## SUPSI

# SCRiPSIt - Writing as a Professional Resource in Southern Switzerland

*Axis 8 – Educational/training systems*

Interview with Luca Cignetti, Project head



**Tell us briefly about the SCRiPSit project, starting with the problem tackled.**
As has now been demonstrated by a number of studies, writing is a fundamental tool for the construction of knowledge in its various forms, and, particularly in today's information society, contributes to the execution of numerous professional activities and to the success of interpersonal relationships. With the SCRiPSIt project (acronym for "Scrivere come Risorsa Professionale nella Svizzera Italiana" - Writing as a Professional Resource in Southern Switzerland), we wanted to focus on the writing skills of students from the various educational sectors of SUPSI, and who will be the professional operators of tomorrow. After having assembled a representative corpus of degree dissertations, by means of IT tools, questionnaires and specific analyses, we aim to identify the most persistent writing problems and errors recorded in the papers of students from three departments and an affiliate school, with the aim of improving the level of linguistic and formal quality through targeted didactic activities.

**What initial results have been obtained?**
Up until this point, the project has allowed us to assemble a corpus of approximately 600 dissertations, using an original approach that was made possible by the interdisciplinary competences of our team. We are now identifying the most recurrent errors, examining various aspects of writing. For example, we have found cases in which fundamental rules of Italian are not respected, while in other instances insufficient consideration is given to the development of the text, or its coherence. Moreover, dissertations are often written in the form of personal diaries: this is not acceptable, because each type of text requires adherence to specific conditions, associated with the objectives for which it is written. For example, dissertations require the use of fonts, the use of citations and an objective presentation of the results. In order to conduct further in-depth study into some aspects associated with the dissertation-writing process, we also asked students and academic staff to complete two structured questionnaires: the results will be published in a journal in the near future.

**What are the strong points of the project? And the problems?**
In the last few years there has been much discussion about the writing skills of university students, and in Italy there was even an appeal recently, signed by a number of professors, complaining about the poor linguistic quality of degree dissertations. However, unfortunately, no concrete solutions have yet been proposed. The strong point of our project is that it tackles this issue by adopting a meticulous working method, one that will allow us to formulate didactic proposals in the light of real and verifiable phenomena. The most critical aspect, on the other hand, is the need to analyse a large quantity of data in a just a few months: investigations of this type usually require some years of work.

**Do you remember anything interesting, amusing or unusual that occurred during the project?**

The most interesting fact was probably the discovery that colleagues in other SUPSI Departments had the same impressions as we have regarding the critical aspects of students' writing. And the same can be said of colleagues from other universities: the problems are clearly almost always the same.

**Could other projects develop from this one?**

We plan to continue with the research, seeking support from external financing, perhaps also involving other universities. We would also like to continue our work by proposing academic and argumentative writing courses in the various SUPSI departments.

**Apart from you, who else was on the project team?**

The other members of the team are Guenda Bernegger from DEASS, Silvia Demartini and Sara Giulivi from DFA, Daniele Puccinelli from DTI and Demis Quadri from the Accademia Teatro Dimitri.

**Project type:** internal project
**Financing body:** SUPSI
**Project partners:** Department of education and learning, Department of innovative technologies, Department of business economics, health and social care, Accademia Teatro Dimitri