

Editoriale

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Riprende con questo numero la pubblicazione di Studi di Glottodidattica, la prima rivista italiana open access online di didattica delle lingue moderne nata nel 2007.

Fin dal primo numero la rivista si è caratterizzata per l'attenzione alla dimensione interdisciplinare dell'Educazione linguistica, all'apprendimento e insegnamento delle lingue seconde e straniere e agli studi linguistici e interculturali.

La ripresa della pubblicazione di Studi di Glottodidattica vuole contribuire alla crescita e alla diffusione in campo nazionale ed internazionale delle riflessioni e delle ricerche più attuali del panorama scientifico che fa riferimento alla linguistica educativa nelle sue dimensioni teorica e applicativa.

Nella veste rinnovata la rivista uscirà con cadenza semestrale, alternando un numero di carattere miscelaneo ad un altro di carattere monotematico.

A garanzia del valore scientifico dei contributi i comitati di redazione e quello dei revisori sono stati ampliati e tutti i saggi proposti vengono sottoposti ad un processo di double blind peer review.

Questo primo numero del nuovo corso di Studi di Glottodidattica ha carattere miscelaneo e propone nove saggi in diverse lingue (inglese, italiano e francese) che riguardano un ventaglio di temi che comprende l'intercomprensione tra le lingue e il translanguaging, la glottodidattica andragogica e geragogica, le diverse percezioni e attitudini di apprendenti giovani ed anziani, le tecnologie per la didattica delle lingue, anche legate alla recente diffusione della DAD, l'utilizzo dei corpora linguistici nella Glottodidattica e l'insegnamento dell'italiano come lingua seconda.

Siamo orgogliosi di poter offrire alla comunità scientifica che fa riferimento alle lingue, al loro apprendimento e insegnamento, e a tutti i campi del sapere ad esse collegati uno spazio open access per diffondere idee, riflessioni e proposte metodologiche.

Il call for papers per il prossimo numero di Studi di Glottodidattica è aperto e disponibile sul sito della rivista

https://ojs.cimedoc.uniba.it/index.php/glottodidattica/pages/view/call_papers.

Elders' and young adults' perceptions and attitudes towards languages in contact in multilingual Friuli-Venezia Giulia: A comparison to inform language teaching within an intergenerational perspective

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Abstract

The overall research project framing the present contribution fits within studies on plurilinguals' language attitudes, studies on language learning motivation, on lifelong language learning and on language learning in old age, its aim being to understand whether elders and young adults could be successfully involved in language learning and teaching within an intergenerational perspective. The research has been carried out in the Friulian-speaking area of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Italy.

Our main focus here is on the *first phase* of the wider research, which, starting from Baker (1992), consists in a quantitative survey on elders' and young adults' habits of use and perceptions with reference to the languages they are mainly in contact with in their everyday life (i.e., Italian, Friulian, English). The aim of this exploratory investigation is to define *elders' and young adults' profiles* and identify the most relevant similarities and differences between the two categories of subjects, with special regard to their relationship with the *local* minority language (Friulian) and the *global* international language (English). Findings from the quantitative survey will be presented, together with a preliminary discussion of possible implications for language teaching within an intergenerational perspective.¹

Keywords

Intergenerational comparison, plurilingual subjects, language attitudes, Friulian minority language, global English

1. Intergenerational language learning towards multilingual competence

The ageing of the European society —mainly due to the concomitance of increasing life expectancy and falling birth rates— and the growing structural unemployment especially among young people have pushed the European Union to carefully ponder over the role of *lifelong learning*. Continuous learning throughout life is regarded as a crucial comprehensive strategy to tackle the above challenges, so much so that “in recent years it has become virtually impossible to locate a policy document issued by the European Commission (EC) that makes no reference to lifelong learning” (Formosa 2014: 13). Following 1996, the European Year of Lifelong Learning, a number of key documents were published on this theme. Among them, of particular relevance is *A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, in which the tight connection between education and active citizenship is brought into focus and where three main categories of purposeful learning —i.e., formal, non-formal and informal— are clearly discussed and emphasised as complementary in the “lifewide” dimension of lifelong learning (EC 2000: 7-9). Following the adoption of the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018, one of the most recent publications on the same topic is *Key competence for lifelong learning*, which discusses a set of eight competences that are deemed essential for citizens in order to reach “personal fulfilment, a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, employability, active citizenship and social inclusion” (EC 2019: 4).

¹ A shorter version of this paper was presented at the *XVIII International Conference on Minority Languages (ICML)*, March 24, Bilbao, The Basque Country. <https://icml2021.eus/programa/?lang=en> (last access: June 16, 2021).

One peculiar form of lifelong learning is *intergenerational learning*, which is “learning taking place between different generations” (Boström 2014: 193). A comprehensive theory of intergenerational learning is still missing, and the label ‘intergenerational learning’ is generally attached to a variety of activities where the participation of subjects belonging to different age groups seems to be the only common denominator (Schmidt-Hertha 2014). Empirical research has found that, on the one side, intergenerational learning may be an effective means to tackle the ever-decreasing contact between generations in different spheres of life (e.g., in the workplace, within the family), thereby fostering intergenerational dialogue through reciprocal learning (Lohman et al. 2003). On the other, research findings seem also to offer evidence that intergenerational learning could be a powerful vehicle for bringing together the novel ideas of younger generations with the life experience of older ones, thus tapping new potential (McGuire et al. 2007).

Siebert and Seidel (1990, cited in Schmidt-Hertha 2014: 148) distinguish between three types of intergenerational learning, the central criterion being the *nature of interaction* required for the learning process to take place: 1. learning from each other, 2. learning together, and 3. learning about one another. The third type, learning *about* one another—which is regarded by the two authors as “the true form of intergenerational learning”, is of particular interest as it implies that the different perspectives and interpretation patterns adopted by the generations involved are not only used *for* learning, but are *part of* the learning content and objectives themselves.

With a view to pursuing this third type of intergenerational learning while at the same time targeting multilingual competence—which is included in the eight key competences for lifelong learning mentioned earlier (EC 2019), *language learning* is a scenario worthy of consideration. It would not (simply) mean bringing together subjects of different ages in a shared learning space: it could also offer “the opportunity to learn about different perspectives of different generations, to reflect on one’s own generational attitudes, and to gain a deeper understanding of other generations” (Schmidt-Hertha 2014: 149). Intergenerational *language* learning could thus be regarded as an additional means to boost the development of social capital, which is linked to the well-being of the subjects directly involved and also of society in general (on the link between intergenerational learning and social capital see Boström 2014).

Mastering multilingual competence is crucial not only for young pupils and students in compulsory education, but also for young adults—especially, albeit not exclusively, to successfully enter the job market—and elderly people. Studies agree that language learning in old age produces important benefits, of social, cognitive and affective nature (for a review see Cardona, Luise 2019a and Ramírez Gómez 2016): it is a means to strengthen active citizenship skills thus avoiding social exclusion, and it successfully contributes to the stimulation and maintenance of cognitive resources, while encouraging the development of compensation processes (Cardona, Luise 2019b).

Whatever the age, in order to boost one’s multilingual competence, the role of language attitudes is of paramount importance: ample evidence has been provided by research of the key contribution of attitudes in language achievement, as they function as the affective bedrock of learners’ motivation (Gardner, MacIntyre 1993; Bernaus et al. 2004; for a review of studies on the relationship between language attitudes and L2 achievement see Lasagabaster 2003). Citing Huguet and Gonzales Riaño’s work, Lasagabaster points out that “language attitude is the most relevant sociolinguistic concept when it comes to setting up particular strategic options in the process of teaching and learning languages” (2005: 298). Therefore, when planning for practice, learners’ language attitudes should be taken into careful consideration, even more so when learners belong to different generations.

The *aim* of the overall research—which this contribution is part of—is to understand whether elders and young adults could be successfully involved in language learning and teaching within an intergenerational perspective. Bearing in mind that every social context is characterised by its own specificities, and with a view to enhancing our understanding of the phenomenon just mentioned, two key operations ought to be carried out at the outset: first of all, the *context* where such intergenerational language learning would occur needs to be thoroughly explored; second, the

profiles of the two categories of subjects should clearly be outlined. The next paragraph is dedicated to the first preliminary operation, whereas the rest of this paper is an attempt to address the second one, i.e., profiles description.

2. A truly multilingual context: Friuli-Venezia Giulia

Friuli-Venezia Giulia (FVG, henceforth) is one of the five Autonomous Regions in Italy and one of the most important reasons for its Special Statute is its linguistic diversity: in this Region, “one of the most convincing examples of a plurilingual community” (Fusco 2019: 167), Italian, the official national language, historically coexists with German —spoken in the area close to the border with Austria, with Slovene —along the border with Slovenia, and with Friulian, which is a “unique minority language”, that is it does not have a majority status anywhere (van Dongera et al. 2017: 10).

In Italy, a National Law was passed in 1999 for the protection of historic linguistic minorities,² which, *inter alia*, foresees the introduction of minority languages in compulsory education. Moreover, in FVG, a Regional Law provides specific rules for the introduction of Friulian,³ rules whose implementation has become systematic since 2012.⁴ On the basis of these norms, Friulian is nowadays compulsorily offered in schools as an *optional subject*, based on the choice of pupils’ families, who can decide whether they wish to make use of the opportunity to have Friulian taught to their children or not (Cisilino 2014). However, the UNESCO’s Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger (Moseley 2010) categorises Friulian as “definitely endangered”, a label which is given to those languages that are “no longer being learned as the mother tongue by children in the home” (UNESCO 2003).

The overall picture emerging from the most recent sociolinguistic survey carried out in 2014 by the University of Udine and commissioned by the Regional Agency for the Friulian Language (ARLeF 2015) is not negative. The Friulian-speaking area roughly corresponds to the former provinces of Udine, Pordenone and Gorizia, and figures for Friulian speakers vary between 420,000 (35% ca. of the total population of the Region) and 600,000 (49% ca.), depending on whether occasional speakers of Friulian are added to those who speak it regularly or not (ARLeF 2015: 41). Among the most interesting findings, two stand out: first, the active language use loss rate has decreased by one third since the previous survey (Picco 2001) and, second, the “generation shift”, i.e., the fact that the younger generation (18-29 y.o.) actively uses the language more than older ones (subjects in their thirties and forties), a fact that —it is hypothesised— may be linked with the introduction of Friulian in compulsory education, a circumstance which may have contributed to the elevation of its status (ARLeF 2015: 6). Nevertheless, nowadays Friulian is spoken above all in mountain, hilly and rural areas (Vicario 2011) and by the elderly population: the majority of those who speak the language are subjects aged 60 or above, and the average age of the Friulian speaker is 53 (ARLeF 2015: 7).

According to the most recent regional statistics, 80.47% of the regional territory (173 municipalities, out of a total of 215) is inhabited by the Friulian-speaking community, 2.79% (6 municipalities) by the German-speaking community, and 14.88% (32 municipalities) by the Slovene-speaking community. There are 21 municipalities (9.77%) where no historic linguistic minority is present (Regione Autonoma FVG 2020: 308). In order to offer a richer picture of the sociolinguistic framework characterising FVG, we ought not to forget to mention the presence of quite a few local and regional language varieties, deriving from flows of people from other regions of Italy, as well as a number of other languages, generally spoken by ethnic groups from different countries (Fusco 2019: 168). To complete the description, English as a *global* language (Graddol 2006) should also be

² Law 15 December 1999, n. 482. *Norme in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche storiche*, Roma, Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana, n. 297.

³ Regional Law 18 December 2007, n. 29. *Norme per la tutela, valorizzazione e promozione della lingua friulana*, Trieste, Bollettino Ufficiale Regionale, n. 52.

⁴ For a complete overview of the laws for the protection of the Friulian language see Cisilino (2014).

included. Not only is it omnipresent in many international specialist domains regarding business, technology, academic communication to name a few, but also it is the most frequently studied language in compulsory schools: according to Eurostat,⁵ in Italy in 2018 93.9% of upper secondary students learnt English as a foreign language.

In light of the figures presented so far, it does not seem incorrect to say that for quite a number of citizens of FVG *English* is an L3, after *Italian* and *Friulian*. These three languages represent the main languages to which our attention is drawn in the present research.

3. Research aim and research questions

As previously stated, the aim of the overall research is to understand whether elders and young adults could be successfully involved in language learning and teaching within an intergenerational perspective. More specifically, in light of the characteristics of the context illustrated above (par. 2), our broad *aim* is to understand whether an intergenerational language learning experience where the young ‘tandem-teach’ English to the elderly and the elderly ‘tandem-teach’ Friulian to the young could be feasible, while at the same time drawing implications for classroom practice.

