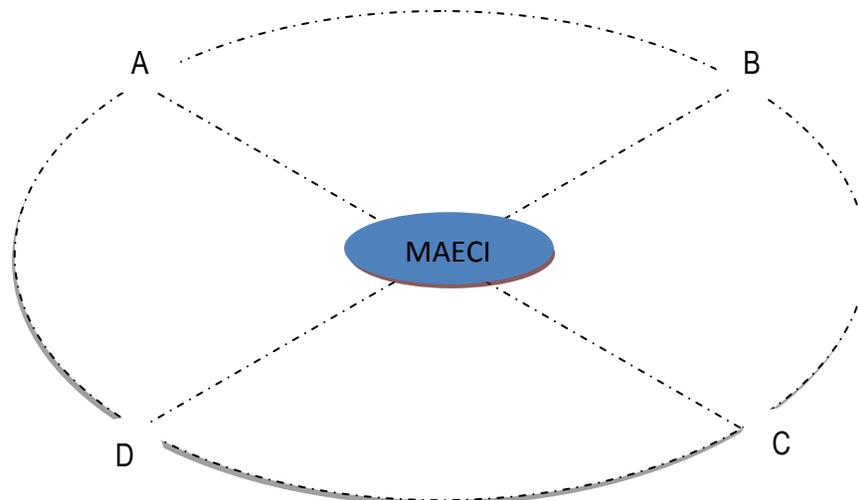


Figure 1. Economy of the Cultural System of IICs

The analysis of the systemic model presented in Figure 1 highlights the network of relationships that emanate from a pivotal center with the purpose of:

- a. selecting public resources to be used within an IIC;
- b. enabling coordination;
- c. centrally handling administrative issues;
- d. facilitating connections;
- e. outlining how new projects will be carried out;
- f. ensuring that activities are within the IIC's budget;
- g. evaluating the set of activities sponsored by each Institute as a whole using the logic of economies of scale.

This setup implies that the system is centralized and that the position of the MAECI (the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) might generate tensions among the IICs due to its apparent dominant or autonomous position. Therefore, each Institute, represented in figure 1 as A, B, C, and D, expresses interests that (a) are an expression of the aims and institutional purposes of the center (MAECI) and (b) are non-institutional, or contextualized, influenced by the local community in which an IIC participates.

With regard to institutional interests and aims (a), certain events are promoted centrally by the Institute; these cultural and linguistic events respond to the institutional objectives that IICs activate in all locations. Cultural products can be understood as the result coordination between the Ministry of Cultural Affairs (MAB) and the Ministry for Cooperation and Development (MCD).

On the other hand, non-institutional interests (b) include all projects and initiatives that an IIC has managed to put in place locally in order to address specific needs of the target community. These activities and projects reflect the communication and intercultural competence of the IIC and its inclination to cooperate with other agents in different contexts. Additionally, these projects give rise to new relationships and strategic opportunities, recognizing the role played by all the social actors involved in the creation of local initiatives.

In short, the IICs deal locally with heterogeneous conditions of governance and needs in order to balance institutional interests and economic necessities with non-institutionalized aims and needs. Non-institutionalized projects represent a final challenge for IICs, namely, to understand local requests and transform them into satisfactory and practical solutions, while evaluating their own effectiveness, and designing enhanced procedures for improvement.

### ***2.5 Defining features of the IICs***

Having identified the organizational model each IIC conforms to and described its nature, in this paragraph we can finally outline the fundamental features that define the content of the Institution. In analyzing the organization, we will adopt a cultural marketing perspective.

The birth and permanence of one or more Institutes within a specific geographic area requires certain preparation:

- a. the meeting of political, economic and cultural interests representing both countries promoting the exchange;
- b. the selection and development of content;
- c. perspectives to be cultivated and put in place within a diplomatic network.

Once these political, economic and environmental conditions for the birth of an IIC have are in place, it is then necessary to understand if there are satisfactory conditions to support the development of the institutional entity in the planned location. This is dependent on contingent factors such as whether the economic situation of the sponsors is solid enough; if the economic and cultural relationships between the two countries can still offer new ideas for a partnership that is perceived as useful and advantageous for both parties; if the dimensions of the operation are proportionate to the strategic people and resources put in place both centrally and locally. According to these factors, we can say that the IICs stem from the meeting of highly specific interests (Seddio, 2013). This juncture of interests is made possible by interdependence between internal and external resources, and thanks to this complementarity, each IIC is capable of

addressing the needs of all agents involved in the project of the Institute. Below is a list of the main conditions that determine the creation and the specific identity of each IIC:

