

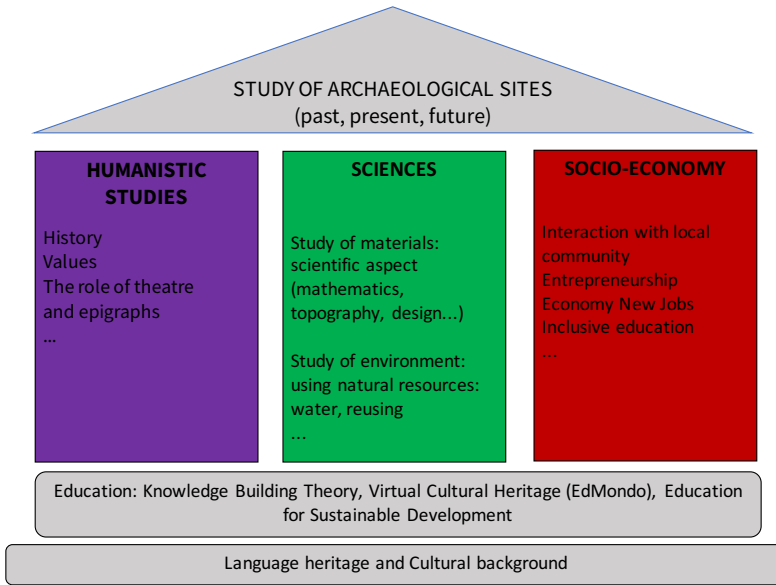
## **Archaeoschool for the Future: Teaching Modern Languages on Ancient Roots**

Caterina Carpinato  
(Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia)

### **1 Archaeoschool for the Future: a Sustainable Approach. A General Overview**

'Archaeoschool for the future: a sustainable approach' is a European project (ERASMUS+ KA2 Strategic Partnership 2015-1-EL01-KA201-013937) (2015-2018). It aims to connect six secondary schools and four other institutions from three different countries (Spain, Greece and Italy) within an archaeological context. It uses ICTs and spoken languages to bring Greek and Roman sites to life, in order to understand the present and build the future. The project uses archaeological sites from Greco-Roman times in three closely linked areas of Europe as a basis for developing a strategic approach to strengthening the links between the schools and their local environments, deepening concepts of local and European identity and improving the employment opportunities of young people. The project uses the spoken languages of the three countries involved as tools for understanding our common roots and the role of Greek and Latin in both the ancient Mediterranean and in modern times.

Our project can be represented by this image that reproduces a Greek temple on two solid bases: the first consists of linguistic heritage and cultural background; the second provides the teaching methodologies that develop the knowledge and study of the ancient and modern world through knowledge building theory, virtual cultural heritage (EdMondo) and education for sustainable development. The three main pillars of research and learning experiences developed during the three years of the project (humanities and linguistic studies, sciences and socio-environmental analyses) aim at the realisation of a wide and structured knowledge of archaeological and linguistic heritage, valued not only as documentation of the past but also as a concrete testimony of the present and a prospect for the future.



The ‘temple’ of the project

### The Principal Issues

For generations a classical education was considered a privilege for the few, not the many, but its revival in schools is underway. In the past (and also in our own time) classical education was often synonymous with elitism, and could be represented as a pure, shining white (the light, perhaps, of cold reason). Nowadays every museum tries to tell a different story: the classical world was multicolour. This chromatically different approach can allow us to make contact with our Greek and Latin cultural heritage in a different way. The use of colours and everyday words can be used to support a new teaching experience of the European classical past.

It is well known that classical subjects and classical languages equip pupils with critical thinking and language skills: we need different tools to read and examine them. Our project tries to illustrate our archaeological and cultural-linguistic heritage for the new generation, with its differing impacts on the past, the present of our everyday life and the future. Our students and ourselves study the meaning of the past in our lives and its conscious application in the present. The past, or the application of the past in the present, is a guarantee for our future, and an uninterrupted line which connects our lives with our entire history. It is the discovery of our cultural DNA.

During the three years of our project the Venetian team has worked with words and stones, dipping not only into linguistic heritage but working also on ancient theatre and on Greek and Latin epigraphic texts. We offer analysis and lessons of four spoken languages (Italian, Catalan/Spanish, Modern Greek) and a reflection on the role of ancient Greek and Latin as vehicular languages in the past.