The present contribution mainly focusses on the *first phase* of the research which consists in a quantitative investigation on elders’ and young adults’ habits of use and perceptions —perceived citizenship, perceived competence, perceived importance, attitudes— with reference to the languages they are mainly in contact with in their everyday life, i.e., Italian-national majority language, Friulian-local minority language, English-international global language. This investigation aims at answering the following research questions:

RQ 1) What *profiles* characterise the elders’ and the young adults’ samples with respect to these subjects’ habits of language use and perceptions on the languages they are in contact with?

RQ 2) Do the elders’ and the young adults’ profiles *differ* significantly? If so, in what ways?

4. Methodology

The overall research is of a mixed nature; it can be labelled as an “interview study facilitated by preceding questionnaire survey (quan→QUAL)” (Dörnyei 2007: 172).

This contribution focusses on the first, *quan*, exploratory phase of the research, whereas in Bier (forthcoming) the main *QUAL* phase is dealt with. Findings from the *quan* phase informed the strategy adopted to purposefully identify interviewees for the subsequent *QUAL* phase.

4.1 Participants

A total of 157 subjects took part in the questionnaire survey. Of these, 66 are young adults, aged between 18 and 22, almost all students (87.9%), and 91 are elderly people, aged 63⁶ or above, almost all retired (84.6%). There is a predominance of female respondents in the Y group, and of male respondents in the E group (Table 1).

Table 1. Age group and gender

			F	M	Total
Group Y (young adults)	66	42.04%	69.70%	30.30%	100%
Group E (elderly)	91	57.96%	41.76%	58.24%	100%
Total	157	100%			

⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/education-and-training/data/database> (last access: June 16, 2021).

⁶ In line with Cardona and Luise (2019a: 7), 63 years of age is considered as the threshold of the beginning of old age.

The great majority of respondents are from the area of Udine (Table 2), live in small villages with less than 20.000 inhabitants (Table 3) and the language mainly spoken in their communities is Friulian (Table 4); these figures seem to align with the existing literature (cf. par. 2).

Table 2. Province where respondents are from

	Gorizia	Pordenone	Udine	Total
Group Y	3.03%	13.64%	83.33%	100%
Group E	2.20%	24.18%	73.63%	100%

Table 3. Inhabitants in the town/village where respondents live

	Less than 20.000	Between 20.000 and 50.000	More than 50.000	Total
Group Y	92.42%	4.55%	3.00%	100%
Group E	73.63%	3.30%	23.08%	100%

Table 4. Language mainly spoken in the town/village where respondents live

	Mainly Friulian	Mainly Italian	Other	Total
Group Y	66.67%	27.27%	6.06%	100%
Group E	58.24%	37.36%	4.40%	100%

4.2 Research methods

The survey took place in the spring-summer of 2020 and was carried out by means of an online questionnaire (based on Baker 1992 and on Lasagabaster, Huguet 2007), created and administered through *EUSurvey*.⁷ Before the main data collection, the instrument was submitted to a pilot test (Dörnyei 2010) which gave consistent results: high correlation indexes were obtained after administering the pilot questionnaire twice, three weeks apart.

Respondents were reached in two main ways: first, a video-invitation⁸ to take part in the survey was shared on the researcher's Facebook page; second, thanks to an ongoing collaboration between the researcher and the *Friulian Philological Society*,⁹ an e-mail invitation was sent to the Society's members a) who matched the age requirements, and b) who work as teachers in upper-secondary schools. The latter were kindly asked to invite their students to participate in the survey.

The questionnaire is organised into *four main sections*: the first section aims at gathering general demographic information on respondents (e.g., gender, provenance, inhabitants and language mainly spoken in their city/village, etc.); the second section aims at collecting data on respondents' perceived competence in their languages, the age when they started learning said languages and whether they attended (or wished to attend) language lessons; the third section aims at inquiring into respondents' habits of language use, with special regard to Italian, Friulian and English; lastly, the fourth section includes two sets of multi-item scales. The first set of three scales (Scales 4.1, 4.3, 4.5, Appendix 1) gauges the perceived importance of the three target languages, whereas the second set (Scales 4.2, 4.4, 4.6, Appendix 1) targets respondents' attitudes towards the same languages.¹⁰

5. Analysis

⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/home/welcome> (last access: June 16, 2021).

⁸ This is the link to the video-invitation: <https://vimeo.com/417233950> (last access: June 16, 2021).

⁹ <http://www.filologicafriulana.it/> (last access: June 16, 2021).

¹⁰ These scales have been adapted from the questionnaire used by Lasagabaster and Huguet (2007) in their survey on language use and attitudes in nine European bilingual contexts.

The data collected via the questionnaire were analysed by means of both descriptive and inferential statistics. *Microsoft Excel* for Mac and *R* (R Core Team 2019; Winter 2019) were used to carry out all analytical operations.

More specifically, data from questionnaire sections 1-2-3 were submitted to frequency count and then organised in graphs, whereas data from multi-item scales of section 4 were submitted to independent samples t-tests. Prior to carrying out inferential parametric statistics with said scales, they were checked for internal consistency and for normality of distribution: the internal consistency of all scales was good¹¹ and the variables corresponding to the average score in Scales 4.1, 4.3, 4.5 were normally distributed. Instead, the distribution of the average score variables for Scales 4.2, 4.4, 4.6 was not perfectly normal and therefore these variables were non-linearly transformed.¹² Finally, all the variables (from 4.1 to 4.6) were centred and standardised.

6. Findings and discussion

In this section, findings will be presented and discussed with reference to the Research Questions previously formulated (par. 3). Thus, the *characteristics* —in terms of habits of language use and perceptions— of each of the two categories involved, elderly and young adults, will be illustrated (RQ 1), and special attention will be drawn to their most significant *differences* (RQ 2).

6.1 Main findings from descriptive statistics

In this section, findings from descriptive statistics (i.e., frequency count) performed on data from questionnaire sections 1-2-3 will be presented and discussed.

6.1.1 Perceived citizenship and mother tongue

With a view to making a comparison with the ARLeF findings (2015: 36-40), the last question in section 1 asked respondents what citizenship they most strongly identified with, and the same mutually exclusive answer options as in the ARLeF survey were provided (i.e., Italian, Friulian, European, of FVG). Nearly half the E group say they feel they are Friulian citizens, and a good percentage also declare feeling as European citizens. As for Y respondents, answers are more evenly distributed, with a relative majority of subjects declaring they feel they are Italian citizens, followed by those who feel they are Friulian and European citizens, in equal percentages (Graph 1).¹³

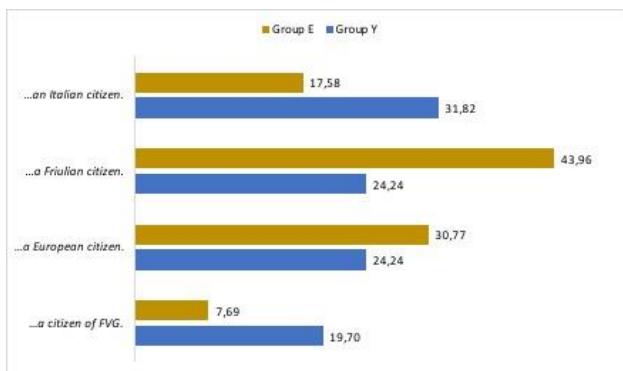
These findings only partially agree with those presented by ARLeF (2015: 40): while there is agreement about the “Friulian sub-sample”, characterised in both studies by the highest average age, there does not seem to be a direct correspondence about the “European sub-sample”. In the ARLeF research, the European sub-sample is characterised by the lowest average age, which is not the case here; our findings show that the sub-sample which, on average, is the youngest is the Italian one.

¹¹ Cronbach's alpha: 0.94 (Scale 4.1), 0.91 (S. 4.3), 0.92 (S. 4.5); 0.89 (S. 4.2), 0.76 (S. 4.4), 0.85 (S. 4.6).

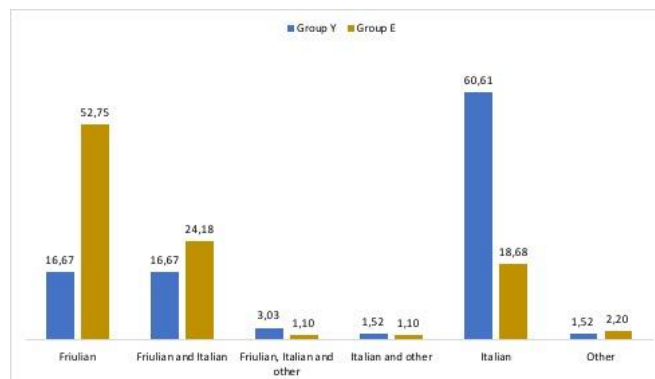
¹² Scale 4.2: reflect and logarithm; Scales 4.4 and 4.6: reflect and square root.

¹³ In all Graphs, figures are shown in percentage terms, calculated on the age group total (Group Y=66, Group E=91).

As regards mother tongue, the difference between the two groups is quite remarkable, with the majority of elder respondents indicating Friulian and the majority of young respondents indicating Italian (Graph 2).



Graph 1. Perceived citizenship

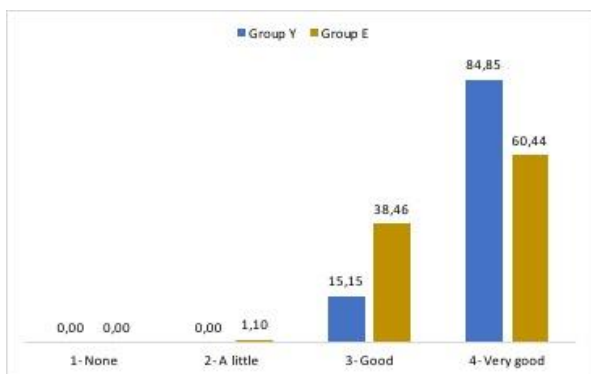


Graph 2. Mother tongue

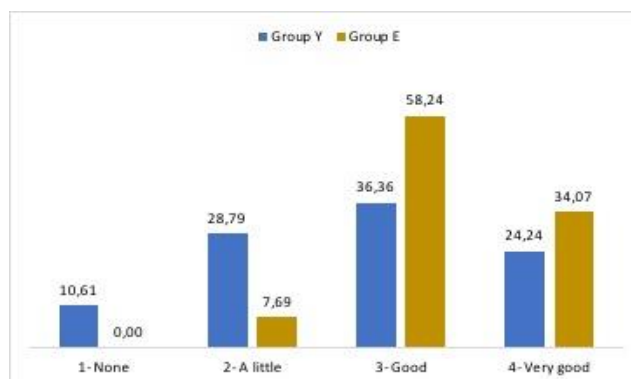
It seems that a mild correspondence exists between the subjects’ perceived citizenship (cf. Graph 1) and their mother tongue.

6.1.2 Perceived language competence and age of acquisition

Coherently with the findings just presented, young adults perceive a much higher competence in Italian (Graph 3) and a lower one in Friulian (Graph 4). Moreover, it ought to be noticed that there is a good percentage of Y respondents that say they have *no* competence at all in Friulian (10.61%). More than half of E respondents, instead, declare having a *good* competence in the minority language, and a slightly lower percentage a *very good* competence: this is quite an interesting finding, considering that the majority of the elderly declare that Friulian is their mother tongue (cf. Graph 2); this issue will be further explored below.

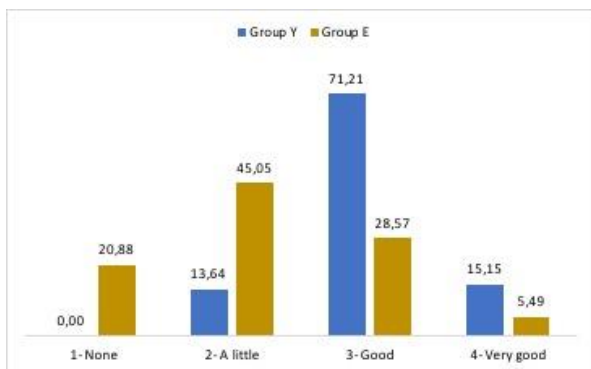


Graph 3. Perceived competence in Italian



Graph 4. Perceived competence in Friulian

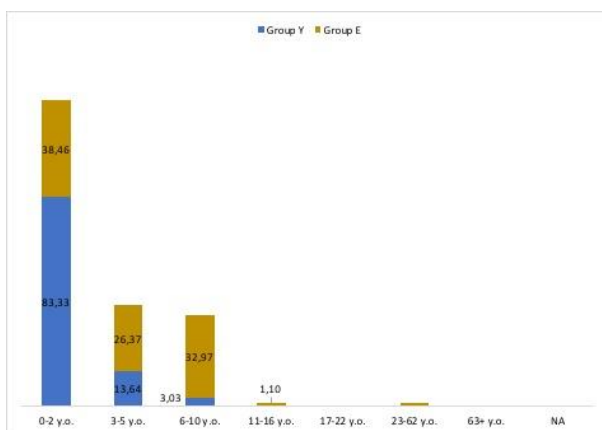
As far as English is concerned, Graph 5 shows that the vast majority of Y subjects clusters around *good* competence, while E respondents are more evenly distributed towards the middle-low end of the spectrum. It ought to be noticed that —just like what happened for the young with Friulian (cf. Graph 4)— there is a good percentage of elder respondents that say they have *no* competence at all in English (20.88%).