- a. Spatial-territorial character. Located in a specific geographical area and in a certain territory, each IIC is deeply connected to the specific place it serves. Within a given context, it builds its own history, communicating its roots so that its activities are connected to its identity, and its identity shapes the environment within which it is working. The specific cultural identity each IIC develops becomes a testimony to its dialogue with and welcoming of the local community and culture. The cultural entity that results from this process is a clear, recognizable sign of the IIC's will to embrace the needs and desires of the territory and of its efforts and struggles to offer useful services to a given community.
- b. Durability. Today's situation at the ministerial level determines whether a certain IIC remains in a given country or not. This phenomenon casts light on the unstable nature of IICs: their permanence depends on a complex series of relationships where social, political or economic factors come into play and may force their closure. Therefore, the presence of an IIC is connected to factors and events that go well beyond the purposes of the system and the needs of a particular context, factors that in fact impact its lifespan and range of operations within a specific environment.
- c. Structure. The structure of each IIC is connected to the organizational model that qualifies the IIC, which is structured, established and integrated into a network. There is a whole set of physical, institutional and economic rules and regulations that govern the IIC's operations.
- d. Level of autonomy. Political and financial ties allow for a specific level of autonomy in determining objectives and selecting projects for each IIC.
- e. Balanced spreadsheet. The value of each cultural product, for example a course of Italian language, needs to increase through the cooperation with other actors, integrating the resources of each part involved with an interest in the overall project. The success of the cultural product depends on conditions of balance that are both internal and external to the Institute, where all the tools mobilized to achieve objectives are optimized. Consequently, each institution needs to find the balance between its level of decisional autonomy (either allocated centrally, or acquired locally) and the decisions coming from the central system.

The conditions of existence at the foundation of an IIC highlight the close relationship between the institutional environment and external factors coming from the target territory, thus setting in motion a process of adaptation and response to the needs of the target community. It is necessary to establish a conceptual, methodological, and operational scaffolding in order to attribute value to each moment of dialogue and cooperation between local entities and the shareholders involved in the project. With this in mind, each IIC will be able to express and promote itself through projects largely regarded by the local community as both functional and useful. Functionality here refers, on the one hand, to the perceived value and utility of a certain project and, on the other hand, to the methodology by which it is carried out, given that the development of contents and the tools used in implementing projects needs to be consistent with the institutional objectives and pertinent to the needs of the community. This link between the institutional and non-institutional gives birth to effective communication: the more it is finely attuned to the target community, the more successful it will be. Therefore, in the next sections we consider the importance of strategically organized communication, that is, communication set up in such a way as to highlight both the institutional background and the operational management of a cultural-language product.

### **3. The communication strategy of the Italian Cultural Institute in Tokyo: a case study**

In the following sections, we will present some of the data obtained from a case study referred to the IIC in Tokyo. The selection of this model is determined by the fact that the Institute of Tokyo uses communication as the heart of its strategy for the management and control of the quality of education; while for internal communication, there is an open strategy that encourages the flow of communication, for external communication there is an approach which considers the five senses as the human retail interaction<sup>2</sup>. This approach affects the strategy of promoting Italian language in connection with the student. For this reason, the IIC in Tokyo is one of the most productive Institutes in terms of the number of courses offered.

---

<sup>2</sup> It is a marketing approach that investigates the interactive effects on shoppers. In this case, atmospheric cues have significant effects on learners.

### ***3.1 Internal communication: creating educational events***

The design of Italian courses is aimed at developing the skills of learners, since internal communication is a formative process for the entire learning system, where the students themselves are the main protagonists. The IIC, therefore, focuses on the skills of individuals by determining the forms of continuity and evolution of the external and internal learning system; connection with the context and steps to support the dissemination of information and promotion of communication and learning represent crucial efforts.

Each member of the organization participates and contributes to varying degrees to the stages of development of a project; thus a flow of internal communication that helps to maintain consistency with model development and organizational behavior from the top down is created. The path analysis of the research highlights how each role is contextualized according to environmental characteristics and distinctive features of particular cultural values. The design, therefore, is characterized by a multidimensional nature and an intrinsic human context profile intrinsic both qualitative and quantitative that enriches the course of Italian language. The structure develops according to an open system of human and environmental components where an open and circular logic prevails, in relation to communicational pathways and tools.

### ***3.2 The function of the Committee as a strategic hub of educational interaction from the inside out***

The Committee, which is composed of the board, four teachers and student representatives, serves as a liaison between the inside and outside environment. The Committee works to introduce new ideas, informed by the input of teachers and the point of view of the student representatives. In this way, it seeks to solve the difficulties of the students with the goal of increasing the value of service learning and motivation of teachers and students. Finally, the hybrid nature of the Committee promotes social interaction and the consolidation of practices and rules shared by all.

We believe that, according to the pedagogical purposes and meaning of their mission, the IIC uses appropriate tools to prepare students to acquire global expertise and to provide them with challenging learning experiences. The Institute presents itself as an open organization able to implement a plan and continue to reflexively evaluate its activities. Such a task-oriented structure increases the motivational level and productivity of participants.

