

Building an Archive of ELT Materials Used in the 20th Century in Italy: Preliminary Observations

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Abstract

In this paper we present a new online archive of books for English language teaching (ELT), published throughout the 20th century in Italy. No such systematic overview existed previously. Firstly, we obtained descriptive statistics of ELT literature in order to ensure that our archive features a representative sample. To gauge the level of representativeness of our archive, we queried relevant categories in the OPAC SBN and established a sampling baseline. We discuss how our sample meets the specified baseline, and how it falls short of it. The variety of metadata that we introduced for the purposes of the archive support an in-depth, multidimensional interpretation of the books. We include a case study to exemplify how this archive may be used for conducting research in the field of history of language learning and teaching. The archive also contributes to teacher education by raising awareness of pedagogical changes in ELT practices.

Keywords

History of language learning and teaching, English language teaching, digital archive, foreign language education in Italy, phenomenographic visual exploration

1. Introduction

Archives and special collections are important resources for knowledge dissemination [1, 2, 3], as they capture extensive information which is relevant for specific domains. Additionally, specialised archives represent an important layer of metadata providing fine-grained contextual details, useful for both research and practice. In this paper, we present an online archive of books used for English language teaching (henceforth ELT) in Italy throughout the 20th century, the Italy ELT Archive (henceforth IELTA)¹.

The IELTA is a two-year project started in September 2023 at the Department of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Mediations at the University of Milan. The design and development of the IELTA is based on the premise that the study of how ELT has developed in Italy inevitably passes through an overview of the learning materials available in this context [4]. To date, however, no systematic source for such information has been made available. The closest such source is the Warwick ELT Archive [5], but due to its broad scope, it has only very limited coverage of the educational materials used in Italy. Indeed, the Warwick ELT Archive is a historical collection of published and unpublished documents, available primarily offline and partially online, which trace the history of ELT and applied linguistics between the 1880s and 1990s from a predominantly British and American perspective.

The IELTA is a freely accessible resource collecting bibliographic records of materials such as course books, readers, spelling books, etc., which will help advance research into ELT history in the Italian context [6, 7, 8, 9]. While providing useful information for students and researchers interested in the field, the project will support English language teacher education with a tool enhancing teachers'

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¹<https://italy-elt-archive.unimi.it>

awareness of the principles underpinning ELT materials for Italian learners, and it will enable them to critically evaluate current teaching methods, approaches, and practices. The richness of metadata in the archive lends itself to a wide range of research methodologies, including archival and quantitative approaches [10, 11, 12], as well as qualitative ones, such as topic and content analysis [13, 14, 15].

In this paper we present the IELTA by firstly providing background information about the field of research to which it belongs, namely history of language learning and teaching (henceforth HoLLT), and by contextualising it in the area of special archives and collections for educational purposes (Section 2). Next, we outline its data model, we describe its technical platform, and we discuss fundamental issues around the design and development of the archive (Section 3). To the best of our knowledge, the IELTA is the first of its kind for the purposes it is meant to fulfil and for its variety of metadata. Therefore, we were confronted with challenges pertaining to the size of the sample. In point of fact, the IELTA does not aim to showcase Italian ELT materials production in an exhaustive fashion. Instead, its objective is to provide a representative snapshot of materials for English language learning and teaching in the 20th century that can be significant for teachers looking to consolidate and expand their knowledge of methods and approaches for ELT and their uptake in Italy. Moreover, it is our contention that a representative rather than exhaustive sample can better cater for the needs of researchers in the field of HoLLT, given the wealth of information it provides not only about the books it holds, but also about their authors and publishers. In order to reach a satisfactory level of representation, the IELTA was compared against the Open Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) of the Italian National Library Service. In order to exemplify the type of research afforded by the IELTA, we discuss a case study using phenomenographic visual exploration [16, 17]. The analysis is centred on educational changes in Italy between the 1970s and 1980s, and the impact they had on the methods and approaches applied in the books and the type of technology supporting them (Section 4). As the IELTA is still developing, we conclude with a discussion of our preliminary results, limitations of the present study, and further avenues for research.

2. Background

The research field of HoLLT has been growing considerably in the European context over the last few years [18, 19, 20, 21]. However, research into the history of ELT still needs to be expanded, especially considering its potential applications in English language teacher education [19]. Italy is a case in point, as historiographical studies conducted so far have primarily centred on French [22, 23, 24] and Spanish [25], with a focus on language teaching materials. This type of investigation would be of great value for scholarly research into the English language too.

The IELTA aims to fill this gap through the setting up of a digital archive of English language learning and teaching materials published in Italy in the 20th century [4]. The development and implementation of the IELTA follows in the footsteps of an important resource for pursuing research into the history of English language learning and teaching, i.e. the Warwick ELT Archive [5], a physical collection of ELT texts created by Prof. R. Smith in the Department of Applied Linguistics at the University of Warwick. Promotion and knowledge dissemination of the Warwick ELT Archive and its activities is supported by a website which contains a wealth of digitised contents, including books, documents, and audio-visual materials relevant to ELT history. Hence, part of the collection of the Warwick ELT Archive can be accessed online too.