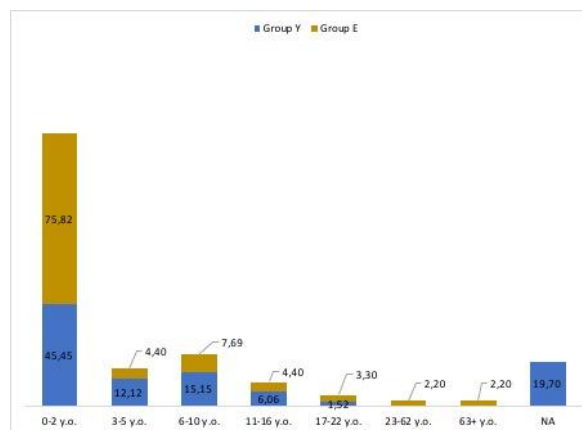
Graph 5. Perceived competence in English

As regards the age when respondents started learning these languages:

- the vast majority of elderly respondents (75.82%) started learning Friulian at birth (Graph 7); instead, the overwhelming majority of young adults (83.33%) started learning Italian at birth (Graph 6). However, among these subjects we also find good percentages of both elders (23.08%) and young adults (34.85%) who started learning both Italian and Friulian at birth;
- during kindergarten (3-5 y.o.) and primary school (6-10 y.o.), virtually all the young started learning English, whereas the relative majority of elderly respondents started learning English in secondary school (11-16 y.o.) (Graph 8).¹⁴ In this period, the young started learning German (Graph 9), which seems to be a popular second foreign language (after English) offered in secondary schools in FVG (see also Graph 13 below);
- in the range between 3 to 10 years old, when almost all Y subjects started learning English (Graph 8), more than half of the E group were instead beginning with Italian (Graph 6).

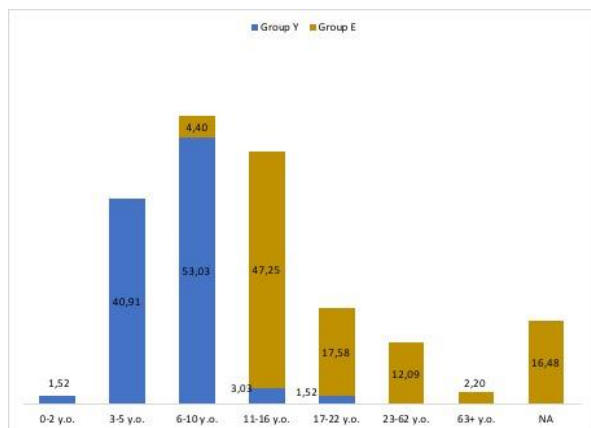


Graph 6. When did you start learning Italian?

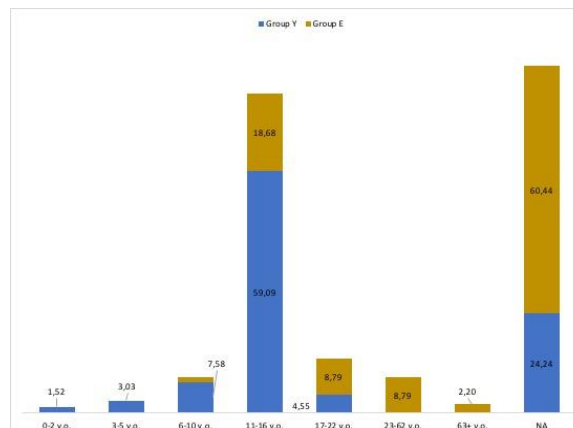


Graph 7. When did you start learning Friulian?

¹⁴ This finding is in line with what was recently found by Cardona and Luise (2019a): the majority of their elderly interviewees were bilingual in Italian and in a Venetan dialect, and started learning their first foreign language — French, in the majority of cases— when they were 11-12 years old (i.e., in lower-secondary school). In our sample, elderly respondents declaring they started learning French when they were 11 years old are 23.07%, whereas those who learnt it but did not specify when are 37.36%.



Graph 8. When did you start learning English?



Graph 9. When did you start learning German?

As we have already noticed for perceived competence (cf. Graphs 4, 5), here as well another important difference between the two groups can be observed: there is a good percentage of Y subjects (19.70%) who have never started learning Friulian while nobody in the E group is in the same situation (Graph 7); on the other hand, we see that there is a good percentage of elders (16.48%) who have never started learning English while nobody in the Y group is in the same situation (Graph 8).

6.1.3 Language lesson attendance and wish to attend a language course in the future

As for language lessons attendance, there is a striking majority of respondents in both groups who declare having attended lessons of Italian¹⁵ and English (Graphs 10, 12). There is also a good percentage of subjects who have attended lessons of German (Graph 13).¹⁶

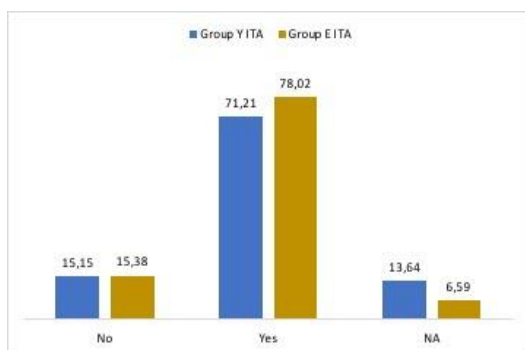
As for Friulian (Graph 11), more than half in both groups declare *not* having attended lessons. However, among those who have, the percentage is higher for the elderly (38.46% vs. 28.79%). The fact that more than half of the young say they have not attended lessons of Friulian is quite interesting and it may be explained by *either* of these two circumstances:

- the families of these young respondents *chose not* to make use of the opportunity to have Friulian taught to their children in compulsory school (as per Regional Law 29/2007, see par. 2);
- these young adults *did* attend Friulian lessons in compulsory school but *either* do not remember *or* they do remember but do *not* regard that school experience as actual ‘lessons’ of Friulian.¹⁷

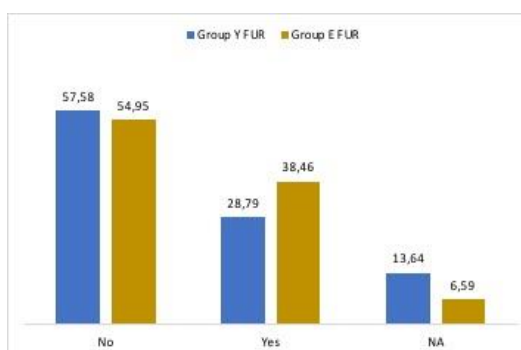
¹⁵ The fact that some respondents declare *not* having attended lessons of Italian (Graph 10) appears quite odd, given that all of them went through compulsory schooling in Italy. It could be attributed to an inaccurate interpretation by respondents of the expression “lessons of”, which may have been equated with “language course”, traditionally associated with ‘foreign’ languages. As we shall see, the same may apply with reference to Friulian.

¹⁶ Almost nobody in our sample declared any competence or attended lessons of Slovene, and that is why graphs about that language are not shown.

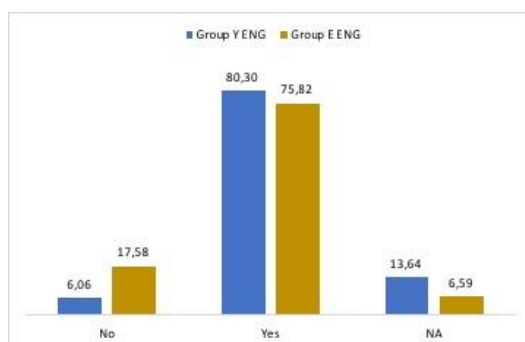
¹⁷ The same reasoning applied with reference to Italian lesson attendance (i.e., inaccurate interpretation, see footnote 15) may be valid here.



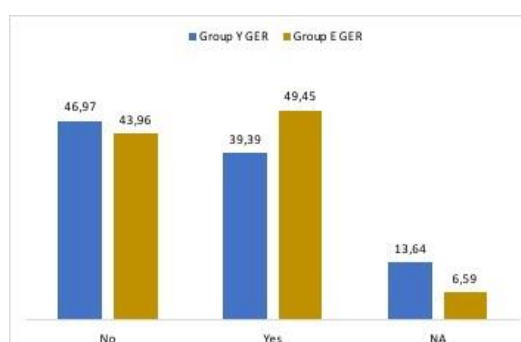
Graph 10. Have you attended lessons of Italian?



Graph 11. Have you attended lessons of Friulian?



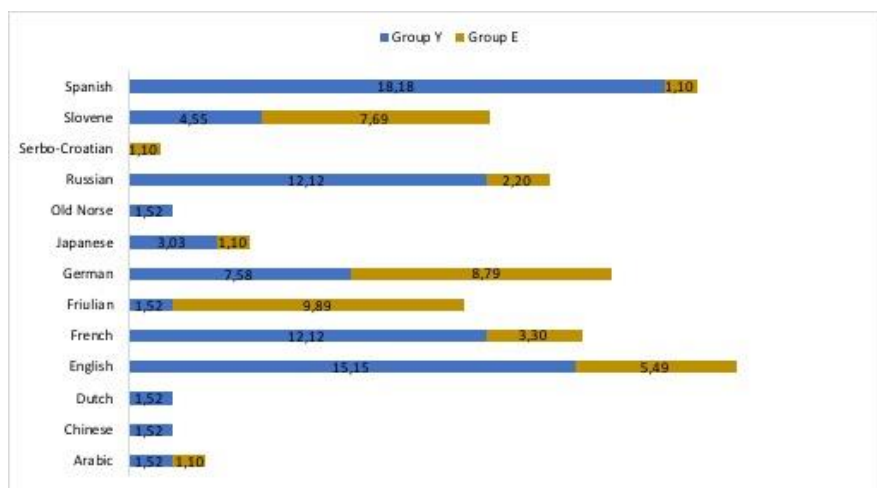
Graph 12. Have you attended lessons of English?



Graph 13. Have you attended lessons of German?

The percentage of subjects wishing to attend a language course in the future is much higher in the Y group (80.30% vs. 58.24%). Looking at Graph 14, we notice that young adults mostly choose Spanish as the language they wish to study. English is the second most frequent choice, French and Russian third. Only one respondent (1.52%) wishes to attend a course of Friulian. As for elder respondents wishing to attend a language course in the future, the relative majority chooses Friulian as the language they wish to study, and German and Slovene are the second and third most frequent choices. English comes fourth. This is coherent with what was said before about mother tongue and perceived competence. Although the majority of the elders say that Friulian is their mother tongue (cf. Graph 2), not all of them declare having a *very good* competence in the language (cf. Graph 4): this is because Friulian has always been mainly a *spoken* language for them, they are not used to write in Friulian (cf. ARLeF 2015: 19) and in its written form they have virtually no competence. That is why so many of them wishes to attend a course of Friulian: to learn how to write in the standard language.¹⁸ Confirmation of this is also found in phase two interviews (Bier forthcoming).

¹⁸ The Friulian-speaking area is characterised by the coexistence of several mutually intelligible *local varieties* of Friulian (Benincà, Vanelli 2016), especially common in their spoken form, with the *standard language*, for which the official spelling exists (ARLeF 2017).



Graph 14. What language would you like to study in the future?

Reading Graph 14, it appears therefore that the elderly have a higher interest in the languages that are spoken in the area (i.e., Friulian, German, Slovene), an interest that does not seem to be shared by young adults, whose preferences are for more international languages, Spanish and English.