### ***3.3 Benefits for students of Italian***

Japanese students are traditionally oriented towards authority and totally dependent on class (Saito & Samimi, 1996). By contrast, following IIC's logic, students are encouraged to take part in decision-making and quality control of their learning. In this way, they play an integral role in the cultural entity and are in close contact with native speakers and the course material. Consequently, they can cultivate meta-disciplinary expertise. The aim is to push students to abandon passivity, empowering them to engage with the IIC. This implies a distribution of knowledge and power that is strengthened in relation to the interaction and interconnectedness of stakeholders, the nature of the interdependencies between individuals, and the organizational context (Siemens, 2005).

## **4. External communication**

Language promotion is the core of business of the organization, and courses are designed with the aim to meet the needs of the target community. We will see how external communication is supported by thematic channels such as outdoor spaces, together with methodological training of teachers and new atmosphere. This represents an innovative approach to instruction and external communication.

### ***4.1 Outdoor environment***

Tokyo IIC has invested in the construction of outdoor environments, which become relevant in the promotion of Italian language and culture for the following reasons. The first type of outdoor environments, outdoor spaces, contribute to generate the vision of the Italian culture and their design prefigures the value-components of the learning that takes place internally. Therefore, they play an attractive and communicative role. The second kind of outdoor environment, break areas or transit areas, such as the entrance and corridors, are where most interactions, interests, barriers and openings are developed.

Through the organization of the outdoor environments we can understand the concept of

communicative and interactive teaching practiced by the Institute. Observation of the IIC spaces allowed us to reconstruct the contribution of Human Retail Interaction as an achievement through multiple senses. In this way, external communication passes through the external environments by activating an experiential process in which the communication of a particular message is enhanced by the use of the senses.

#### **4.2 Non-verbal communication**

The interaction between the physical structure of the IIC building and individual actors is achieved by the simultaneous use of sensory stimuli. The management of the sensory stimuli through the five senses, exerted by the architectural elements on the process of users' perception, is emblematic in our case. The sensory components comprise sight, sound, smell, and touch.

Sight includes elements of the setting such as the building's having been erected in a particular location, or natural and environmental conditions of the garden that contribute to the visual dimension of the building. All these elements contribute to introducing an effect of visual comfort that is both acoustic and climatic. The specific design of the IIC spaces contributes to the value of this sensory component. This is evident in the color scheme of the space, which reproduces the colors of the Italian flag, and the arrangement of chairs gracing the front hall.

Sound is limited mostly to Italian music, which is audible from outside the IIC. As Japanese students and visitors approach the main lobby, background music featuring popular arias of Puccini can be heard, with the intention of arousing emotions and feelings connected to Italian culture.

Olfactory sensations contribute to visitors' sensory experience. Outside, a rich fragrance is produced by the plants in front of and around the building. The evocative value of smell differentiates the context, and distinguishes it from other physical and sensory components. It is widely known that olfactory stimuli affect the memorability of an event (Zaghi, 2012). These fragrances contribute to the well-being of learners and the memorability of their time at the Institute.

Touch is here referring to the sensory experience of the exhibitions that are on display in the atrium space, parallel to the road leading to the Institute, whose materials are a symbol of arts made in Italy. The visible presence of authentic materials aims to attract visitors, inviting the public to admire their physical characteristics.

In conclusion, we argue that the appearance of the IIC in Tokyo, created through a combination of verbal communication channels (billboards input) and non-verbal input (sense organs), leads to the internalization of the messages delivered to the Japanese user, which identify the Italian culture through the balance between form and matter, or the verbal and sensory input.

#### **4.3 Multimedial communication**

The high number of students who are over 50 years old and enjoy language courses at the IIC in Tokyo (Maugeri, 2014) suggests that the language promotion should not be built solely for a young age group. As we found out in our research, the Tokyo IIC invests more on the external area and lesser on technologies to teach Italian. Therefore, we experience a construction of the Italian teaching which uses internal communication as a resource to enable educational services in line with the needs of the people. On the other hand, the potential of the external communication could be strengthened by applying a model that aims at promoting of Italian language and culture in the territories with high technological impact. In the following paragraphs we will present a communication model with these characteristics.

### **5. Communication of IICs**

For some years now, the MAECI has been committed to the renovation of IICs, encouraging a managerial approach to culture so that all those involved in the process may become active contributors to the modernization of the system, and the system may, in turn, better adhere to its mission. From this perspective, the IICs are often interpreted as a cultural endeavor with a business sensibility (Fraterrigo & Maugeri, 2009; Solima, 2004) so that resources may be funneled into local branches while maintaining efficiency and maximization of resources (Serragiotto & Maugeri, 2012).

The political and cultural measures taken within the IICs are the result of a series of processes and organizational practices based on the concept of brand equity, which also includes communication as a key factor to set up a strategic plan to run the Institute.

Therefore, in the following section, we will focus our attention on the IICs and the communicative factors that require technical and organizational competence, in order to envision a project plan involving the community of the hosting territory.