While the Warwick ELT Archive is primarily physical and does not have the same depth of metadata as the IELTA (see 3.1 below), some projects have been carried out recently for the creation of archives that can be consulted online, designed with specific sets of criteria in mind. An important example is Contrastiva, a database which is part of a project led by Professor F. San Vicente at the University of Bologna [26]. The aim of Contrastiva is to trace the history of the teaching of Spanish to Italian native speakers and of Italian to Spanish native speakers from the 16th century onwards. To do that, it gives access to two digital collections, one pertaining to lexicographical publications (324 bibliographic records) and the other to grammar books (391 bibliographic records). Another relevant project is the

Eighteenth-Century English Grammars database [27], led by Dr N. Yáñez-Bouza (University of Vigo) and Dr M. E. Rodríguez-Gil (University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria), which contains bibliographic records of materials for native speakers (323 items), as well as records about their authors (275 items). The bibliographic records of the grammar books in the EGEN database rely on a rich set of metadata attributes (21 in total, some with further sub-classifications)², which refer not only to the characteristics of the books themselves (e.g. their title, year, place of publication, target audience), but they also provide information about their writers (e.g. name, gender, occupation), and the sources consulted for analysing the books (e.g. bibliographies, studies, and other scholarly publications); information about the sources is provided to assist other scholars conducting further research in the field [28].

As mentioned above, one of the prime objectives of the IELTA is to support English language teacher education in the Italian local context. The value of archives and special collections for pedagogical purposes, especially in the humanities, has been the object of scholarly discussion for several decades, and it began before the introduction and subsequent spread of digital archives [29, 30]. Publishing primary sources online means that they can be disseminated more widely, thus extending their participation framework beyond their traditional academic audience. Furthermore, the conviction that physical primary sources are more effective in engaging students than digitised ones has been challenged, suggesting that online archives can provide students with an equally valuable learning experience, provided that issues related to search interface are properly addressed, and that the sources are given the right amount of contextual information, which may be lacking online [31].

The adoption of archives and special collections in learning settings is particularly student-centred, as it helps develop students' skills in researching, investigating, and analysing [30]. Indeed, the use of primary sources engages students in a process of discovery that goes beyond the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student [32]. Other positive outcomes of working with archives and special collections are better information retention and the development of metacognitive skills. The latter, in particular, are fostered by the use of primary sources in real-life tasks that prompt students' reflection on both their achievements and areas for improvement [33]. Further skills that may be acquired pertain to information evaluation, critical thinking, and independent research [34].

The literature to date has focused on the application of archives and special collection in primary, secondary, and higher education, mostly to teach history and social sciences [32, 35, 36, 37, 34], and, to a lesser degree, other disciplines within the humanities such as English, religion, political science, and architecture [38]. Instruction based on primary sources in higher education appears to involve undergraduates rather than postgraduates. Indeed, the former are, in general, less familiar with archives and special collections than the latter, who instead are more likely to be involved in archival research as part of their academic career [39]. To the best of our knowledge, there is a gap regarding the use of primary sources for teacher training, including the training of pre-service and in-service teachers of foreign languages. However, in the field of HoLLT there is growing awareness that investigation of primary sources such as learning and teaching materials can aid in uncovering the nexus between theoretical aspects of language education, such as the description of methods and approaches for teaching languages, and their implementation in the teaching practice, as influenced by the local and historical context surrounding those materials [20, 4]. Therefore, a need has emerged for integrating the study of materials in foreign language teacher education, which will benefit from the use of specifically designed archives and special collections. This obviously elicits questions pertaining to the fundamental criteria for the design of such resources as well as those challenges which may emerge during their development.

When creating an archive such as the IELTA, exhaustiveness is hardly possible due to the considerable number of primary sources. In order to make sure that the featured materials are representative of the available literature in the field, it is necessary to turn to broader, more exhaustive catalogues as a point of reference. In Italy, thanks to the work of the Central Institute for the Union Catalogue of Italian Libraries and for Bibliographic Information (ital. abbr. ICCU), this type of resource is represented by the Open

²The complete list of metadata attributes and their subdivisions can be consulted at https://varieng.helsinki.fi/CoRD/corpora/ECEG/basic.html#database_entries.

Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) of the Italian National Library Service (SBN - Servizio Bibliotecario Nazionale). The OPAC lends itself to automated extraction of bibliographic data³, but certain historical limitations need to be considered. In particular, despite the existence of systematic efforts to catalogue entries in Italy at least since the late 19th century, it is not until the fourth edition of the corresponding manual published in 1979 that a consistent representation of published literature in SBN has been obtained [40]. Continuous archival and integration efforts have provided some retrospective coverage of published materials, yet there is a noticeable gap both in quality and quantity before the 1970s, and semantic subject indexing was introduced only in the 1990s, drawing from a Soggettario from the 1950s [41].

3. Overview of the Archive

The IELTA builds on the physical collection available at the Department of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Mediations at the University of Milan, with the addition of books consulted in Italian libraries (see 3.4), and it provides a representative coverage of the literature used for ELT in Italy throughout the 20th century. As such, it aims not only to provide bibliographic information about a relevant selection of materials, but also details about, for instance, their authors, target learners, and methods and approaches adopted in the materials themselves. It also offers previews of book covers, tables of contents, and sample pages. It is intended to be used both for research and education purposes, especially with reference to teacher training, as indicated in the previous section.