6.1.4 Language use with specific people and for specific actions

As for the languages used with specific people, there seems to be quite a clear pattern of preference for Friulian over Italian for exchanges within the wider family (i.e., parents, siblings, grandparents, partner) for elder respondents, whereas for the young Italian is the language mostly used. Friulian is used slightly more often by the young with their father and grandparents (Graphs A15).¹⁹

A similar pattern of preference for Friulian over Italian, especially for the E group, is also seen in communicative exchanges with friends and neighbours (Graphs A16), whereas a less evident pattern is detected in elders' exchanges with colleagues and shopkeepers (Graphs A17), where a mix of Friulian and Italian seems to be common. As for the Y group, Italian appears to be by far the most frequently used language in all these situations.

The pattern changes, for elder subjects as well, in communicative exchanges with grandchildren, nieces and nephews, where Italian is mostly used (Graph A18).

Lastly, there appears to be a distinct predominance of Italian, for both groups, in more formal exchanges, i.e., with teachers and in offices (Graphs A19).

As for the languages used for specific activities (Graphs A20), from the data collected it seems that for elder respondents Italian is the most used language, followed at a distance by Friulian; English is the least used language, except when listening to songs, when it is slightly more common, in addition to Italian and Friulian.

For young adults too Italian is the most used language but it is immediately followed by English, which is more frequently used when listening to songs and more or less on a par with Italian when surfing the internet and using social media. Friulian is the least used language, except —just like what happened for the elders with English— when listening to songs, when it is slightly more common, in addition to English and Italian.

6.2 Main findings from inferential statistics

In this section, findings from inferential statistics (i.e., t-tests) performed on data from questionnaire section 4 will be presented and discussed.

¹⁹ Due to space limitations, Graphs from A15 to A20 are not displayed here; they are in Appendix 2.

6.2.1 Perceived importance of the three languages in contact: results from t-tests

Two-sample t-tests showed that there is a significant, large difference in perceived importance of Friulian between the young, who score lower, and elder subjects (Table A1).²⁰ There is also a significant, moderate difference in perceived importance of Italian between the young, who score higher this time, and elder subjects (Table A2). Finally, there is a significant, moderate difference in perceived importance of English between the young, who, again, score higher, and elder subjects (Table A3).

6.2.2 Attitudes towards the three languages in contact: results from t-tests

There is a significant, large difference in attitudes towards Friulian between the young, who score lower, and elder subjects (Table A4). A non-significant difference between the two groups is found when comparing the attitudes towards Italian (Table A5). Then, there is a significant, large difference in attitudes towards English between the young, who score higher, and elder subjects (Table A6).

With a view to taking a closer look on subjects' attitudes towards the local minority language, Friulian, a series of independent-samples t-tests were carried out maintaining the young/elder main grouping but splitting the two groups further based on the following three dichotomic variables:

- whether they use *Friulian in the family*, i.e., with father/mother/siblings (or not)
- whether they have *attended lessons of Friulian* (or not)
- whether they feel they are *Friulian citizens* (or not), or *Italian citizens* (or not), or *European citizens* (or not)

In both young and elder respondents, there is a significant difference between those who use Friulian in the family, who show more positive attitudes towards the language, and those who do not. For the elders the magnitude of the difference is moderate, whereas for the young it is very large (Tables A7, A8): this finding is particularly noteworthy and also in line with the literature, which shows that home language, together with the linguistic model followed at school (i.e., degree of presence of the minority language), are crucial variables influencing subjects' attitudes towards the language itself (Lasagabaster 2017: 586).

For E respondents only, there is a significant, moderate difference between those who have attended lessons of Friulian, who show more positive attitudes towards the language, and those who have not (Table A10). As for young adults, instead, it appears that those few who do have attended lessons show attitudes towards Friulian that are *not* significantly different from those shown by subjects who have not had the same experience (Table A9). Together with what was seen before about these subjects' Friulian lesson attendance (par. 6.1.3), this is quite an interesting finding as a) it apparently does *not* align with previous research (cf. Lasagabaster 2017: *supra*) and b) might be interpreted as an indication that the school provision in the minority language is not effective enough to produce a significant impact on students' attitudes towards the language itself.

A finding that could be expected and that is in line with previous research (ARLeF 2015) is the significant, large difference between those who declare Friulian citizenship, who show more positive attitudes towards the language, and those who do not, in both age groups (Tables A11, A12).

For elder respondents only, there is a significant, large difference between those who feel they are Italian citizens, who show less positive attitudes towards Friulian, and those who do not (Table A14). For young adults, the difference in the means is not significant (Table A13).

Lastly, for the Y group only, there is a significant, large difference between those who feel they are European citizens, who show less positive attitudes towards Friulian, and those who do not

²⁰ Due to space limitations, detailed output from t-tests (Tables from A1 to A22) is not displayed here; it is available online: <https://tinyurl.com/53nsh6a> (last access: June 16, 2021).

(Table A15). This is another interesting finding as it appears that, for young adults, being a European citizen is associated with *less* positive attitudes towards the local minority language. For the elderly, instead, the difference is not significant (Table A16).

To take a closer look on subjects' attitudes towards the global language, English, a series of independent-samples t-tests were carried out in the same fashion, i.e., maintaining the young/elder main grouping but splitting the two groups further based on subjects' perceived citizenship.

A finding that, once again, could be expected, is that there is a significant, moderate difference between those who feel they are Friulian citizens, who show less positive attitudes towards English, and those who do not, in both age groups (Tables A17, A18). This seems to resemble what Baker (1992) calls "bunker attitude", an unfavourable disposition found in minority language speakers who believe that majority languages represent a threat to the survival of the minority language (see Lasagabaster 2005).

In both Y and E respondents, there is a non-significant difference in attitudes towards English between those who declare Italian citizenship and those who do not (Tables A19, A20).

Finally, for the elderly only, there is a significant, moderate difference between those who feel they are European citizens, who show more positive attitudes towards English, and those who do not (Table A22). This is an interesting finding as it appears that, for the elders, being a European citizen is associated with *more* positive attitudes towards the global language. For young adults, contrary to what happened with attitudes towards Friulian, the difference in the means does not reach statistical significance (Table A21).

7. Conclusions

Before drawing some preliminary, tentative conclusions, the *limitations* of the present survey study need to be acknowledged. The main weakness regards the sampling strategy adopted: as random-sampling was out-of-reach, convenience sampling and snowball sampling were adopted instead (Dörnyei 2007: 98). Furthermore, as data collection took place during the Covid-lockdown period, a very delicate moment for the whole country, Italy, the two samples involved were rather small and not entirely representative of the whole populations of reference. Therefore, due to non-perfect generalisability, our findings should be treated with caution.

At the end of the first phase of our wider research, the *main findings* of the preliminary survey could be concisely summarised as follows. As far as young adults are concerned, not only do they perceive and declare quite a high competence in the global language, English, they also use it rather often, show positive attitudes and attach a high instrumental value to it. It seems, however, that the same cannot be said for Friulian, in which, on average, they declare lower competence and harbour milder feelings. Those who use it in the family and, predictably, those who declare feeling as Friulian citizens are the ones who show more favourable dispositions towards the minority language. Nonetheless, unlike what is reported in the literature (e.g., Lasagabaster 2017), Friulian lesson attendance has been found to exert *no* significant effect on young adults' attitudes, a circumstance that leads to surmise that the effectiveness of the current school provision in the minority language (i.e., 30 hours a year, maximum) is rather limited. As far as elders are concerned, instead, more or less the reverse situation appears to be true; on average, they declare good competence and favourable dispositions towards the local minority language, Friulian, that they use frequently and with a variety of people. On the opposite, English is associated with less perceived importance and less positive attitudes, except for those who feel as European citizens, who harbour more positive feelings towards the global language.

In light of both the stated objective of the overall research —i.e., to understand whether elders and young adults could be successfully involved in language learning and teaching within an intergenerational perspective— and the survey findings presented here, it could be said that the prospect of engaging the two categories of subjects in intergenerational language learning experiences

could represent, in theory at least, a good starting point. Given that their profiles are somehow *complementary*, the young could tandem-teach English to the elderly while the elderly could tandem-teach Friulian to the young.

However, the complexities of the overall picture need to be duly acknowledged and taken into careful consideration when planning for practice. For example, while research reveals that the elderly might welcome the idea of intergenerational learning (Schmidt-Hertha 2014) and, by extension, of sharing the experience of language learning with young adults, the same might not be true for young adults themselves:

“it can often be observed that the ones supposed to learn seem to be less interested in participating than the ones supposed to teach [...] There still is a lack of studies on the willingness of younger generations to participate in intergenerational learning.” (Schmidt-Hertha 2014: 147, 149)

As far as language learning (and teaching) is specifically concerned, Ramírez Gómez warns that, although intergenerational interaction may be attractive for older learners, “an interesting or entertaining class is not necessarily an effective class” (Ramírez Gómez 2016: 5). She recommends a) taking the cognitive and developmental differences between the two categories of subjects into careful consideration, b) creating language courses specifically dedicated for older adults, and c) organising activities that promote intergenerational interaction as *extra-curricular* options (Ramírez Gómez 2016: 174-175). Discussing their Cognitive-Emotional Scaffolding Model, Cardona and Luise, in turn, highlight the importance of capitalising on elders’ life *experiences and emotions*, adopting a cognitive-emotional approach that targets the totality of the person (Cardona, Luise 2019a: 102), a holistic approach of which young adults may benefit as well.

Extra-curricular project-oriented *language* activities, where language objectives are pursued *together* with other common aims, may be a viable solution for intergenerational learning, taking all the above recommendations into account. For example, *gardening* (see Hake 2014) could be a suitable non-formal learning environment for elders and young adults to collaborate on a common goal while at the same time working on the two target languages, Friulian and English. Careful planning is needed though, in order to address all the issues that might arise. Among these, as far as Friulian is concerned, one aspect that is worthy of consideration is the type of language that could be employed in such activities: elder participants may well be proficient in a local variety of Friulian (Benincà, Vanelli 2016) in its *spoken* form, but, looking at research findings (par. 6.1.2; ARLeF 2015), the same does not seem to be true if the standard *written* language is contemplated. Furthermore, a potentially negatively impacting issue regards young adults’ attitudes towards the minority language, which, as appears from the data discussed in the present article, are not as positive as those shown by elders. This means that while elders might welcome a learning experience of this kind, the same might not be true for young adults (cf. Schmidt-Hertha 2014, *supra*).

Given the power of language attitudes, which “affect the success or failure of entire minority language planning strategies” (Ó Riagáin 2008: 329), the issue of young adults’ mild attitudes towards Friulian —notwithstanding the normative framework presented earlier (par. 2)— needs to be carefully pondered, and evidence-based plans for targeted interventions should be put in place in order for the situation to improve. More specifically, empirical research is needed in order to ascertain the characteristics of the current educational provision in/through Friulian and its impact on students’ attitudes towards the language in different school levels. Moreover, a more in-depth qualitative exploration of the interrelationships between the *language selves* (cf. Pavlenko 2006; Cardona, Luise 2019a) of plurilingual subjects living in FVG is also necessary, as it could shed light on both young adults’ and elders’ motivation for language learning (Bier forthcoming).