## 6. Communication in its cultural setting

Two main points should be clarified before focusing our attention on communication in the IICs. First, we adhere to the widely accepted principle that communication must not distort the message intended by those involved in the promotion of the IICs. Second, we believe that communication should be based on fundamental principles that guarantee the unity and integrity of the IICs' mission. We propose and describe these principles as follows:

- a. Communication is pivotal in settling into the foreign country environment;
- b. Communication allows the Institute to assess and address possible cultural needs;
- c. Communication is the means of contact with the local territory;
- d. Communication is centered on the individuals representing the organization's drive and purpose in a specific socio-cultural context;
- e. Communication is the activation of an interactive process seeking to lay the foundation for dialogue in which differences and similarities between cultures are appreciated;
- f. Communication expresses the culture and behaviors adopted by the organization in the context of its foreign setting.

In addition to following these principles, communication must seek to guarantee continuity and feature clear, detectable, and consistent objectives aligned with the *mission* and *corporate identity* of the IICs. For these reasons, communication must be planned and coordinated so that the IICs' identity may be consistent and allow the public:

- a. to perceive the IICs as a cultural entity;
- b. to access the system the IICs belong to;
- c. to join the operational platform and system of alliances the IICs work within.

All of these fundamental features contribute to make available and immediately usable the complex network of knowledge and know-how, leading to the identification of the IICs' history and vision, mission and objectives, contacts and alliances established in the territory (in terms of both quality and typology) and the level of internationalism reached by the organization. In this sense, communication must take advantage of a unified strategy by which the Institution operates in the territory following its diplomatic network and implementing a series of consistent initiatives in the host community in order to:

- a. establish contacts with the hosting environment;
- b. shorten cultural and geographical distances;
- c. allow for the birth of lasting cultural relationships;
- d. create a flow of ideas and positive energy working towards the Institute's mission;
- e. enhance demand beyond the perceived need and beyond the rational level of purchase. The entry-level threshold of IICs is surpassed by the value of services extended to the customers without the need for cognitive effort when evaluating the price of purchase (Anderson, 2009). Thanks to the quality and job potential offered by the learning experience, with the benefit of operating as professional consumers (prosumers) both inside and outside the organization's network.

With this in mind, communication creates a bonus, a *surplus* of emotional-rational material for the use of the cultural product and, at the same time, it ensures integration in focusing on the core values of the cultural identity of a host country, which offers developmental and transformational opportunities to the learning community.

## 7. Guidelines for planned communication

According to Severino (2007), the guidelines upon which communication is centered are:

- a. Use a language that is understandable and directed at the community it seeks to address, with the objective of increasing trust in the Institution;
- b. familiarize the client with the ideas and reality of the cultural enterprise;
- c. identify the idiosyncrasies of the hosting territory's culture together with the cultural identity of the guest culture;
- d. develop a relationship that acknowledges the values, interests and needs of both parties;
- e. raise awareness about the innovative presence of a new culture;
- f. give importance to the role, quality and contribution of each individual involved in the exchange, recognizing his or her contribution as a source of ideas and knowledge.

With the hope that communication may inspire and produce shared values as ethical intelligence (Balboni, 2011), it is necessary to emphasize, first of all, the foundation of the organizational structure as much as the behaviors through which a common vision is expressed. Secondly, the will to actively listen to the hosting community and to acknowledge the value of its people putting at their own disposal all the possible technical and cultural tools to appreciate the dialogue and share those motivations and solutions that aspire towards a better quality of life.

## 8. Cultural characteristics of communication

To enable an exchange between a guest and host culture means multiplying the opportunities for dialogue and sharing information on both an emotional and cognitive level. In nuancing our understanding of this process, we could connect this intercultural communication to the learning process of the learner at the moment s/he communicates with the organization and develops forms of interaction that connect and bind both parties. Adherence to the course of Italian language is the result of a communicative process defined as:

- a. horizontal;
- b. clear;
- c. believable;
- d. consistent;
- e. proactive;
- f. original.

These communicative features characterize the quality of the interactive relationship between the two parties, resulting in a system where we can identify two co-producers of non-linear meaning whose contributions lead to the construction of a shared cultural experience. In order to welcome the language learner in his or her entirety and complexity, it is therefore necessary to struggle to establish authentic communication that is motivating and differentiated for each community of learners involved in dialogue. Such exchange highlights the true needs of all learners and works to cater to their different integrated intelligences.

Communication therefore is transformed into an experience, revealing the identity of the cultural entity that speaks about itself through colors, visuals, architectural features, technologies and a plurality of forms and initiatives and prompts onlookers to reflect on their own culture and the system of values attached to it.

## 9. Communication mediated by new technologies

In this section, we turn our attention to the organization of communication on the Internet and on the importance of integrating modern technological resources such as the social networks in language instruction. It would be unreasonable to overlook the potential that these resources can offer; therefore, drawing on their aim to network with and reach out to potential users, cultural organizations such as IICs should recognized the potential contribution of online communication to avoid falling behind with technological advancements. Technology can allow IICs to reinforce the image of the organization and quickly

and allow it to effectively respond to the interests of selective consumers, thus laying the foundation for a dynamic intercultural exchange.