To provide a comprehensive account of the IELTA, below we describe the developed data model, the technical realisation, the methodology for selecting the represented materials, as well as the contents featured so far.

3.1. Featured Data Model

Rather than a standard bibliographic knowledge base, we were interested in the pedagogical motivations and implications of the entries in the archive. Thus we elaborated additional metadata and taxonomies to be included with the data entries. The archive comprises entities not only for the books sampled, but also for their authors and publishers, as shown in Figure 1. As for the authors, we were interested in their professional background and their country of origin. Such information was retrieved from the paratextual contents of the materials, or by conducting further online research. By doing so we were able to compile a list of relevant professional typologies, and a list of countries. As for the publishers, information about their primary location was obtained by bringing together data from different online sources (e.g. the websites of the publishers and entries in the Treccani encyclopedia⁴).

As for the books, we aimed to provide a multifaceted description (see Figure 1). This was obtained by developing a framework for investigating the materials which draws inspiration from the metadata attributes in the EGEC database (see Section 2), and that takes into account the literature on the analysis of language teaching materials [42, 43, 44]. On the one side, this considers the context of use of the materials (e.g. education level), also providing information about the learner typology they target (e.g. their age, proficiency level); on the other, it focuses on elements that are related to the materials “as they are” [43, p.64], including information about their production (e.g. year and place of publication), physical aspects (e.g. number of pages, use of visuals) and, most importantly, aspects connected to the use of the materials as “an aid to teaching and learning a foreign language” [42, p.182], such as their methodology and content. Thus, the metadata attributes implemented in the IELTA, are indicative of the overall design of the books, which were investigated in-depth, including both their textual and paratextual components (e.g. tables of contents, prefaces, introductions). Since the IELTA is meant as a tool for raising teachers’ awareness regarding the principles underlying ELT materials production in the Italian context, the attributes related to the methods are of primary importance. These were

³An example of such extraction is featured in Ruskov and Sullam [16].

⁴<https://www.treccani.it>

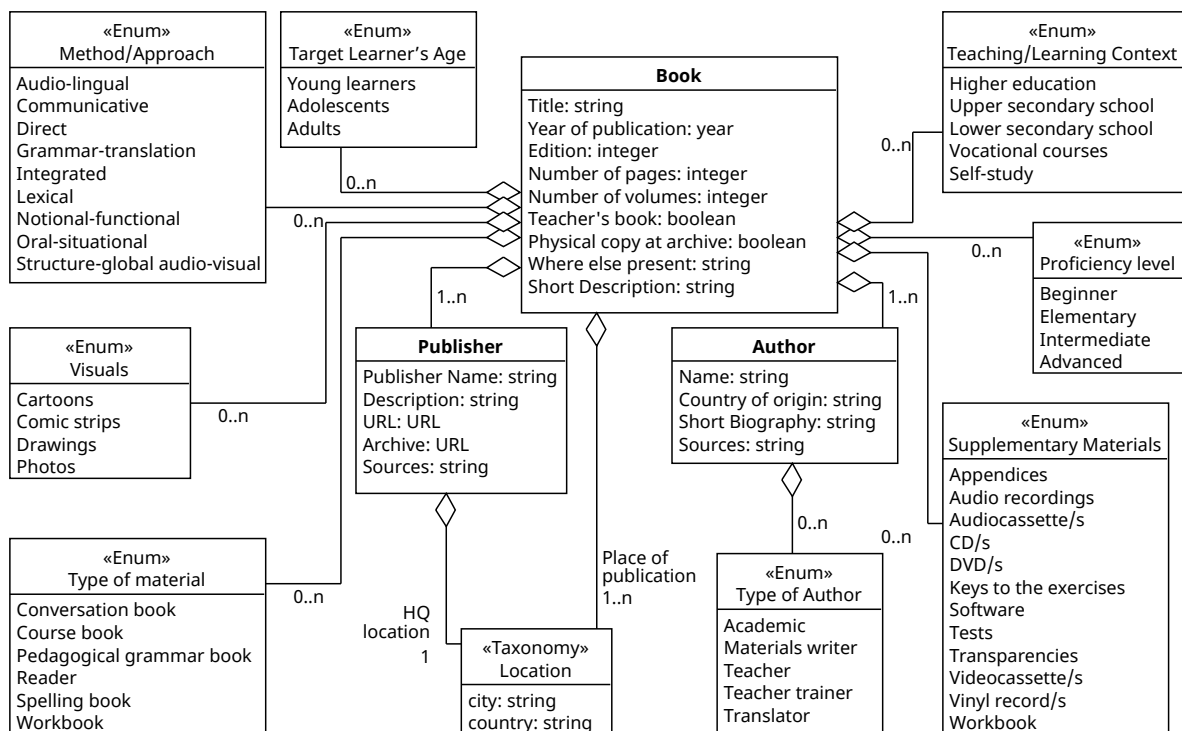


Figure 1: IELTS data model shown as an UML class diagram.

identified from the literature around methods and approaches for foreign language teaching [45, 46, 47]. In this sense, the books were analysed focusing, for example, on the type of activities they include and the techniques used for the exercises. The analysis also took into account statements made by the authors regarding their methodological choices, as can be read in the prefaces and introductions (when present) of the books. Further attributes indicate the availability of supplementary materials and a teacher's book. These convey a more precise idea of the realisation of the materials in terms of additional resources which will support both learners and teachers [48, 49, 50].