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Appendix 1. Multi-item questionnaire scales (English version)

S4.1-3-5 How important do you think $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{FRIULIAN (4.1)} \\ \text{ITALIAN (4.3)} \\ \text{ENGLISH (4.5)} \end{array} \right\}$ **is for doing the following actions?**

- 4.1-3-5a = [Make friends]
- 4.1-3-5b = [Read]
- 4.1-3-5c = [Write]
- 4.1-3-5d = [Watch TV]
- 4.1-3-5e = [Get a job]
- 4.1-3-5f = [Be liked]
- 4.1-3-5g = [Live in Friuli-Venezia Giulia]
- 4.1-3-5h = [Bring up children]
- 4.1-3-5i = [Go shopping]
- 4.1-3-5l = [Make phone calls]
- 4.1-3-5m = [Pass exams]
- 4.1-3-5n = [Be accepted in the community]
- 4.1-3-5o = [Talk to colleagues at the study/workplace]
- 4.1-3-5p = [Talk to friends]
- 4.1-3-5q = [Talk to people]

Answer options for each item: 1- Not important (*score=0*)
 2- A little important (*score=30*)
 3- Important (*score=70*)
 4- Very important (*score=100*)

S4.2-4-6 How much do you agree with the following statements about $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{FRIULIAN (4.2)} \\ \text{ITALIAN (4.4)} \\ \text{ENGLISH (4.6)} \end{array} \right\}$ **?**

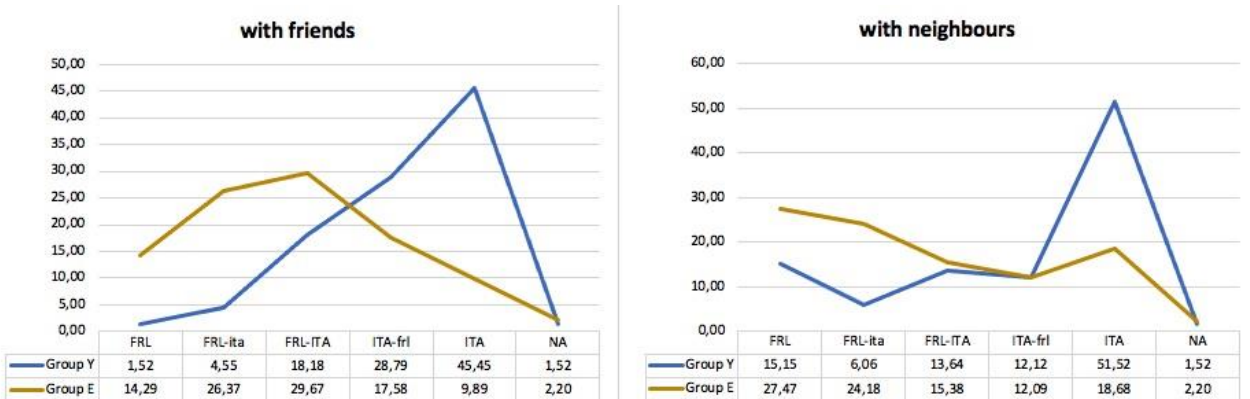
- 4.2-4-6a = [I like hearing Friulian/Italian/English spoken.]
- 4.2-4-6b = [Friulian/Italian/English should be taught to all pupils in Friuli-Venezia Giulia.]
- 4.2-4-6c = [I like speaking Friulian/Italian/English.]
- 4.2-4-6d = [Friulian/Italian/English is an easy language to learn.]
- 4.2-4-6e = [There are few languages more useful to learn than Friulian/Italian/English.]
- 4.2-4-6f = [I prefer to be taught in Friulian/Italian/English.]
- 4.2-4-6g = [Learning Friulian/Italian/English enriches my cultural knowledge.]
- 4.2-4-6h = [I would not mind marrying a Friulian/Italian/English speaker.]
- 4.2-4-6i = [Friulian/Italian/English is a language worth learning.]
- 4.2-4-6l = [If I had children, I would like them to be Friulian/Italian/English speakers regardless of other languages they may know.]

Answer options for each item: 1- Strongly disagree (*score=0*)
 2- Disagree (*score=20*)
 3- Partially disagree (*score=40*)
 4- Partially agree (*score=60*)
 5- Agree (*score=80*)
 6- Strongly agree (*score=100*)

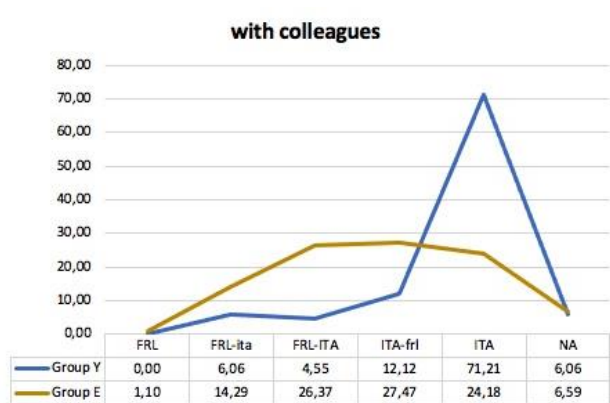
Appendix 2. Language use with specific people and for specific actions (par. 6.1.4)—Graphs



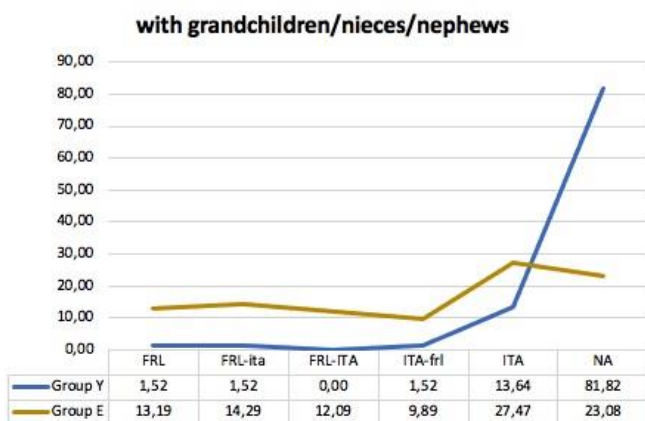
Graphs A15. Exchanges within the wider family (parents, siblings, grandparents, partner)



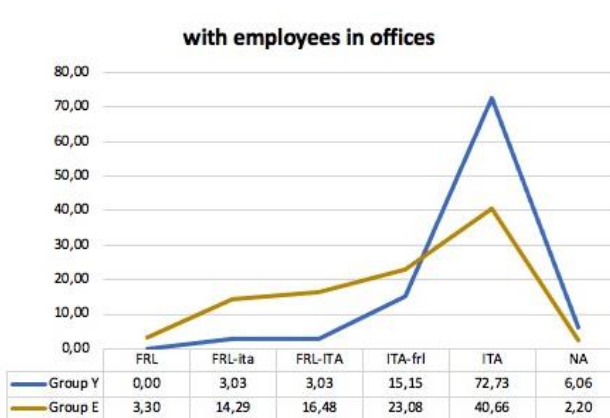
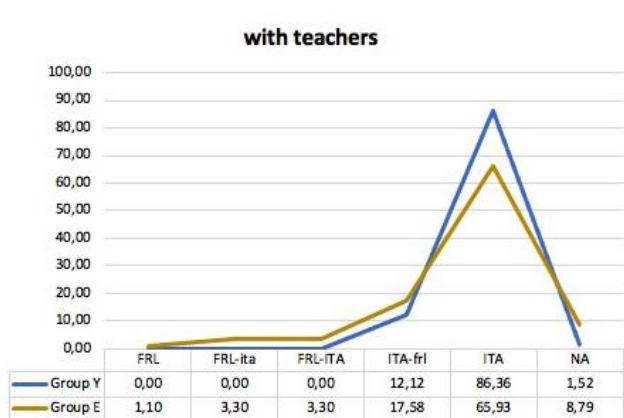
Graphs A16. Exchanges with friends and neighbours



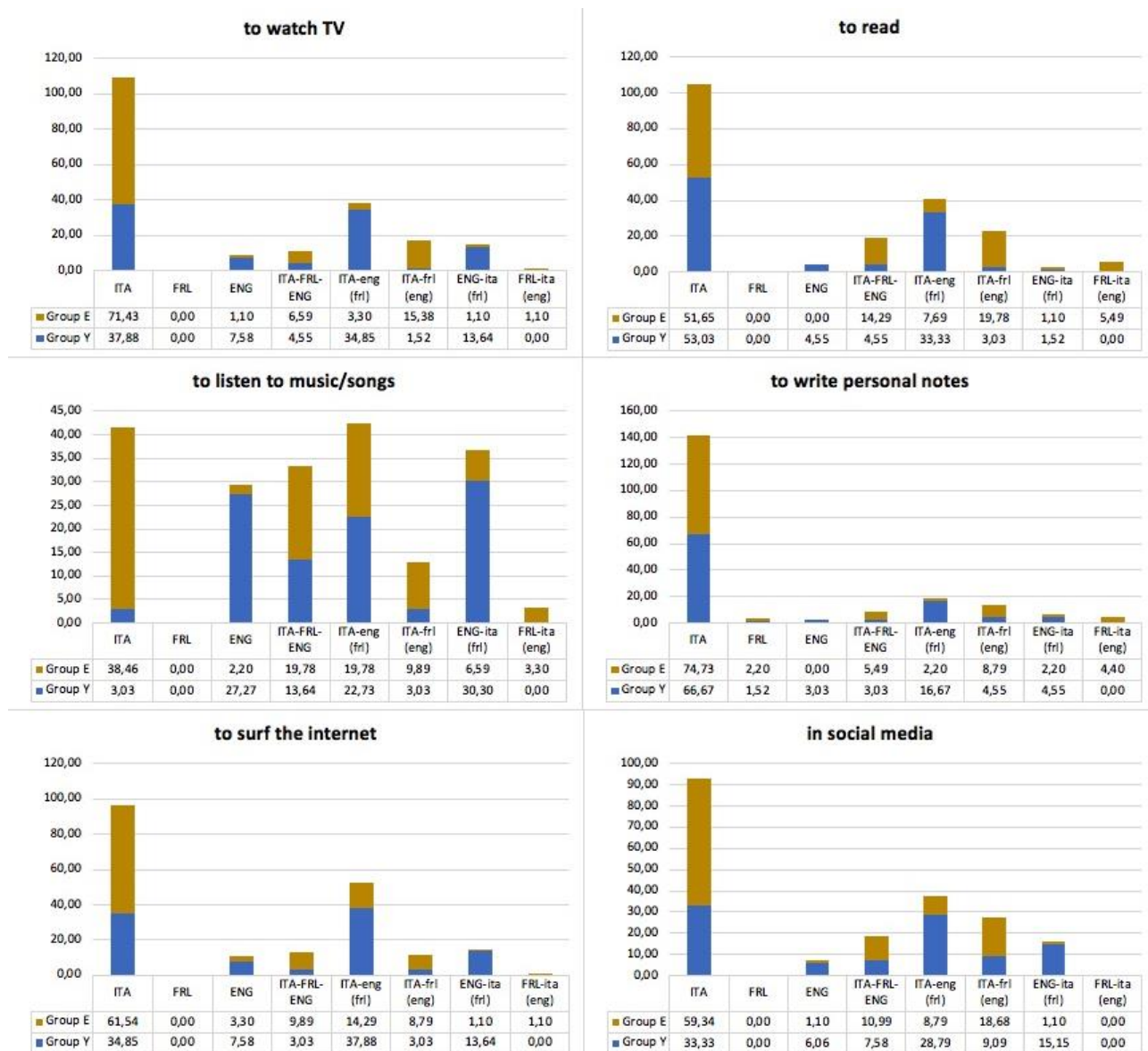
Graphs A17. Exchanges with colleagues and shopkeepers



Graph A18. Exchanges with grandchildren/nieces/nephews



Graphs A19. Exchanges with teachers and with employees in offices



Graphs A20. Language/s used to do specific activities

Didactique des langues accessible et approche intercompréhensive: affinités et pistes d'investigation possibles

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Resumé

Les élèves ayant des différences évolutives dans le traitement cognitif et linguistique rencontrent des difficultés importantes dans le processus d'apprentissage des langues, tant maternelles qu'étrangères. Les chercheurs italiens identifient les besoins de ces apprenants par l'acronyme BiLS (Bisogni Linguistici Specifici - Besoins Linguistiques Spécifiques), parmi lesquels on envisage aussi les élèves avec dyslexie. Dans l'une de nos études (Celentin 2020) nous avons comparé les principes de la didactique des langues accessible et ceux de l'approche intercompréhensive, et avons trouvé de nombreux points communs. Dans cet article, nous souhaiterions proposer des pistes de recherche dans le domaine du développement de la conscience phonologique et de l'amélioration métastratégique, issues du recoupement d'études sur l'intercompréhension et de celles sur le rôle de la dimension affective et motivationnelle dans l'apprentissage des élèves avec dyslexie.

Mot Clés

Intercompréhension, dyslexie, apprentissage des langues

Abstract

Students with evolutionary differences in cognitive-linguistic processing encounter significant difficulties in the language learning process, both maternal and foreign. Italian studies identify the needs of these students by the acronym BiLS (Bisogni Linguistici Specifici - Specific Linguistic Needs), among them there are also students with dyslexia. In one of our studies (Celentin 2020) we compared the principles of accessible language education and those of the intercomprehensive approach, finding many points of contact. In this essay we want to propose research tracks in the field of the development of phonological awareness and metastrategic enhancement, originating from the conjunction of intercomprehension studies and those on the role of the affective and motivational dimension in the learning of students with dyslexia.

Keywords

Intercomprehension, dyslexia, language learning

1. Quelques clarifications terminologiques

Dans cet article, nous nous inspirerons conjointement de deux traditions d'études qui explorent différents domaines (didactique des langues accessible et intercompréhension), nées dans différents pays (Italie et le monde francophone). Nous devons donc clarifier certains des termes-clés de la question.