### **9.1 Tools for communication between participants**

The means and modality of communication may result being a strategic move to facilitate the process of acknowledgment on behalf of the end-users. At this point, the adoption of a particular means of communication reflects the personality and type of relationship that an interlocutor has in mind. Different kinds of channels are thus used to improve and personalize communication, linking like-minded communities along with their cultural values to the cultural life of the organization's endeavor.

To achieve this objective, the tools and channels selected must be in place, readily available in the hosting territory, and used by the local community so that the communicative aim is deeply understood and results in motivating and enlightening involvement in the project.

At present, the development of new social technologies empowers learners to become a *surveyor* of interconnected information. The Internet and all modern social media platforms have different kinds of organization that structure a message in a particular way. Consequently, individuals must first learn how to use and manage specific online tool. This technicality aside, the selection of a communicational channel may reveal how an online tool is intended to serve as a flexible support in promoting a cultural initiative.

### **9.2 Considerations for cultural marketing via social media**

Social networks by now play a central role in strategic cultural marketing. In fact, they are considered suitable tools to create interactional environments (Vescovi, 2007) within which the cultural initiatives of a certain institution are nurtured. In this perspective, forums and blogs have acquired an especially dynamic function in establishing and sustaining contact with a language learner. Indeed, they can contain information, news, opinions, and comments that can inform individuals' impressions, positive or negative, about the *brand* and the cultural product being offered. Consequently, these channels can convey successful messages, whatever their purposes may be, by means of the *influencer* (Rosen, 2009).

The *influencer* is a person who, more than other readers interacting on the site, seeks to affect the opinions and choices of others, publishing his own *feed* based on impressions, thoughts, and comments after having experienced the product firsthand or after having participated in an event. This *feed* aims to persuade or dissuade other users considering a certain product, and attract comments by other users voicing agreement and appreciation of the product in question.

The cultural entity must oversee its own profile across the different channels it uses, and in doing so, manage all communicational opportunities with contacts in order to attract and retain faithful high-profile consumers. These same consumers play an increasingly important role as collective force responsible for defining the identity of the cultural entity and shaping its relationship both inside and outside the network.

### **9.3 The Institutes and digital communication**

After having carried out a brief analysis of digital communication channels, we now examine a series of features of communication that IICs should adopt to be able to interact and bond with the host communities via the latest information technologies.

The adoption of such technologies should respond to:

- a. a well-defined strategy;
- b. a targeted communication plan (accounting for the who, what, where, when, and why's of effective communication);
- c. the availability of tools both on- and off-line (Maimone, 2010) suitable to the speed of development and type of communication envisioned for the host community (Wenger, 1998);
- d. a context supporting informality and open processes: The nature and use of these media underlines the participative and collaborative role of the organization. It would be rather misleading and inconsistent for the Institute to be present and operate in these network environments if the organization responded to an inflexible model of relationships and imposed a top-down hierarchical structure (Di Bari, 2007). It is precisely because the organizational model is dynamic that a collaborative and open system is ideal;

- e. praise of culture: Through the combined use of different media, the organization shall value the cultural dimension of the organization, which is ever more prone to communicational channels that allow for rapid and shared flows of information;
- f. the presence of meta-communication skills: Organized communication results from the complex coordination of cognitive and behavioral exchanges. Centered on the individual and on his or her ability to first learn and then learn to learn, it seeks to give rise to collective knowledge that is evenly spread throughout a community.

With all of this in mind, organized communication facilitates interactions and exchanges which may lead to different levels of meta-learning in relation to the objectives and organizational resources that need to be highlighted and made accessible. The purpose of such organized communication is to state the pivotal importance of relationships (Argano, Bollo, Dalla Sega, & Vivalda, 2009) and to share and support a common objective of cultivating knowledge. Following these steps will help to place value on factors of individual and collective change that, in the short run, may lead to behaviors that truly involve acquiring and appreciating cultural products.

## **10. Spinoffs for the organization of teaching Italian as a foreign language**

In this section, we would like to cast light on the possible trickle-down effects that the intercultural approach to communication described above (Maimone, 2010) may have on the organization of Italian instruction. To this end, we set out to explain the need for consistency in communication, organizational set-up (Thompson, 1998), and the production of meaning for the student of Italian.

### ***10.1 The foundation of didactic communication***

The IIC's purpose is to convey culture in order to allow for positive changes within the host community, not only in the educational sector. In order to be successful, each IIC has to increase empathy towards the organization and spread common organizational values (Alvesson, 1996), instilling meaning in the actions of the intellectual capital employed to build a level of understanding suitable to the living and cultural conditions that each IIC is working within. The strongholds on which to develop skills must be structured around a communicative culture that makes the relationship with students visible through processes of socialization and integration and positioning of the language-product.