Finally, the archive also features short descriptions of the items, hyperlinks to secondary sources, and scanned book extracts, which allow for qualitative exploration of the archive contents.

3.2. Technical Platform

For the implementation, free and open source platforms were considered, so that we could benefit from the accumulated experience of other projects. One notable option we considered is Omeka⁵, which is seen as a standard solution for catalogues and archives. However, due to our analytical purposes and richness of our data, which differ from standard bibliographic knowledge graphs (such as Dublin Core and MARC), we preferred to use a platform that allows experimentation without the need of an a priori definition of a new domain ontology.

Another platform that is adopted widely and has good usability and maintainability is WordPress [51], therefore we considered solutions building on it. Our final choice, Tainacan⁶, is an extension of WordPress that has been used for a number of bibliographic catalogues [52]. It allowed for the exact representation of the model from Figure 1. It also helped map record metadata to standard ontologies (thus, in the future, support for linked open data may be added) and afforded modifications of the model during data entry when necessary.

⁵<https://omeka.org>

⁶<https://tainacan.org>

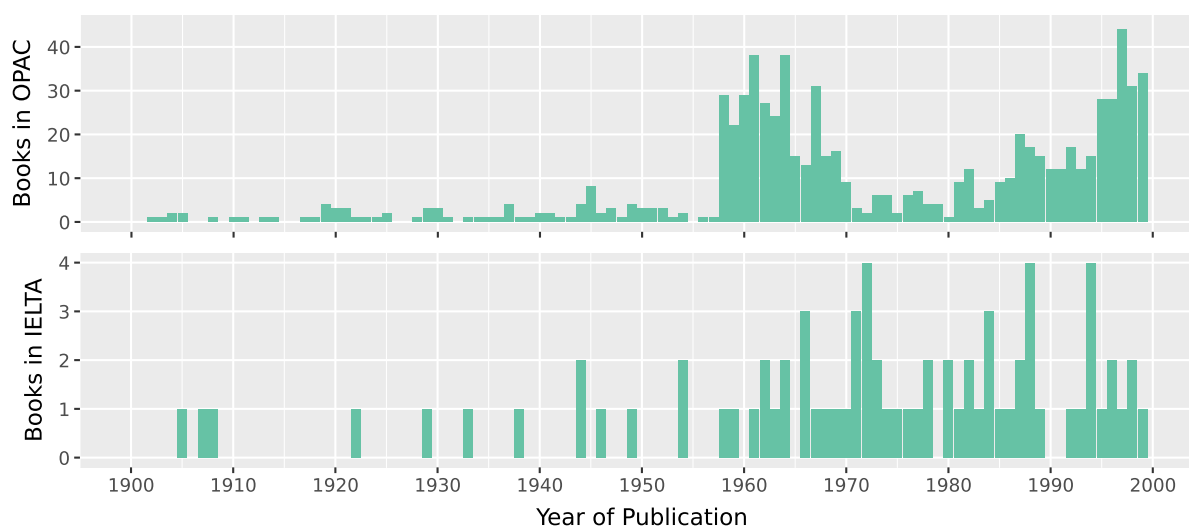


Figure 2: Distribution of the books over the years. Above: books available in the OPAC after data cleanup. Below: books in the Italy ELT Archive.

3.3. Selection of materials

Due to the absence of previous systematic research, we had no information about the overall patterns of publications of ELT literature in Italy. This posed a challenge to our objective of ensuring that the materials in our archive are a representative sample of an exhaustive baseline, at least according to attributes that we can verify, i.e. the year of publication of the books, their place of publication, and publishers.

To address this issue, we extracted bibliographic data from the OPAC SBN to serve as our representation baseline. A sample of subjects that reflect the thematic scope in our archive was selected. To this end, we considered the major subject categories in the OPAC, related to the English language (“lingua inglese” in the catalogue) and selected for extraction those that appeared to contain materials related to ELT. From this list, we extracted all categories that the OPAC interface indicated to contain more than 30 items. Thus, 10 subcategories and a total of 1981 items (with repetitions) were extracted, as detailed in Appendix A.

As a next step, duplicates and irrelevant items were removed. For our purposes, we deemed relevant only monographs (the term used in the OPAC, equivalent to the term “books” used in this paper), published in Italy in the 20th century, and written in Italian, English or a combination of the two languages. In the case of books with multiple editions, only the first one (chronologically) was retained. Additionally, abridged works of fiction were discarded. This resulted in 786 books with a provided year of publication, which we adopted as a baseline for our sample. The temporal distribution of these is shown in the upper graph in Figure 2.

In terms of publishers, the extracted sample displays a very rich variety which reflects the book market segmentation during most of the 20th century. This slowly began to change in the post-war period when a process of consolidation started in the publishing industry [53]. Nevertheless, the publishers which are most represented in our selection are Zanichelli (48 books), Valmartina (32 books), Le Monnier (27 books), and Minerva (21 books). However, due to the aforementioned segmentation, we also looked at the place of publication of the books, in addition to the publishers themselves. These show a clearer tendency, with 185 books (about 25%) published in Milan, followed by Florence and Bologna with 102 books each (about 13%) and Turin with 82 books (about 10%).