Les "Besoins linguistiques spécifiques" (que nous appellerons BiLS) sont définis comme (Daloiso 2013:644; c'est nous qui traduisons)¹

¹ L'insieme delle difficoltà evolutive di funzionamento, permanenti o transitorie, in ambito educativo e/o apprenditivo, dovute all'interazione dei vari fattori di salute secondo il modello ICF [International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, n.d.a.], che interessano primariamente lo sviluppo della competenza comunicativa nella/e lingua/e materna/e ed incidono significativamente sull'apprendimento di altre lingue

la combinaison des difficultés de développement du fonctionnement, permanent ou transitoire, dans l'éducation et/ou l'apprentissage, en raison de l'interaction de différents facteurs de santé selon le modèle du CIF [Classification internationale du fonctionnement, du handicap et de la santé, nda] , qui affectent principalement le développement des compétences en communication dans la/les langue(s) maternelle(s) et ont un impact significatif sur l'apprentissage d'autres langues (langue seconde, étrangère, ou classique) au point d'exiger l'adaptation, l'intégration ou la restructuration de la voie de l'enseignement des langues.

Les BiLS peuvent avoir des causes différentes et résulter de troubles de la communication, du langage ou de l'apprentissage (Weck et Marro 2010 ; Moret 2018). D'un point de vue pédagogique, les BiLS font partie de la macro-catégorie des BES (Besoins Éducatifs Spéciaux). Les interventions pour les personnes atteintes de BiLS ne sont pas cliniques mais à la fois *éducatives* et *linguistiques*. La formulation de la définition de BiLS naît de l'effort de surmonter une "approche clinique" aux difficultés des étudiants, qui arrive certain fois à identifier l'étudiant avec le trouble (on entend quelques fois les enseignants dire: "en deuxième j'ai deux Dys et un TDAH") (Crunelle et al. 2010).

L'intercompréhension (IC) est l'une des quatre approches plurielles développées par la didactique des langues, unies par certains traits fondamentaux qui peuvent être résumés par (Candelier et al. 2007):

- la *dimension psycholinguistique*: favorise la construction de nouvelles compétences à partir des connaissances et des savoir-faire existants, linguistiques et non linguistiques;
- la *dimension linguistique*: incite l'apprenant à considérer les phénomènes linguistiques de manière holistique plutôt que par des compartiments étanches;
- la *dimension psycho-cognitive*: favorise la décentralisation culturelle;
- la *dimension sociolinguistique*: légitime la diversité linguistique et culturelle et favorise une meilleure intégration des apprenants allophones.

En IC, il y a une situation communicative dans laquelle les interlocuteurs, tout en parlant des langues différentes, sont capables de se comprendre réciproquement. Malgré la différence d'objectifs et la diversité des techniques adoptées, les différentes méthodologies tendent à être reconnues dans les principes suivants qui constituent le plus petit dénominateur commun de l'enseignement IC:

- l'approche plurilingue;
- *l'utilisation de compétences partielles*, requise par le Cadre Européen Commun de Référence pour les Langues (CECR);
- la centralité de la *compréhension*, aussi bien en termes de processus cognitifs activés que d'attitude envers l'interlocuteur dont on veut être compris;
- la *réflexion sur le langage* effectuée de manière d'abord inductive puis explicite;
- le développement de connaissances et de compétences stratégiques et métacognitives.

Les difficultés que rencontre l'élève avec BiLS dans l'apprentissage des langues à l'école peuvent dépendre du trouble, mais aussi de la façon dont la langue est enseignée (Njakowska 2010), notamment du "degré d'accessibilité" par lequel (Daloiso 2016:211) on entend "le processus menant à la construction d'un environnement d'apprentissage des langues sans obstacle pour l'apprenant avec BiLS". La réussite de la formation de l'élève avec BiLS dépend du degré d'accessibilité mis en œuvre par les professeurs de langues.

(seconde, straniere, classica) al punto da richiedere interventi di adattamento, integrazione o ristrutturazione del percorso di educazione linguistica.

L'accessibilité affecte toutes les étapes de l'enseignement des langues et est réalisée grâce à des interventions au niveau *macro* (et donc des choix théoriques de base de l'enseignement des langues et une certaine continuité au niveau horizontal et vertical) et au niveau *micro* (c'est-à-dire des stratégies pour accroître l'accessibilité des segments individuels et les outils opérationnels pour réaliser l'enseignement linguistique).

2. Les élèves BiLS et les contextes d'apprentissage des langues

Contrairement à la langue maternelle, qui est apprise spontanément par l'interaction avec des locuteurs compétents dans un idiome donné, l'éducation linguistique se fait dans un contexte formel et structuré. Le parcours éducatif est conçu et géré par des spécialistes et utilise des outils, des matériaux et des choix méthodologiques liés aux objectifs qu'ils ont l'intention de poursuivre.

Pour les élèves avec BiLS, les conditions linguistiques préalables et la réalisation de certains objectifs (p. ex. la maîtrise des compétences écrites ou des compétences de pensée métalinguistique) ne peuvent pas être considérées comme acquises, car leur trouble spécifique peut empêcher les processus mentaux de se transformer correctement en activités linguistiques concrètes et efficaces, leur permettant d'agir socialement avec la langue dans le monde.

Après avoir interprété le diagnostic du spécialiste, il faut observer les comportements de l'élève et détecter sa performance à l'aide d'outils spécialement conçus pour cela (Crunelle 2010) et donc analyser les spécificités des contextes dans lesquels les langues sont apprises, c'est-à-dire:

- *L1* la première langue apprise, à partir de laquelle le processus de scolarité a normalement lieu;
- *LE* les langues étrangères ou les langues apprises dans un contexte formel (scolaire), où elles sont différentes des langues de communication utilisées dans l'environnement extra-scolaire ;
- *L2* la langue seconde, c'est-à-dire la langue apprise (dans un contexte informel voire formel) après la L1 dans un environnement où elle est langue de communication;
- *LC* les langues classiques, c'est-à-dire les langues anciennes apprises dans un contexte formel.

Les élèves avec BiLS entrent souvent dans le cycle de l'enseignement primaire avec des compétences linguistiques informelles incomplètes en L1 en raison de fossilisations dans certains domaines de la compétence communicative, qui varient en fonction du trouble. Ces lacunes peuvent avoir des conséquences importantes sur la réalisation des objectifs du projet d'éducation linguistique. Les problèmes sont nombreux, ils génèrent des effets en cascade et affectent les conditions préalables essentielles d'un cours scolaire réussi, tels que le *rapprochement à la lecture et à l'écriture*, la *compréhension du texte*, l'*étude disciplinaire*, l'*analyse linguistique* et la *littéraire* qui, en soi, ne présenterait pas de difficultés spécifiques, mais qui devient complexe pour l'ensemble des points critiques mentionnés ci-dessus.

L'attitude de l'élève avec BiLS vis-à-vis des LE dépend de son expérience scolaire précédente : il peut en effet aborder une nouvelle LE avec curiosité et avec le désir de "prendre sa revanche", puisqu'il s'agit d'une nouvelle langue pour toute la classe, ou il peut considérer qu'elle est difficile "a priori", en raison des échecs dans l'étude de la L1.

Le spectre des difficultés que l'élève avec BiLS peut rencontrer dans l'apprentissage d'une LE est encore plus large que celui de la L1 et est lié au parcours d'apprentissage de la L1 que l'élève a suivi. Toutes les *compétences linguistiques* sont potentiellement difficiles, (nous

nous référons à Daloiso 2015:154 pour le détail; voir Charlann 2000 pour une expérience personnelle), c'est la combinaison des *phonèmes et des graphèmes de la LE* (en particulier des langues opaques) qui crée des difficultés considérables pour les élèves avec BiLS, qui présentent déjà des faiblesses dans les compétences phonologiques et orthographiques en L1. L'analyse *linguistique* est en outre encore plus compliquée qu'en L1, souvent aggravée par la méthode didactique utilisée.

L'étude des LC présente pour tous les élèves des inconvénients liés à la question de la motivation, étant donné qu'il s'agit de langues qui n'ont aucune valeur pragmatique dans la communication quotidienne et qui sont donc difficiles à insérer parmi les besoins immédiats de l'apprenant (Iovino 2019). Les difficultés que rencontre l'élève avec BiLS dans ce domaine sont en partie liées à son trouble, mais proviennent en grande partie de l'approche méthodologique utilisée. *L'approche à travers les textes écrits*, nécessaire en raison de l'absence d'un modèle de langue vivante, implique pour l'élève avec BiLS un énorme travail de décodage, sans qu'il n'ait la possibilité d'accéder ni au son de la langue ni à la richesse d'expériences linguistiques informelles. En outre, l'analyse *linguistique*, envisagée principalement par une approche *grammaticale*, s'appuie presque exclusivement sur le canal visuel-verbal, souvent le plus fragile chez les élèves BiLS. Enfin, la *traduction*, traditionnellement le principal outil d'étude des LC, est extrêmement difficile, voire impossible, pour les apprenants BiLS, à cause, entre autres, de la difficulté à utiliser le dictionnaire.

Le contexte de la L2 est le plus difficile à définir car le nombre de variables qui entrent en jeu augmente de façon exponentielle (Celentin, Daloiso 2017; Elbro et al. 2012; Houzé 2019). L'une des questions cruciales concernant les liens entre les BiLS et la situation bilingue est la relation de cause à effet possible entre les deux, bien que les études menées jusqu'à présent semblent l'exclure. Certes, pour déterminer la fragilité du parcours scolaire de l'élève, on affecte des facteurs tels que la transparence de l'orthographe de la L2, la progression de la lecture, l'âge du début de l'apprentissage de la nouvelle langue et la façon dont l'élève est scolarisé, la méthodologie d'enseignement adoptée. La politique inclusive adoptée par l'environnement scolaire et les relations entre la culture d'origine et la culture d'accueil jouent également un rôle majeur.

3. L'approche IC et l'enseignement des langues aux élèves avec BiLS

Les difficultés d'apprentissage des langues qu'éprouvent les élèves avec BiLS découlent principalement de problèmes de gestion des processus d'ordre inférieur (tels que discriminer les sons, récupérer le sens des mots, assembler les éléments de la phrase, activer les habiletés graphiques-motrices, etc.). Les processus d'ordre supérieur, liés aux fonctions exécutives (Aron 2008) sont intacts (Daloiso 2016; Elwan et al. 2019), mais malheureusement l'activation de ces derniers est affectée par la lenteur des premiers. Les interventions didactiques doivent donc viser à "surmonter", "résoudre", "compenser" les problèmes techniques (tactiques) afin que les ressources cognitives soient libérées pour être investies dans des processus plus élevés (stratégiques).

Les travaux de sensibilisation aux processus d'apprentissage et d'élaboration de stratégies métacognitives doivent nécessairement être menés à partir de la langue la mieux maîtrisée par l'élève, c'est-à-dire sa L1, en l'utilisant comme une "passerelle" pour accéder à la LE et, plus largement, aux langues avec lesquelles l'élève entre et entrera en contact : en s'intéressant au fonctionnement du système linguistique, l'apprenant peut construire des ponts avec les systèmes linguistiques qu'il connaît déjà et acquérir plus d'autonomie dans son apprentissage en développant, entre autres, sa capacité de déduction (Blanche-Benveniste 2001).

C'est précisément cette considération qui nous pousse à considérer l'approche IC comme appropriée pour enseigner les langues aux élèves avec BiLS.

Les tendances dominantes dans les méthodologies utilisées dans l'enseignement des langues à l'école sont généralement caractérisées par (Chandelier 2007):

- l'évitement et la peur des interférences de la L1, considérées comme risquées parce qu'elles "rendent les élèves confus" (Fiorentino 2017);
- la recherche d'un accès direct à la langue cible, sans l'intermédiaire de la L1;
- le refus de soutenir la connaissance antérieure de l'apprenant par crainte de faux amis et d'autres sources possibles d'erreur, telles que les moulagés et les transferts.

L'IC, d'autre part, envisage toutes ces caractéristiques comme des avantages et vise également le développement de compétences croisées, telles que la collaboration, la communication, les stratégies d'apprentissage, la pensée créative et l'attitude réflexive.

Dans les paragraphes suivants, nous aimerions concentrer l'attention du lecteur sur certains aspects qui semblent mettre en évidence l'affinité entre l'accessibilité en didactiques des langues et l'IC.

3.1 Traitement de l'entrée linguistique

Afin de saisir les affinités entre l'enseignement de l'IC et la didactique accessible des langues, nous rapportons dans le diagramme suivant (Fig. 1) les étapes de la planification d'une intervention de récupération pour un élève avec BiLS, flanquant des boîtes avec des références aux techniques utilisées dans l'enseignement IC (Bonvino, Jamet 2016).