## 2 Archaeological Heritage / Cultural-linguistic Heritage

Many of the marbles, stones and archaeological ruins are now so fragmentary, or so distant from their place of origin, that it is hard to imagine they once had an active role, function and life. Many literary texts are now damaged, or so complicated and distant from our sensibility that we have no instruments (linguistic or theoretical) with which to analyse them. Inscriptions on stones, ancient ruins and archaeological sites stand in front of our eyes but we are unable to properly see and understand them. As a consequence, we are unable to properly appreciate them and to use them without abusing them. We have, in short, become unable to *love* them.

The gap between classical languages and modern languages in European countries has, in recent decades (even in Italy where the situation is somewhat different), become ever wider.

Something similar has happened to the words that we use to communicate in our everyday life. We are unable to reconnect them with the long histories of languages, with words that have endured from the past of our Mediterranean cultural heritage. Stones are heavy, and words may be heavier still, but we are losing our ability to understand the weight of these words.

Given these assumptions, I decided – together with my students – to begin with the analysis of the areas surrounding the partners of the project (Venice-Verona, Barcelona-Tarragona, Kalamata-Ancient Messene).

Our aims were to open our eyes to see how the past is both concrete and in front of us, and to open our ears to hear how our words are in direct continuity with the classical languages that we are unable to understand. We aimed to use our bodies, our senses, our feelings in a multimedial way, using our skills to reveal the knowledge of a cultural and linguistic heritage that has become hidden from us.

Using our eyes and ears we wished to understand the archaeological remains *in situ* (historical analysis, historical archaeology, environmental impact assessment, relief and reconstruction of the monuments) and to find deeper meanings in our everyday language. We also wanted to study the assessment of the state of conservation or degradation; to push forward proposals for conservation and the reuse (where possible) of the archaeological environment.

Too many purposes, perhaps, but so many testimonies of the past are in front of our eyes and so many of the echoes and sounds that surround us come from the ancient oral tradition. It is time to start to look and listen to them again.

### **3 Ancient Theatres of Messini, Tarragona and Verona: Words and Stones**

To better define our focus we decided to investigate three ancient Roman theatres in depth, located in ancient Messini, Tarragona and Verona : areas where people involved with the project live, work and spend their time. After antiquity, these theatres fell silent and lost their function for many centuries. Archaeological research in modern times gave them back their identity and role. Their new aspect, however, is far away from that of ancient times. It was a challenge for both our students and those of us in charge of the project, to reflect on the different lives of the ruins of the ancient Roman theatres, and at the same time to analyse how they are used and perceived in the modern day. We also tried to study our spoken language in the context of the lines of continuity from Ancient Greek and Latin, to reflect on our linguistic and cultural heritage.

During the three year project, students and teachers reproduced these archaeological sites in 3D, on a virtual platform using the EDMONDO method (<https://www.edmodo.com/>). They also had the opportunity to study some Modern Greek, Italian, Catalan and Spanish, and to encounter some literary texts from Ancient Greek and Latin.

Words and stones had, and continue to have, a powerful function in the areas around the ancient theatres; as we can see from the languages spoken today which have evolved from the spoken languages of the past.

The analyses of archaeological and linguistic terminology are useful tools to understand the present *status* of the ancient context, and to interpret how and why the past is ideologically connected with the present. All these ideological and theoretical assumptions are focused on the attempt to build our future on stones and words.

### **4 Handbook: Working on Words**

We prepared a specific handbook for the students of our project and language MOOC, beginning with a digital version which was then printed in 2016. The present text represents a new revised edition. The intention was to create a didactic tool, a useful instrument for the classroom but also for self-study of languages and cultures.

The so-called *ARCHAEOBOOK 'The stones also speak'* aims to improve basic competencies in archaeology and linguistics. It is a simple text which proposes a different way of looking at and listening to our surrounding world. The ancient theatres utilized were and are located in real spaces. In ancient theatres, as in modern ones, speech is based on written texts. Their stones, their physical presence, their architectural dimensions help words and thoughts to circulate around and to provoke reactions.

Our efforts were connected with the understanding of language structures at different linguistic levels, environmental impact assessment, examination of the internal elements of the languages, and specific lexicology in an archaeological context. We analysed the use, the evolution and transformation of the languages; and put forward proposals for conscious use of modern languages and their conservation and development within a general context of forced Anglicisation. Every small didactic linguistic unit is also connected with the themes of sustainability and respect for the environment.