For the selection in our digital archive we had the physical archive in our department as a starting point. However, in order for our digital archive to appropriately match the described baseline distribution, we identified gaps in our physical sample and searched additional materials to fill them. For this purpose,

collections hosted in libraries in Florence, Modena, and Cremona were consulted, and this process is still ongoing.

3.4. Results

Currently, the IELTA holds 78 books, 115 authors and 42 publishers. Among these, we are interested in obtaining a representative sample of books published in Italy in the 20th century. In the IELTA, these account for 75 of the book titles present in the catalogue. Distribution over time is shown in the second graph in Figure 2.

The main concern in terms of representation of the IELTA is the relatively small number of entries in the first half of the century. However, this corresponds to the distribution in OPAC. Such a low proportion of recorded books may not be entirely due to lower production rates and less systematic educational demand, but also to historical circumstances and scarcities of archival practices. Regardless of the reason, our objective is to provide a sample of what is available in the OPAC, and therefore we argue that the data in the IELTA align well with it.

A more focused observation of the data currently present in the archive reveals a gap in the 1910s. Whereas this is very similar to the low representation in the OPAC, there are two clear reasons why further representation in the IELTA is needed. One is that even if there are few preserved materials, at least one sample should be included to represent these. The second reason is that low numbers in the OPAC may be due to poor preservation, rather than lack of publications. Another misalignment between the OPAC data and our archive is seen in the peaks around the years 1960 and 2000. The first one could possibly be explained by the fact that, whereas we filtered library holdings by earliest editions possible, about 25% of the books in our archive are second or later editions, which leads to what may appear as a delayed publication date in the IELTA. Similarly, later editions of books that were first published in the late 1990s would have subsequent editions in the 2000s and thus were not selected for inclusion in our archive. Despite these plausible considerations, further work is needed to improve representation in these three cases.

Similarly to the data from the OPAC, the most common cities of publication are Milan (21 books, or 27% of the books in the IELTA) and Turin (17 books, or 22%). These are followed by Florence and Bologna, each having 11 books, or about 14% of all the books in the archive. This means that Turin has a higher degree of representation in the archive than in the baseline. The other cities are in line with the OPAC data. The same applies to the publishers Zanichelli (10 books) and Valmartina (8 books), which are the most represented ones. The fact that Turin is an outlier is motivated by reasons related to the expansion of our sample. Thirteen books are stored in our physical archive, while five were consulted in Italian libraries. Three books were added because they fill gaps in the distribution of the year of publication (the books were published respectively in 1929, 1946, and 1968). One book was added because it exemplifies an important type of material published between the 1980s and 1990s, i.e. the pedagogical grammar book (see the discussion in 4.2).

4. Case Study

To illustrate the opportunities that the IELTA affords, in this section we explore how it reflects the developments between the 1960s and 1980s that gave rise to shifts in the adoption of methods and approaches for foreign language education. While part of these developments may be due to technological advancements that made the use of new media much more accessible, it is hypothesised that an important role was played by the radical changes characterising foreign language education in Italy in the 1970s [54, 55, 9].

4.1. Educational changes in Italy between the 1970s and 1980s

The educational changes taking place in Italy between the 1970s and the 1980s had their premises in the reform put in place in the 1960s, which transformed lower secondary school by introducing a unified

three-year system that abolished the vocational option first introduced in 1859. In this scenario, revised national syllabuses were published for lower secondary education which ushered in methodological shifts in foreign language teaching. These shifts, however, unfolded slowly because of inconsistencies contained in the syllabuses themselves [54, 55]. On the one side, the value of learning foreign languages for practical purposes was highlighted, while also stressing the importance of pronunciation and oral skills to be improved using technological resources (e.g. films and recordings); on the other, the approach to be applied in the classroom was based on the use of dictation, translation, and the reading of poems and literary passages [54, 55]. This was in line with views of foreign language teaching rooted in the long-standing tradition of grammar-translation in the Italian context. As regards technology in the classroom, the lack of proper equipment in schools represented a major barrier to its adoption [55].

More radical changes took place between the 1970s and the 1980s thanks to the introduction of the New National Syllabus for lower secondary school in 1979, which, in foreign language teaching, was inspired by the concept of *educazione linguistica* (language education). This concept, theorised in 1975 by linguists and researchers belonging to the Gruppo di Intervento e Studio nel Campo dell'Educazione Linguistica (GISCEL – Intervention and Study Group in the area of Language Education), was first applied to the teaching of Italian as a native language, but it was soon extended to foreign languages, to emphasise their usefulness in a variety of communicative functions and forms [9].

This conceptualisation of foreign language teaching also reflected the outcomes of the research conducted at the Council of Europe in the 1970s, which contributed to the spread of communicative language teaching (CLT). In 1971 the Council started the Modern Languages Project which aimed to introduce a unit/credit system for modern language learning by adults [56]. This system was supported by recommendations for intensified programs covering education at all levels. Such recommendations regarded, among others, the use of authentic materials, research into aspects which influence language acquisition and learning and teaching at all ages, the development of syllabuses for all learners, and the analysis of specialised language. In this context, the needs of learners are defined in terms of language situations (involving agents, time, and place) and the functions that a communicative act has to fulfill, the objects to which it relates, and the means to produce the act itself [56].