### ***10.2 The importance of communication for the teaching of Italian***

In this article, we have had the opportunity to indicate how communication frames host culture as a factor of identity (Anolli, 2002) in a modern cultural organization (Argano et al., 2009; Bollo, 2012). In this sense, communication confers a functional role to dialogue so that the objectives for which a student has chosen to attend courses within the Institute are shared.

In developing communicative actions focused on a multi-directional exchange, participation, and the appreciation of equality, authenticity, and the acknowledgment of participants' intelligences and skills, the IICs' situation mirrors what Bettetini (1993) described as complementarity between an organization and its objectives. The factors mentioned above are all regarded as specific conditions that contribute to create and maintain a community (Celentin, 2007). The Community praises the single individualities present as resources capable of associating the reality of learning with the meanings that the learning has expressed and developed in terms of knowledge and skills for the person. What is taking shape is a triangular dialogical model that highlights the humanistic-emotional perspective (Balboni, 2011) in which the relationship is encompassed, making each site of the Institution an effective place for learning.

### ***10.3 Metacognitive and social values of learning***

Each environment of the IICs comes to represent a spatial metaphor of organized learning where each constitutional element has value within a repertoire to be shared and interpreted together. There exist a body of knowledge and values to be built and spread across the community. In this sense, a class is one of the junctures of communication having a participative and interactive nature that goes in several directions and works on multiple levels. Specifically, the communicative behavior in class should be consistent with the processes of construction of contextualized meaning and should put students into relation with one another and offer them problem-solving activities with relevance. In this way, what takes place is a truly personalized

learning experience based on a dialogic and interactive approach, ultimately leading to the production and exchange of values in which language transforms the knowledge of the individuals and reinforces their metacognitive skills.

Therefore, this mode of communication becomes the necessary fundamental unit of change governed by processes of redistribution and reconfiguration of knowledge, and the propelling force that encourages each and every student to become an actor and *prosumer* of his or her own learning experience.

## 11. Conclusion

In conclusion, we may state that communication plays a fundamental role in positioning the IICs in a particular territory and defining its presence through targeted cultural policies in order to sustain interaction between the guest and host culture. Furthermore, each Institute must address its local community, shedding its status as an organization imposed on a particular territory by a complex, diplomatic body that is often perceived as an oppressive force distanced from the people. Therefore, the Institute should aim at becoming a collective entity, ideally including and representing all those people united by a love for art in the broadest and deepest sense, and inspired by shared values, which come from a great past and offer even greater future potential.

## References

- Argano, Luciano, Bollo, Alessandro, Dalla Sega, Paolo, & Vivalda, Candida (2009). *Gli eventi culturali. Ideazione, progettazione, marketing, comunicazione*. Milano, Italia: FrancoAngeli.
- Associazione delle Istituzioni Culturali Italiane (2005). *Gli Istituti Culturali: una mappa ragionata*. Cosenza, Italia: Rubbettino.
- Alvesson, Matz (1996). *Prospettive culturali per l'organizzazione*. Milano, Italia: Guerini e Associati.
- Anolli, Luigi (Ed.) (2002). *Psicologia della comunicazione*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Arcuri, Adriana, & Mocciaro, Egle (Eds.), (2014). *Verso una didattica linguistica riflessiva*. Palermo, Italia: Università di Palermo.
- Argano, Lucio, & Dalla Sega, Paolo (2008). *Gli eventi culturali. Ideazione, progettazione, marketing, comunicazione*. Milano, Italia: FrancoAngeli.
- Balboni, Paolo E. (2011). *Conoscenza, verità, etica nell'educazione linguistica*. Perugia, Italia: Guerra.
- Bettetini, Gianfranco (1993). *Semiotica della comunicazione d'impresa*. Milano, Italia: Bompiani.
- Bollo, Alessandro (2012). *Il Marketing della cultura*. Roma, Italia: Carocci.
- Celentin, Paola (2007). *Comunicare e far comunicare in internet*. Venezia, Italia: Cafoscarina.
- Decastri, Maurizio (Eds.). (2014). *Leggere e progettare le organizzazioni*. Milano, Italia: Guerini.
- Di Bari, Vito (Ed.). (2007). *Web 2.0*. Milano, Italia: Il Sole24Ore.
- Faccioli, Franca (2000). *Comunicazione pubblica e cultura del servizio. Modelli, attori, percorsi*. Roma, Italia: Carocci.
- Fraterrigo, Vincenzo, & Maugeri, Giuseppe (2009). Il marketing culturale per una politica linguistica di qualità. *Lettere Italiane*, 27, 229-252.
- Giovanardi, Claudio, & Trifone, Pietro (2012). *L'italiano nel mondo*. Roma, Italia: Carocci.
- Maimone, Fabrizio (2010). *La comunicazione organizzativa*. Milano, Italia: FrancoAngeli.
- Maugeri, Giuseppe (2014). *Gli ambienti di apprendimento nell'insegnamento della lingua italiana a stranieri*. Ph.D. dissertation. <http://dspace.unive.it/handle/10579/4640>.
- MAECI, Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale (2014). *L'italiano nel mondo che cambia. Stati Generali della lingua italiana nel mondo*. Firenze, Italia.
- Rosen, Emanuel (2009). *Passaparola*. Milano, Italia: IlSole24ore.
- Saito, Yoshiko, & Samimi, Keito (1996). Foreign language anxiety and language performance: A study of learner anxiety in beginning, intermediate, and advanced level college students of Japanese. *Foreign Language Annuals*, 29, 239-249.