	Planification d'une intervention de récupération pour un élève BiLS	Compréhension d'un texte en IC
Phases	Actions	Techniques
Prélecture (planification)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - créer un contexte concret et motivant - lier les connaissances et l'expérience passées de l'élève au sujet du texte - formuler un objectif de lecture précis - formuler des prévisions sur le texte 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - choisir des textes authentiques et motivants pour le destinataire - solliciter le bagage linguistique - faire comprendre le sens global
Lecture (phase technique)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lire à haute voix pour l'élève ou le faire lire en silence - faire réfléchir explicitement sur le lexique 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - utiliser des pistes audio ou faire lire par un locuteur natif - faire utiliser le mot fantôme quand il y a un mot inconnu - faire utiliser les tamis lexicaux et morphosyntaxiques
Après lecture (réflexion)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - se concentrer sur les contenus du texte ou sur les stratégies utilisées par l'élève pour les comprendre - catégoriser de façon systématique les stratégies de compréhension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - faire systématiser les intuitions linguistiques - faire "penser à haut voix" ("think aloud protocol") - faire utiliser les tamis lexicaux et morphosyntaxiques

Fig. 1: comparaison entre les étapes d'une intervention de récupération pour un élève avec BiLS et celles de la compréhension du texte dans une approche IC.

Dans l'approche IC, les compétences linguistiques sont travaillées séparément et l'effort mené à une compétence peut avoir des conséquences positives sur les autres. Selon Caddéo et Jamet (2013: 29) "Pour preuve, dans le cas d'élève en difficultés, par exemple, les *diagnostics* se font plus précis (troubles de l'écriture, trouble de la lecture, trouble de la parole, etc.) et le travail de renforcement n'est mené que sur une compétence."

Nous soulignons également, méthodologiquement, le rôle de la L1 dans l'apprentissage des LE/L2. Dans l'approche IC, l'enseignant agit comme intermédiaire entre le texte et l'apprenant en utilisant la L1 de l'apprenant: si l'enseignant utilisait la langue cible, l'apprenant devrait gérer plusieurs niveaux de connaissances, ce qui retarderait l'exercice visé par l'enseignant et déplacerait les objectifs.

L'utilisation de la L1 au début de l'apprentissage est rassurante, facilitante (l'apprenant reste dans un état d'observateur du fonctionnement des langues, mais commence à acquérir des connaissances susceptibles de servir au moment de travailler en production) et réfléchie, car par la découverte du fonctionnement d'autres langues, l'apprenant redécouvre sa L1. Le niveau de connaissance de la L1 est un facteur clé dans les processus d'inférence.

Pour l'élève avec BiLS, pouvoir utiliser sa L1 à la fois dans le processus de compréhension du texte et dans le processus d'analyse et de réflexion linguistique, c'est pouvoir tirer profit d'une multitude d'expériences linguistiques dont il ignore souvent le potentiel. L'exploitation de ces connaissances lui permet de soutenir la motivation et d'améliorer les stratégies métacognitives, au profit de l'éducation linguistique globale.

3.2 Compétence phonologique

Dans le cadre du rétablissement des conditions linguistiques pour les élèves avec BiLS, Dallois (2015) souligne l'importance préliminaire des interventions de sensibilisation phonologique, c'est-à-dire ce processus qui favorise la familiarité de l'élève avec la structure sonore d'une langue. L'avantage de ces interventions est indéniable tant pour les élèves atteints de BiLS que pour les autres.

Il existe deux types d'interventions de sensibilisation phonologique:

- *interventions informelles*: activités qui, de par leur nature, peuvent favoriser une exposition implicite de l'élève aux sons de la langue (environnement d'apprentissage riche en phonologique);

- *interventions formelles*: interventions éducatives spécifiquement conçues pour promouvoir le développement des compétences phonologiques et métaphoniques, dont le cadre doit toujours être ludique, narratif, explicite et multisensoriel.

Dans une optique IC, on considère que pour les langues voisines, il n'est pas nécessaire d'introduire l'écriture et la phonologie parce que la forte proximité des systèmes est spontanément perçue par les lecteurs novices adultes et qu'une présentation "exhaustive" des différences orthographiques serait décourageante. Il est également important de se rappeler que les divergences sont plus apparentes que réelles. Il existe trois façons possibles de surmonter ces différences:

- disposer d'un *enregistrement audio* des textes pour favoriser une familiarité progressive en parallèle avec l'écriture et l'oral;

- faire en sorte que le *filtre phonologique* agisse, c'est-à-dire laisser une personne percevoir les nouveaux sons à travers le filtre de son propre langage et donc "de façon erronée" parce que, paradoxalement, cela permet d'abord de réduire les difficultés ; les associations "sauvages" sont souvent constructives;

- intervenir uniquement sur les *termes/passages incompréhensibles* qui peuvent entraver la lecture et retarder la compréhension, en créant des outils destinés uniquement aux points qui créent des difficultés basées sur la langue de départ de l'élève. Le reste, vous devinez.

Ce n'est que récemment que des études approfondies ont été menées sur le développement des compétences phonologiques des étudiants en IC (Escoubas Benveniste 2016), mais il est indéniable qu'un travail ardu sur la compréhension, écrite et orale, ne peut faire abstraction du son de la langue. Escudé (2014) remarque chez les étudiants qui suivent un cours d'IC la capacité de construire, à partir de leurs propres lectures de textes, une sorte de "phonologie des hypothèses" qui les conduit plus rapidement à entrer dans les pratiques phonétiques authentiques des langues apprises. Dans l'enseignement IC, les phénomènes prosodiques en général ont une importance considérable et, plus spécifiquement, les problèmes de segmentation et de cohésion. L'optique est celle de la méthode verbe-tonale qui implique une approche du global au particulier. Les premières activités visent donc à identifier naturellement les intonations expressives, la fragmentation et les limites syntaxiques. Elles sont suivies par des tâches spécifiques destinées à faciliter la perception de l'accent dans le langage objectif (activités de récupération et de discrimination) et à présenter les difficultés que la structure accentuée peut entraîner (Baqué, Le Besnerais, Masperi 2003).

3.3 Motivation

Comme nous l'avons vu au paragraphe 2, au début de l'apprentissage d'une nouvelle LE les élèves avec BiLS peuvent avoir des attitudes contradictoires : certains ont peu confiance dans leurs capacités à apprendre une LE, d'autres vivent ce moment comme une façon de se racheter et ont des attentes irréalistes.

L'IC modifie l'attitude "méfiante" à l'égard de l'apprentissage des langues, considéré comme complexe : on se rend compte que la compétence réceptive est importante et qu'elle permet d'"entrer" dans la communication, l'investissement cognitif est inférieur et est à la portée d'un plus grand nombre de personnes de tous âges.

Après l'expérimentation de la formation menée avec l'approche IC, les réactions positives de surprise sont nombreuses et les participants ont le sentiment de découvrir leurs aptitudes pour l'apprentissage des langues. L'IC donne la sensation d'obtenir un résultat tangible inattendu et pousse vers un sentiment d'auto-efficacité qui active une attitude positive permanente envers l'apprentissage des langues (Caddéo, Jamet 2013).

L'IC peut agir comme une étincelle de motivation ou de revitalisation, grâce à la mise en œuvre rapide et authentique des compétences dont nous disposons.

3.4 Réduction de l'anxiété linguistique (ou "latophobie")

Certains chercheurs (Horwitz et coll. 1986) parlent d'un type particulier d'anxiété, *l'anxiété des langues étrangères*, résultant de l'unicité du processus d'apprentissage des langues. Les causes de ce type d'anxiété situationnelle résident dans la maîtrise linguistique en LE/L2, perçue comme limitée, ce qui empêche ces personnes d'être elles-mêmes. Les élèves avec BiLS éprouvent souvent un niveau élevé d'anxiété linguistique. Afin de le réduire au maximum, un environnement d'apprentissage détendu, acceptant les différences évolutives, s'avère nécessaire.

La progression en IC opère à l'inverse par rapport à l'apprentissage traditionnel des langues : après avoir développé des activités de compréhension écrite jusqu'à un certain niveau, il est possible de revenir en arrière et de développer les autres compétences, sur une meilleure

base et avec un niveau d'anxiété plus faible (Meissner et al. 2004) comme on le voit dans le schéma de la fig. 2.

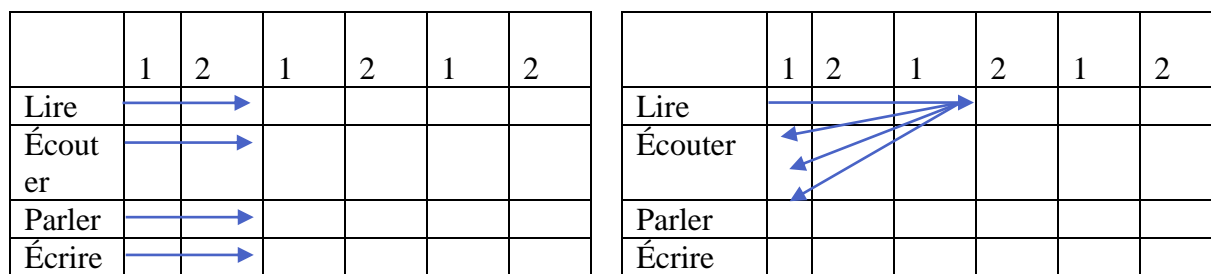


Fig. 2: Confrontation entre la progression d'apprentissage dans un cours de langue traditionnel et un cours donné suivant l'approche intercompréhensive.

3.5 Expertise métastratégique

L'élève avec BiLS, afin de faire face à l'apprentissage de façon efficace, a besoin d'améliorer ses propres stratégies techniques. La didactique des langues accessible place en effet comme essentiel le développement des compétences métastratégiques, qui font prendre conscience à l'élève de ses forces et lui donnent des références solides à exploiter, y compris de manière indépendante.

L'IC a une forte valeur métacognitive qui vise à faire acquérir les principales stratégies de compréhension, applicables à toutes les langues et permettant une plus grande autonomie et l'émancipation de l'apprenant dans l'apprentissage des langues (Garbarino 2015).

La *simultanéité* est le trait original de l'IC par le fait qu'elle s'appuie sur la linguistique comparative, c'est-à-dire la relation des fonctions linguistiques dans leurs différences et similitudes (sans que l'aspect historique de la langue ou une certaine érudition ne soient requises). C'est un outil pédagogique car il fournit une technique permettant de résoudre les problèmes de compréhension: l'apprenant est invité à consulter ses connaissances dans d'autres langues (y compris la L1) pour résoudre le problème. Contrairement à l'idée souvent répandue, l'utilisation de plusieurs langues à l'intérieur d'une seule séance d'enseignement ne conduit pas à la confusion ou au *mélange* pouvant nuire au développement de la compréhension parce que:

- le décodage se déroule dans le contexte (limitation de l'interprétation erronée);
- une combinaison incorrecte, p. ex. traduire "apre" (italien pour "il ouvre") par "après", indique que la stratégie de comparaison est active;
- le nombre de similitudes est beaucoup plus élevé que celui des différences.

La mauvaise interprétation est résolue grâce à l'aide spécifique de l'enseignant et/ou dans le contexte lui-même qui contraint à faire un choix.

Il ne s'agit pas d'apprendre davantage de langues de façon juxtaposée, mais de développer un savoir-faire dans différentes langues. Plusieurs langues peuvent apparaître au cours de la même session pédagogique: l'apprenant continue ainsi à se concentrer sur la capacité à transférer les stratégies de compréhension et le sens, à reconstruire sans remettre en question la légitimité de travailler sur ces langues ("ai-je assez de connaissances pour le faire?").

La comparaison est l'opération la plus sollicitée par les apprenants qui continuent de comparer les mots, les structures, les phonèmes, la morphologie et la typographie des langues. Partant de ce qu'ils savent sur le code linguistique d'une langue, ils essaient de découvrir, par comparaison, ce qu'ils ne savent pas sur d'autres langues. Dans la réalisation des activités, les apprenants ont accès à la langue de scolarisation, aux LE apprises à l'école, aux langues de l'environnement, aux langues des compagnons allophones, aux langues présentes dans les médias ou également aux langues qui sont à l'origine d'autres langues, en particulier le latin.

3.6 Utilisation d'outils compensatoires

Les ressources audio et vidéo sont un outil utile pour compenser les difficultés d'apprentissage d'une LE parce qu'elles:

- permettent l'activation d'autres canaux (les pistes audios soulagent le poids du décodage écrit, les pistes vidéo s'appuient sur des langues non verbales);
- proposent des activités moins fatigantes;
- fournissent un modèle linguistique correct;
- permettent de gérer les ressources en autonomie.