4.2. Phenomenographic visual exploration

Analysis carried out on the IELTA indicates the extent to which the changes taking place in language education impacted ELT materials production in Italy. We employed phenomenographic visual exploration as a method for our analysis [16, 17]. This is a method that draws on the structure of metadata attributes to extract visual observations in three subsequent steps:

1. *Contrast*, in which variation within an individual metadata attribute is explored as a dimension of visualisation, temporarily disregarding the others.
2. *Separation*, in which one attribute is considered as fixed, while varying the others around it.
3. *Fusion*, in which a holistic understanding is aimed by exploring the free interplay between multiple attributes.

Whereas originally Marton [17] did not define phenomenographic variation over explicitly formalised subjects, his method readily adapts to such quantification. In our adaptation, we incrementally expand the number of metadata attributes that become dimensions of our visualisation.

Given the changes taking place around the 1970s, the year of publication of the materials appears to be an attribute (i.e. dimension of visualisation) of central interest: for instance we expect that these changes impacted the adoption of methods and approaches for foreign language teaching. Another element worth considering is the type of supplementary materials accompanying the books, since these would be influenced by both technological advancements and the recommendations made in the syllabuses (see 4.1). Based on these premises, we performed our analysis by first considering the distribution, over time, of methods and approaches in the books, then their types, and finally, we took into consideration their supplementary materials.



Figure 3: Books by aggregated approaches.

For the purpose of the analysis and to facilitate interpretation of the visualisations, we simplified our entity attributes by grouping the values into higher-level categories. One example of this is the categorisation of methods and approaches for foreign language teaching. These were grouped as follows:

1. **Language-oriented methods and approaches:** audio-lingual, direct, grammar-translation, lexical, oral-situational, structure-global audio-visual;
2. **Communication-oriented approaches:** communicative, integrated, notional-functional.

The graph in Figure 3 suggests that communication-oriented methods began to be applied in Italian materials at the end of the 1970s. Their application increased over the 1980s and 1990s, although they were paired in some cases with language-oriented methods. The co-occurrence of methods in the IELTA can be seen in more detail in Figure 4. In this figure we applied phenomenographic contrast on the methods, and we applied separation between methods and year of publication in Figure 3.

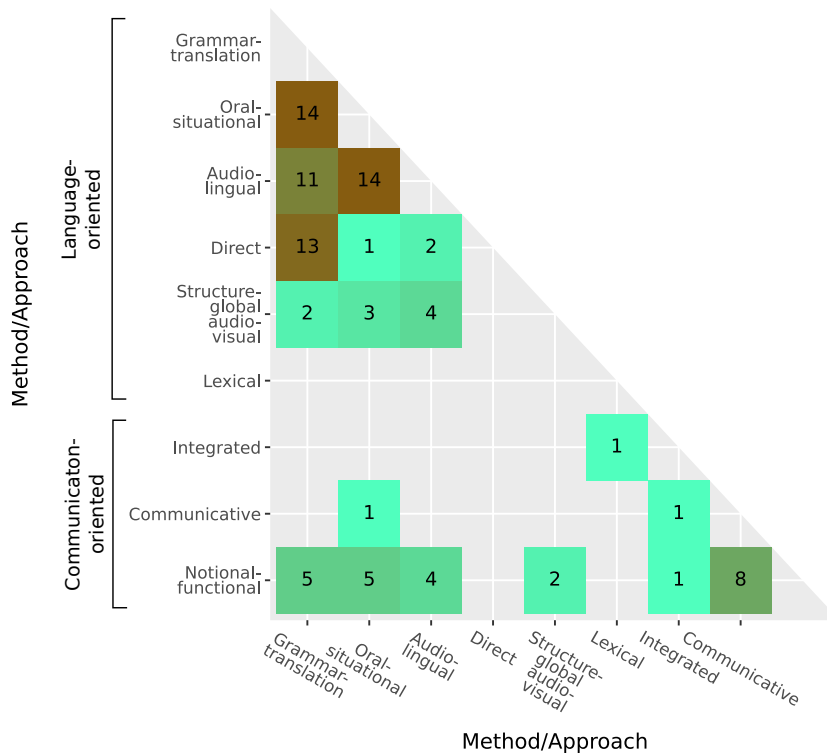


Figure 4: Correlation of approaches used together in books.