- Seddio, Pasquale (2013). *La gestione integrata di reti e sistemi culturali*. Milano, Italia: FrancoAngeli.
- Serragiotto, Graziano, & Maugeri, Giuseppe (2012). Nuove coordinate per lo sviluppo degli Istituti Italiani di Cultura in ambito organizzativo e didattico. *Rivista ITALS*, 28, 93-126.
- Severino, Fabio (2007). *Comunicare la cultura*. Milano, Italia: FrancoAngeli.
- Siemens, George (2005). *Connectivism: Learning as Network-Creation*. Retrieved from <http://www.elearnspace.org/Articles/networks.htm>
- Solima, Ludovico (2004). *L'impresa culturale*. Roma, Italia: Carocci.
- Thompson, John B. (1998). *Mezzi di comunicazione e modernità*. Bologna, Italia: Il Mulino.
- Totaro-Genevois, Mariella (2005). *Cultural and linguistic policy abroad. The Italian experience*. Ontario, Canada: Multilingual Matters.
- Vescovi, Tiziano (2007). *Il marketing e la rete*. Milano, Italia: Il Sole 24 Ore.
- Wenger, Etienne (1998). *Communities of practices. Learning, meaning and identity*. New York City, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Zaghi, Karin (2012). *Atmosfera e visual merchandising*. Milano, Italia: Franco Angeli.

## Consulted bibliography

- Balboni, Paolo E. (1999). *Parole comuni, culture diverse. Guida alla comunicazione interculturale*. Venezia, Italia: Marsilio.
- Balboni, Paolo E. & Santipolo, Matteo (Eds.) (2003). *L'italiano nel mondo. Mete e metodi dell'insegnamento dell'italiano nel mondo. Un'indagine qualitativa*. Roma, Italia: Bonacci.
- Balboni, Paolo E. (2007). Qualità della politica, qualità dell'insegnamento. *Studi di Glottodidattica*, 1(3), 1-7.
- Balboni, Paolo E. (2009). *Storia dell'educazione linguistica in Italia. Dalla legge Casati alla riforma Gelmini*. Torino, Italia: Utet Università.
- Boaretto Andrea, Noci, Giuliano, & Pini Fabrizio (2007). *Marketing Reloaded*. Milano, Italia: Il Sole 24 Ore.
- Bonel, Elena, & Moretti, Andrea (2004). Il coordinamento interorganizzativo nella valorizzazione dei beni culturali: specificità settoriali e opzioni di progettazione. In Barbara Sibilio Parri (Eds.), *Creare e valorizzare i distretti museali* (pp. 131-152). Milano, Italia: FrancoAngeli.
- Caon, Fabio, & Maraschio Nicoletta (Eds.) (2011). *Le radici e le ali. L'italiano e il suo insegnamento a 150 anni dall'Unità d'Italia*. Torino, Italia: Utet.
- Carù, Antonella, & Salvemini Severino (2011). *Management delle istituzioni artistiche e culturali*. Milano, Italia: Egea.
- Colbert, Francois (2005). *Il marketing delle arti e della cultura*. Milano, Italia: Etas.
- D'auria, Massimo (2012). L'utilizzo del contratto di rete: un vademecum legale. In Lorenzo Zanni & Massimiliano Bellavista (Eds.), *Le reti di impresa* (pp. 9-43). Milano, Italia: FrancoAngeli.
- Dwyer, Larry, Mellor, Robert, Mistilis, Nina, & Mules, Trevor (2000). A ramework for assessing tangible and intangible impacts of events and conventions. *Event Management*, 6(3), 175-189.
- Foglio, Antonio (2005). *Il marketing della cultura*. Milano, Italia: FrancoAngeli.
- Francesconi, Alberto (2013). L'analisi strategico-organizzativa e la progettazione del sistema culturale evoluto. In Francesconi Alberoni & Gabriele Cioccarelli (Eds.), *Organizzare i distretti culturali evoluti* (117-164). Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Gardner, Howard (2006). *Cinque chiavi per il futuro*. Milano, Italia: Feltrinelli.
- Hesmondhalgh, David (2008). *Le industrie culturali*. Milano, Italia: Egea.
- Isnenghi, Mario (1979). *L'educazione dell'italiano. Il fascismo e l'organizzazione della cultura*. Bologna, Italia: Cappelli.
- Krashen, Stephen D. (1988). *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning*. New York, New York: Prentice-Hall International.