### Not Only English

Basic knowledge of other languages beyond English (even ancient Greek and Latin) and a deep understanding of the mother tongue are necessary to:

- Understand our language and our history;
- Reconsider the importance of the study of the evolution of national languages;
- Comprehend other languages and the nature of 'the other'.

The *Archaeobook* aims to explore why and when 'ancient Greek' and 'Latin' had the same function as contemporary English, and to be a useful instrument for:

- The reading and understanding of ancient and modern monuments in our country and in the partner countries;
- A deeper comprehension of the great similarities but also great differences between the ancient Greeks and the Romans and ourselves.

This book aims to help students to reflect on themselves, their language knowledge and their cultural background; and to offer a flavour of foreign lives, languages and cultural heritage. In our multicultural society, we consider this to be the basic requirement for the social sharing of common goods such as historical and cultural heritage, linguistic and literary testimonies, territories and monuments.

## 5 **It is Never Too Late.** ***Archaeobook* for Multilinguistic Competencies**

The team I directed compiled this handbook in order to improve language and cultural learning during the three year programme (2015-18). It aims to help us to properly look at those monuments which are part of our everyday life, to analyse and understand their history; and to give value to their present aspect and respect to their whole context.

We wish to preserve our languages, and to learn others (beyond English) including historical Greek and Latin. We want to develop language skills.

- This handbook is for those students from the three different countries involved in the programme: at the end of the course each student should be better able to use his/her own language (whilst also studying some ancient Greek and Latin) and to understand and speak, at a basic level, the languages of the other countries. At the end of this learning experience pupils should be able to introduce themselves in each others' language, the better to understand each other, with at least an A1-A2 level of competency.
- Studying a foreign language, like Italian, Spanish, Catalan and Modern Greek is not only useful for achieving linguistic competence in a second language: it is also a historical journey within our language.

## 6 **MOOC: not Only Face to Face Lessons, not Only Paper and Books**

Given that it was impossible to teach languages in the traditional way (with face to face lessons and supporting textbooks), we took the opportunity to register a MOOC on the [www.edupen.org](http://www.edupen.org) platform. The course aims to provide the basic elements of four European languages (Italian, Spanish, Catalan and Modern Greek). The MOOC consists of three different steps: an introductory section (with 5 lessons on multilingualism, Ancient Greek and Latin), an intermediate section (in modern Greek, which is the presentation of the complete handbook) and a language section with the same materials in the four different languages (Carpinato's edited text is recorded by Italian Ca' Foscari students in the 2016 e-book *The stones also speak*).

Our MOOC aims to enhance European multilingualism and to raise students' awareness of the historical importance of languages and their evolution. The course provides some reflections on the role of language and the historical and cultural function of Ancient Greek and Latin in the Mediterranean, which were languages of culture, trade, power and exchange.

The main objective is to determine a conscious linguistic sensitivity: multilingualism is a precious resource and not a barrier.

## 7 I Know My Land and Yours; I Learn My Language and Yours; I Respect Myself and Yourself; I Build Our Future with You

Four simple steps:

1. I know my land and yours: I open my eyes and I look around me to see how my environment is speaking to me. I see the monuments of the past in my land (Verona and Veneto) in a dynamic way and I try to see and understand their unity. I open my eyes to see other towns and archaeological environments (in Tarragona-Catalonia and in Kalamata-Peloponnese).
2. I learn my language and yours: I know that my spoken language (Italian) came mostly from Latin; I know that your spoken languages (Catalan, Spanish and Modern Greek) are the natural evolution of Latin and Ancient Greek; I know that Ancient Greek and Latin were languages equivalent to contemporary English in the past; I know that by using your language I can speak to you in a different way; and that a few words in our spoken languages may be more useful for our human contact than a rich formal speech in Standard English.
3. I respect myself and yourself: I learn to respect myself, my history, my roots; I see the multilinguistic and multicultural experience as a historical phenomenon and not as a contemporary problem; I respect myself and yourself by respecting the environment.
4. I build our future with you. We offer some tools and ideas, *words and stones*: but it is up to you to use them and to find other solutions.