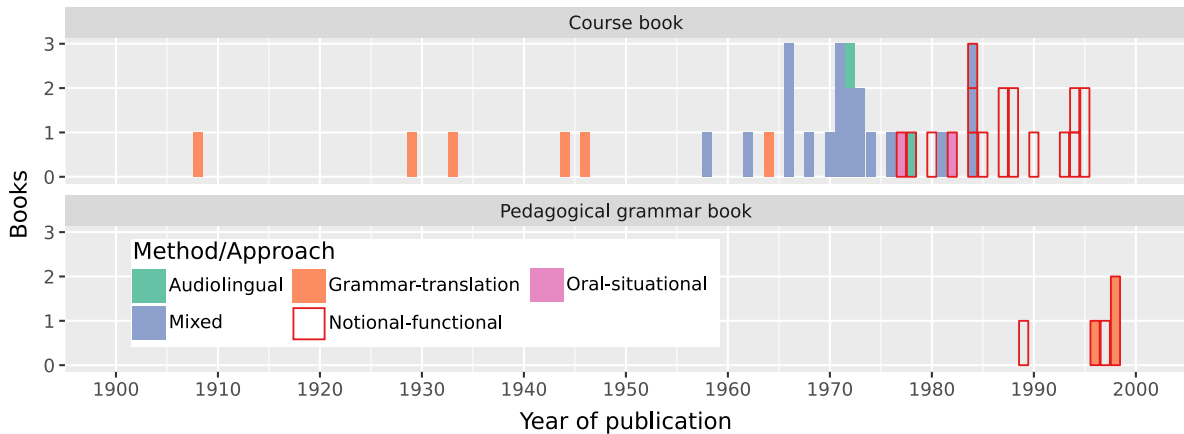


Figure 5: The temporal development of materials that combine language-oriented and communication-oriented methods. “Mixed” stands for any combination of language-oriented methods.

Whereas there appears to be a clear separation, some exceptions are apparent in the lower-left corner of the graph. One is the oral-situational method, which is language-oriented and co-occurs with the communicative and the notional-functional methods. This is, however, something that may be expected, considering that the oral-situational method has paved the way for CLT [47]. Instead, the co-occurrence of the language-oriented grammar-translation and audiolingual methods with the notional-functional method may be, at first blush, surprising. To better explain this, we apply phenomenographic separation, hence fixing the type of material and varying the method and year of publication. We considered the specific type (or genre) of the books where these methods are used in combination. The analysis showed that the materials integrating differently oriented methods are course books and pedagogical grammar books (Figure 5). As for the course books, we observe that the notional-functional method begins to be applied together with language-oriented methods in the second half of the 1970s. Then, language-oriented methods are no longer applied starting from the mid 1980s. This indicates how the Italian publishing context gradually embraced CLT in course books, as can be seen by the qualitative content analysis of the materials (see 3.1). As for the pedagogical grammar books, the situation is different, as this genre began to appear in the second half of the 1980s, and it was designed to be used alongside course books [7]. This is motivated by the resistance against CLT offered by some Italian teachers, who may have been still attached to language-oriented methods and their explicit treatment of grammar [7, 8, 9]. To cater for the preference shown by these teachers, pedagogical grammar books were published which integrated a CLT-informed approach to grammar with techniques belonging to grammar translation.

To further explore our data, we introduced groupings regarding the supplementary materials accompanying the books collected in the IELTA. This is a case of separation over the year of publication. The supplementary materials include learning aids such as workbooks and audiocassettes [50], and other resources such as the keys to the exercises in the books. These materials were grouped in terms of the semiotic modes on which they are based:

1. **Text and image:** appendices, keys to the exercises, transparencies, workbook;
2. **Audio and/or video:** audiocassettes, CDs, software, videocassettes, vinyl records.

The analysis of supplementary materials was carried out comparing data from the periods before 1980 and after, i.e. focusing on changes with respect to this year. This, indeed, appears to be a turning point in the Italian ELT materials production, considering the discussion above.

By separating the supplementary materials accompanying the books published before and after 1980 (Figure 6), it can be observed that, throughout both periods, auditory/audiovisual materials were made available more frequently than those based on text and images. The majority of those

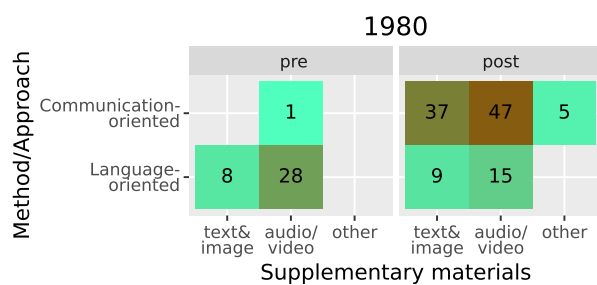


Figure 6: Correlation between approaches and supplementary materials, separated by the year 1980.

supplementary materials were published after 1980, in parallel with the spread of communication-oriented methodologies. The fact that such materials were added to books before the 1980s is motivated by the application of language oriented methods such as the audiolingual and the oral-situational one, which emphasised the importance of listening and speaking skills [45, 46, 47]. The increasing availability of auditory/visual materials in the last decades of the century may indicate authors' and publishers' increasing awareness of the importance of integrating books with additional multimodal resources, in line with recommendations that had been originally made in the national syllabuses published in the 1960s regarding the use of technologies in the foreign language classroom. At the time, however, these technologies were not readily accessible to teachers because of lack of equipment in schools [55], as mentioned in 4.1. We hypothesise that it took several years for reducing barriers to the use of such technologies in the classroom.

When we applied the third step of phenomenographic visualisations - fusion, we looked more closely at the supplementary materials, the methods, and the distribution of the books over time (Figure 7). The graph shows how workbooks stand out as an important text and image learning aid after the 1980s, accompanying communication-oriented materials. As regards auditory aids, vinyl records were used, although sparsely, before the 1980s. They were later, though slowly, replaced by audiocassettes and, to a lesser extent, by videocassettes and software. Similarly to workbooks, audiocassettes are primarily a feature of communication-oriented materials, although in few cases they supplemented language-oriented books too.