- Laporta, Salvatore (2008). I sistemi museali nella legislazione regionale. In L. Degrassi (Eds.), *Cultura e Istituzioni. La valorizzazione dei beni culturali negli ordinamenti giuridici* (pp. 239-278). Milano: Giuffrè.
- Maugeri, Giuseppe, & Serragiotto, Graziano (2014). Analisi sul ruolo degli istituti italiani di cultura e ipotesi di progettazione di nuovi ambienti di apprendimento a rete per la formazione on line dei docenti. *UERJ*, 5, 7-50.
- Maugeri, Giuseppe, & Serragiotto, Graziano (2014). Modello e tecniche di analisi strategica sulla qualità del corso di lingua. *LEA*, 3, 411-441.
- Mezzadri, Marco (2005). *La qualità nell'insegnamento delle lingue straniere*. Perugia, Italia: Guerra.
- Mezzadri, Marco (Eds.) (2010). *Le lingue dell'educazione in un mondo senza frontiere*. Perugia, Italia: Guerra.
- Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Direzione Generale delle Relazioni Culturali (1996). *La promozione della cultura italiana all'estero*. Roma, Italia: IPZS.
- Nardon, Erika, Orlandoni, Ornella, & Schäfer-Marini, Patrizia (Eds.) (2010). *Le nuove tendenze della didattica dell'italiano come lingua straniera e il caso della Germania*. Perugia, Italia: Guerra.
- Rolando, Stefano (Eds.) (2000). *La scuola e la comunicazione. Rapporto al Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione sulla riorganizzazione di una funzione istituzionale strategica*. Milano, Italia: FrancoAngeli.
- Santipolo, Matteo (Eds.) (2006). *L'italiano. Contesti di insegnamento in Italia e all'estero*. Torino, Italia: Utet Università.
- Sieck, Winston (2010). Cultural network analysis: Method and application. In Dylan Schmorrow, & David Nicholson (Eds.), *Advances in Cross-Cultural Decision Making* (pp. 260-269). Boca Raton, Florida: CRC Press/Taylor & Francis, Ltd.
- Vedovelli, Massimo (2006). L'italiano LS in Italia e nel mondo. La condizione delle giovani generazioni. In Immacolata Tempesta, & Maria Maggio (Eds.), *Lingue in contatto a scuola* (pp. 21-42). Milano, Italia: FrancoAngeli.

**Graziano Serragiotto, Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia**serragiotto@unive.it

---

- EN** **Graziano Serragiotto** is a researcher and the director of the ITALS (Italian as a Foreign Language) laboratory. He has worked for many years in the training of foreign language teachers, especially teachers of Italian as a foreign language. His areas of expertise are CLIL Methodology, language learning assessment, and adult education. His research also focuses on the promotion of the Italian language abroad.
- ES** **Graziano Serragiotto** es investigador y director del Laboratorio ITALS. Desde hace años se viene encargando de la formación de profesores de lenguas extranjeras y de italiano para extranjeros. Se ocupa en especial de la metodología CLIL, de la evaluación del aprendizaje lingüístico y de la enseñanza a adultos. La promoción del italiano en el extranjero es otro de los campos en los que se centra su trabajo de investigación.
- IT** **Graziano Serragiotto** è ricercatore e direttore del Lab. ITALS. Si occupa da anni della formazione docenti di lingue straniere e di italiano per stranieri. In modo particolare si occupa della metodologia CLIL, della valutazione degli apprendimenti linguistici e dell'insegnamento ad adulti. Altra area di ricerca è la promozione della lingua italiana all'estero.

**Giuseppe Maugeri, Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia**gmaugeri@unive.it

---

- EN** **Giuseppe Maugeri** is a research fellow who provides training both in Italy and abroad in fields connected to the diffusion of the Italian language and culture in the world. His research specifically deals with the strategies of language policy and the promotion of Italian culture by the Italian Cultural Institutes. He also researches the didactics of Italian as a foreign language.
- ES** **Giuseppe Maugeri** es investigador y su actividad de formador en Italia y en el extranjero está relacionada, fundamentalmente, con la difusión de la lengua y de la cultura italiana en el mundo. Se ocupa en especial de estrategias de política lingüística, de la promoción cultural de los Institutos Italianos de Cultura y de glotodidáctica del italiano como lengua extranjera.
- IT** **Giuseppe Maugeri** è assegnista di ricerca, svolge attività di formatore in Italia e all'estero su temi legati alla diffusione della lingua e della cultura italiana nel mondo. In particolare modo, si occupa delle strategie di politica linguistica e di promozione culturale degli Istituti Italiani di Cultura, e di glottodidattica dell'italiano come lingua straniera.