Since the very beginning of the project the focus has been on reaching a more conscious perception of our surrounding historical-archaeological heritage; on evaluating the environment in which daily life takes place; on the appreciation of the importance of spoken languages and of their historical evolution; and evaluating the evidence of being able to communicate in the languages of others. The use of a third vehicular language (English in contemporary life, but Greek and Latin in the ancient Mediterranean) is compulsory but - at the same time- approaching others in their native language means that human contact is deeper. A more profound knowledge of the surrounding environment and native language allows one to respect oneself in a conscious way and to establish common points for planning the future together. Self-respect is a good basis for the respect of the others. It is not an egotistic attitude.

A conscious linguistic sensitivity allows us to develop the ability to analyse our mother tongue; to actively translate other foreign languages; to understand the history of these languages; to reflect on the common linguistic structures among Indo-European languages; to enhance the dimension of multilingualism; to think about the role of the spoken languages of the present and the past; and to understand the historico-social and political importance of the active use of spoken languages as an expressive tool for civic co-existence.

Basic knowledge of modern languages such as Italian, Catalan, Spanish and Modern Greek (or a contact with ancient Greek and Latin through the reading of ancient texts) will help to:

- Understand our language and our history;
- Re-think the importance of the study of the evolution of these national languages;
- Understand why ancient languages are still alive;
- Understand both other languages and the 'other';
- Understand why and when 'ancient Greek' and 'Latin' had the same function as contemporary English in everyday life;
- Read ancient and modern documents in our country and in the countries of the Mediterranean basin;
- Understand both the similarities and differences between ourselves and the ancient Greeks and the Romans.
- Allow students to reflect on themselves and the lives of others: this is an important quality in our multicultural society.

## **8 The 'target Student' and 'ancient Supporters': the Future is in the Past and in the Present**

This educational tool is for use with groups of students with whom an individual and systematic approach is not possible. We cannot offer a complete cycle of specific lessons on languages and cultures of the ancient world, nor a linguistic manual for learning Italian, Catalan, Spanish and modern Greek that could satisfy every need. Questions have therefore arisen: whether to abandon any approach to Greek and Latin cultural and linguistic heritage, to attempt a minimalist solution, or to devise an 'experiment' that presents some examples that may be appropriate to the sensitivity of the 'target' student of the project.

- The target student of the proposed teaching material, the 'number one' student, is a young person in training, between the ages of 16 and 17, who does not have to attend the course due to scholastic obligations, but by individual choice (or at the invitation of teachers) in order to deepen his/her linguistic and cultural knowledge whilst working in collaboration with other peers.
- The target student 'number two and number X' is a moderately educated person, who wishes to develop linguistic and cultural skills in areas that are not already part of his/her knowledge. The material for further study proposed in the bibliography in the teaching materials of the MOOC *The stones also speak* is essentially intended for this second (and third) type of student.



The proposed linguistic method aims to develop interest in different languages and cultures, as well as a different and integrated way of assimilating languages, by replacing teaching *ex cathedra* with a direct and immediate approach in order to encourage students to question and participate actively in the process of building their knowledge and developing the wish to broaden that knowledge.

The questions that should emerge from our educational materials are:

- Why do we need to learn a foreign language (not only English), and how?
- Why do we analyse syntactic linguistic structures?
- Why must we learn less widely used languages when we all understand and speak standard English?
- Is it true that English is the language of our future?
- English is the common language of the present. It is the vehicular language of the *Millennium generation*. Do young people, who are able to speak English fluently, know that the Greek language in the Hellenistic period was equivalent to today's English? Do they know that later Latin and Romance languages had the same role? Do they know that the use of those languages had ideological consequences? Do they feel that those Greek and Latin words which remain in our modern languages are like cultural 'stones'?

To find some answers to these questions, I called for help from two classical authors typically loved by even the most reluctant students. The ancient Greek and Latin poets Sappho and Catullus will stand at the end of the didactic path like 'protecting deities' or 'fellow travellers' (or just 'supporters') and will guide students during this multilinguistic, multimedia and multifocal learning process.

## 9 Linguistic Diversity and Social Cohesion

To communicate successfully in our international community we all need a basic knowledge of standard English as a common language. Languages were and are a way of interaction that seems entirely human. In the past, and in antiquity, people needed common languages to understand each other. The *Tower of Babel* was a punishment: if humankind had had a single language, humankind would have been too similar to God. Many different languages are spoken in many different contexts, and a common *lingua franca* is necessary for everyday life. But we are in concord with Nelson Mandela's quote: 'If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart'. The mother tongue is the language of the heart, and not only of the mind.