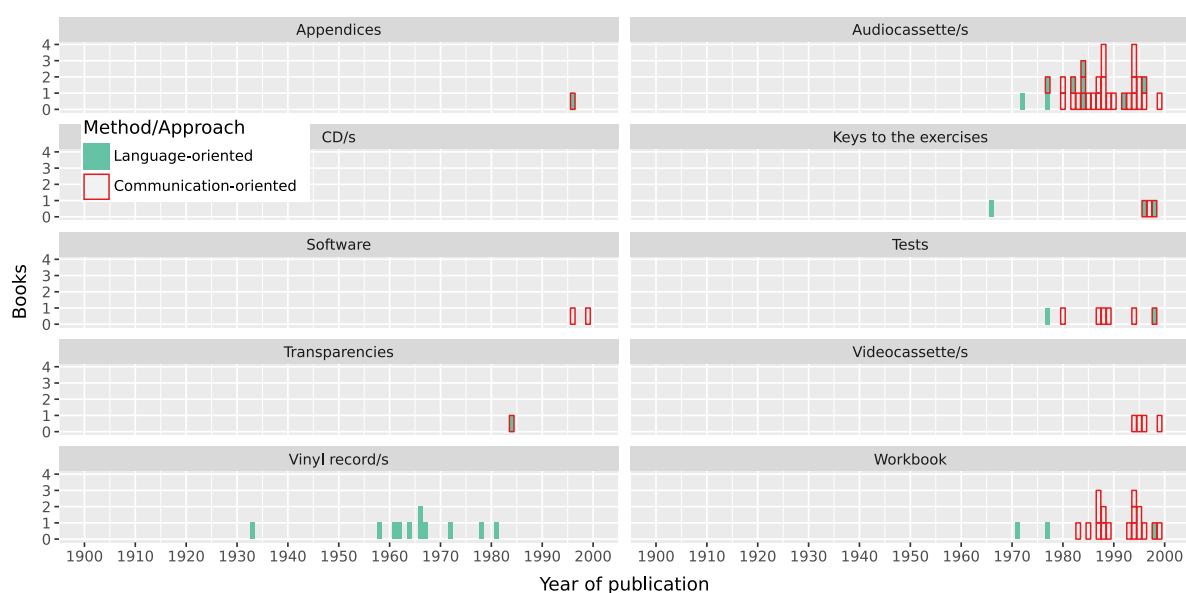


Figure 7: A breakdown of supplementary materials accompanying books in the IELTA, based on their publication date and method.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper we have presented the Italy ELT Archive, which is the first of its kind to have such detailed attributes about its collection of foreign language learning materials. This makes it a semantically rich resource, which is growing continuously. Despite the limited number of records it includes at the moment, the IELTA allows for combined in-depth quantitative and qualitative investigations, both for the purposes of publishing and of educational research. After our validation, we can confirm that this archive provides a representative sample of ELT literature published in Italy in the 20th century. However, by comparing the distribution of materials over time with the data from the OPAC, some minor deviations were identified. As a consequence, three time intervals were identified as needing further additions: the 1910s, the 1960s, and the late 1990s. A further deviation we identified regards the representation of places of publications in the IELTA. In our data Turin is the second most represented city, while in the OPAC it is the fourth. We hypothesise that we may be able to correct this deviation by expanding our sample with books published in other cities.

In the case study, we illustrated how data from the archive could be used to conduct focused quantitative investigations. In the process, we illustrated the first steps of how well-documented historical phenomena could be exhibited and observed in the archive data through exploratory data visualisations.

Having explored the IELTA in terms of changes in language methodology and in the adoption of supplementary materials, questions for conducting further research arise. For example, the data could be queried to identify the co-occurrence of the supplementary materials with certain methods and types of books. Another pathway for research is analysing the co-occurrence of methods and type of author. The research could be expanded to consider the presence of visuals in the materials, and the availability of a teacher's book.

We have identified three other possible directions of future research. The digitised sample pages in the archive would enable research into the book contents. This could be carried out by means of content analysis techniques to study the structure of the books as presented in their tables of contents, or to study their approaches as exhibited by the sample lessons.

A final, promising direction for research would be extending the analysis to the other entities represented in the archive, namely Authors and Publishers collections. In the case of the authors, diachronic changes in the occupations represented in the IELTA could be explored. In the case of the publishers, the role of the places of publications could be investigated. Finally, a focus on the authors and the publishers has the potential to illuminate the historical role of particular individuals and organisations in the developments of ELT in Italy.

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A. Appendix

The table shows categories deemed relevant and the corresponding data collected from the OPAC. The counter column indicates numbers in each category in the OPAC interface, from which only categories indicating more than 30 were selected for data extraction.

Subsection	Counter
lingua inglese - grammatica	560
lingua inglese - testi scolastici	442
lingua inglese - manuali	249
lingua inglese - manuali di conversazione	197
lingua inglese - manuali di corrispondenza commerciale	154
lingua inglese - apprendimento	97
lingua inglese - manuali per italiani	92
lingua inglese - pronuncia	76
lingua inglese - lessico	66
lingua inglese - temi di versione	48