Souvent, cependant, l'élève avec BiLS n'accepte pas volontiers leur utilisation en classe de peur que sa "différence" ne soit soulignée.

Avec la méthodologie IC, la lecture du texte à voix haute se fait pour toute la classe. Elle permet de :

- clarifier la construction de la phrase en fournissant des indications sur le regroupement des mots ;
- saisir les symétries entre certaines constructions grammaticales;
- saisir la proximité entre les langues lorsque la transcription graphique est opaque.

L'IC rend donc tout le monde égal face à l'utilisation de ces outils, favorisant la "mimesis" de l'élève avec BiLS dans la classe.

3.7 Induction et enseignement explicite de la grammaire

Comme nous l'avons souligné au point 2, les élèves avec BiLS ont du mal à appréhender la grammaire de manière déductive: les déficits liés aux processus d'abstraction et de mémorisation rendent les exercices de grammaire traditionnels inefficaces et frustrants. L'approche de l'aspect grammatical de la langue (c'est-à-dire la régularité de l'opération linguistique) doit être *inductive* (parce qu'elle suit et ne précède pas l'exposition à la langue) et *explicite* (c'est-à-dire menée avec l'enseignant de manière évidente).

Dans l'IC, la dimension grammaticale n'est pas traitée indépendamment: pendant le processus de lecture/compréhension, elle est présentée par le *rôle* qu'elle joue dans la construction du sens. Il n'y a donc pas de travail grammatical spécifique avant de lire un texte, bien que des informations puissent être fournies pour faciliter la tâche. Au départ, en fait, le lecteur n'est pas intéressé par les questions grammaticales, il ne le devient que lorsque l'exercice de la lecture est automatisé.

L'information est proposée en fonction de la tâche, qui est de comprendre, et de la difficulté que les phénomènes dans la compréhension représentent. Ce processus est d'autant plus efficace qu'il est mis en mouvement à partir des besoins et au moment où ils se manifestent.

4. Conclusion: l'IC comme créneau positif

Comme dans d'autres pays, l'Italie a connu une prolifération d'acronymes et d'étiquettes au cours des trente dernières années pour identifier et classer la "diversité". L'utilité de ces répertoires pour les praticiens du secteur clinique et éducatif est indéniable, mais le "morcellement" excessif de la diversité risque, selon certains chercheurs, de mystifier le

concept de normalité en en faisant une abstraction. À la fin des années 1990, un mouvement éducatif appelé “neurodiversité” est né (Blume 1998; Chanteur 1999) et a voulu étendre à toutes ces “étiquettes” l’attitude positive que la société du XXI^e siècle démontre à l’égard d’autres diversités, telles que la diversité culturelle ou la biodiversité, considérées comme des richesses précisément parce qu’elles sont “exceptionnelles”.

Partant de la prise de conscience du potentiel et du style d’apprentissage des langues de chaque élève, l’enseignant préconise les chemins métacognitifs et cherche à promouvoir l’éducation à la “diversité dans l’apprentissage” pour toute la classe, en créant des “créneaux positifs”, c’est-à-dire des environnements favorables dans lesquels ils peuvent prospérer, en minimisant leurs faiblesses et en maximisant leurs forces.

La perspective adoptée par la neurodiversité encourage la promotion de l’autonomie de l’apprenant, davantage considéré comme une personne en croissance que comme un sujet à “entraîner”. Ici aussi, nous trouvons une forte affinité entre la didactique des langues accessible et l’approche IC. L’enseignement IC se développe d’abord en dehors des contextes scolaires, comme un ensemble d’indications destinées à donner lieu à des comportements matures de relation et de collaboration, d’ouverture, d’équité. La didactique des langues accessible met l’autonomie au centre de ses interventions: l’élève avec BiLS ne cessera pas d’être ce qu’il est, puisque la cause de son trouble est neurophysiologique, et devra donc apprendre à vivre avec sa “caractéristique” et à la gérer de la meilleure façon possible, en s’assurant qu’elle ne l’empêche pas d’atteindre ses objectifs de vie. L’apprentissage des langues n’est pas une fin en soi, mais l’un des outils qui peuvent être utilisés dans ce parcours.

Les approches plurielles favorisent le développement de l’autonomie pour l’apprentissage futur tout au long de la vie, incitant les apprenants à réfléchir sur les composantes de leur répertoire multilingue, leurs compétences interculturelles, le fonctionnement des langues et des cultures et les moyens les plus efficaces de tirer profit de leurs expériences personnelles ou collectives d’utilisation et d’apprentissage des langues (Beacco et al. 2015:20; Candelier et al. 2012:5).

L’IC stimule dans l’espace de classe un *modus operandi* dans lequel la coopération est à la base du succès: tout le monde sait quelque chose et tout le monde doit apprendre quelque chose et on tient compte des besoins de chaque compagnon parce qu’on ne peut ignorer personne. L’IC ne propose pas de “mesures compensatoires” telles que celles qui sont préparées pour les étudiants ayant des nécessités particulières, mais elle offre la possibilité de créer une société démocratique et paritaire où chaque membre met ses connaissances au service des autres et dans l’intérêt de tous.

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Exploring the Relationship Between Multilingual Learning Experience, Metalinguistic Knowledge, and Metalinguistic Awareness

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Abstract

The last two decades have witnessed a considerable increase in interest in Third or Additional Language Acquisition (TLA). The positive effects of bilingualism in TLA have related the advantages evident in bilingual learners to the influence of bilingualism on cognitive development and, specifically, Metalinguistic Awareness (MLA). The paper aims, first, at providing a comprehensive portrait of what MLA is, considering the complexity of this factor, its linguistic and cognitive nature along the implicit - explicit continuum. Second, it disentangles the intricate relationship between TLA on one hand, and the development of MLA and other mediating factors on the other, including level of bilingualism, literacy, age of acquisition of the L2, language use, and language knowledge. Third, the work focuses on a factor that has been the object of an intense debate in psycholinguistics, i.e. the role of awareness in the language learning process, to shed light on the different aspects distinguishing Metalinguistic Knowledge (MLK) and Metalinguistic Awareness (MLA) of the language. A comprehensive analysis of the most influential literature in the field, comparing contrasting perspectives of study, will be propounded to offer a comprehensive overview of the discussed phenomena to better understand the impact they have on multilingual education.

Keywords

Third Language Acquisition; Bilingualism; Metalinguistic Awareness; Metalinguistic Knowledge; Multilingual Education.

1. Introduction

The popular belief among lay speakers that bilinguals are better language learners is also supported by several influential works in the field of Third or Additional Language Acquisition (TLA) (e.g. Cenoz & Genesee 1998, Jessner 1999, Thomas 1988). All these studies generally explain the so-called bilingual advantage in terms of cognitive development and increased levels of Metalinguistic Awareness (MLA). Specifically, in line with the Dynamic Model of Multilingualism (DMM), (Herdina & Jessner, 2002), Metalinguistic Knowledge (MLK) and MLA have been detected as crucial factors that 'can contribute to the catalytic or accelerating effect in TLA' (Jessner 2008a: 26).

However, given the multifaceted and complex nature of the area of research (Larsen-Freeman 1997, Verspoor et al. 2011), MLA is not easy to define and measure, in both language acquisition and non-language acquisition domains including cognitive psychology, cognitive science, and neuroscience. The present work aims to investigate the relationship between MLA, developed in previous languages, under different circumstances, and TLA. In particular, it analyses the complex and non-unitary nature of MLA, being both linguistic and cognitive, explicit and implicit. Besides, the variables known to affect its development, including different types of bilingualism, literacy, implicit and explicit instruction, will be examined to thoroughly understand its relevance in terms of multilingual education. To propound a complete overview of the multiple nuances characterising the phenomenon of

MLA, the most relevant works selected from the field of cognitive linguistics will be compared and contrasted.

2. Defining Metalinguistic Awareness

From a closer look at previous and current research on the different routes of acquisition available to bilingual learners, it can be noticed that the most striking difference between implicit and explicit learning is the presence or lack of awareness (Rebuschat & Williams 2012). The role of awareness in learning is explicitly or implicitly subsumed in several variables including type of learning, learning condition, type of awareness (i.e. language, metacognitive, conscious, unconscious etc.) as well as constructs such as noticing and perception (Squires 2016). More specifically, when dealing with language learning, these concepts are often associated with the term “metalinguistic”: i.e. metalinguistic awareness and metalinguistic knowledge of the language. The majority of the studies taken into account in the present work explain the instructed bilinguals' better performance in TLA in terms of higher MLA and improved linguistic strategies. Bowden, Sanz & Stafford (2005), for instance, explain the bilingual advantage in additional languages referring to bilinguals' experience as language learners. Specifically, they maintain that ‘they look for more sources of input, make an early effort to use the new language, and show self-direction and a positive attitude toward the task’ (2005:122).

Nonetheless, it still remains unclear how and to which extent MLA helps multilingual learners to acquire an additional language. Thus, what is MLA and why is it considered of paramount importance for the development of additional languages in bilinguals? Providing a general and commonly accepted definition of metalinguistic concepts is not an easy task. The terminology used by academics to describe them may seem rather confusing due to the different scientific approaches (i.e. cognitive, psychological, educational) adopted to analyse MLA and to the variety of competing words employed to describe specific aspects of metalinguistic concepts. In Cenoz's view (2003), MLA works as a mediator between bilingualism on one hand and TLA on the other. This means that bilingualism has a positive effect on the development of MLA and communicative skills and these factors, in turn, have an impact on the process of learning new languages. In other words, positive effects on bilingualism on foreign language learning occur at least because they have a positive influence on MLA in the first place. Malakoff's definition helps to clarify what exactly means to be “metalinguistically aware”. Specifically, the author claims that (MLA):

allows the individual to step back from the comprehension or production of an utterance to consider the linguistic form and structure underlying the meaning of the utterance. Thus, a metalinguistic task requires the individual to think about the linguistic nature of the message: to attend and to reflect on the structural features of the language. To be metalinguistically aware, then, is to know how to approach and solve certain types of problems which themselves demand certain cognitive and linguistic skills (Malakoff 1992: 518).

An enormous contribution to better understand the degree and nature of metalinguistic concepts comes from Bialystok's work *Bilingualism in Development* (2001). Indeed, she disambiguates the three main entities qualified by the term “metalinguistic”: i.e. knowledge, ability, and awareness. Concerning the first concept, metalinguistic knowledge (or knowledge about language), Bialystok argues that what makes it different from knowledge about grammar is the level of generality at which rules are represented. More precisely, it is the broader knowledge of abstract principles of language, which is distinct from the knowledge of a particular language. Contrarily, metalinguistic ability is portrayed as ‘the capacity to use knowledge about language as opposed to the ability to use language’ (Bialystok 2001:124).

Finally, to have MLA, attention must be actively focused on the domain of knowledge that describes the explicit properties of languages.

De Angelis, on the other hand, adopts the broader definition of MLA. In her opinion, it refers to 'the learners' ability to think of language and of perceiving language including the ability to separate meaning and forms, discriminate language components, identify ambiguity and understand the use of grammatical forms and structures' (De Angelis 2007: 121). It is worth noticing that what the author emphasises here is the role played by the formal context of acquisition of the languages involved. That is, they provide further metalinguistic knowledge that learners can rely upon when learning additional languages. Accordingly, formal instruction in the second language is seen as a determining factor that has an impact on the students' performance in a third language.

Hence, the reason why metalinguistic knowledge, ability, and awareness have a positive influence on bilingual learners of additional languages is that they are all represented in an abstract and general sense. In other words, they go beyond the knowledge of any particular language mastered, becoming explicit and universal to such a point to be applied to the study of any additional language. Previous and current research into the field has resorted to different arguments to explain the cause of the increased level of MLA, observed in bilinguals, which was also responsible for their better performance in L3. Indeed, because of the complex nature of the relatively new field of study as well as the number of variables to consider in TLA, there is still no common agreement among scholars whether MLA is mainly to be attributed to the context of acquisition of the L2 (i.e. formal/informal), the level of proficiency attained in the L2 or the amount of use and exposure to the language itself (see Cenoz 2013 for a review). Nonetheless, if on one hand it is commonly agreed that MLA is one of the first and most important variables which makes bilinguals better language learners, it still remains to clarify whether this factor improves the process of language learning or whether it is the other way round.

On the complexity of TLA, it is worth discussing the aforementioned Herdina and Jessner's Dynamic Model of Multilingualism (DMM) (Herdina & Jessner 2002). It describes the development of a multilingual system as a changeable, non-linear, reversible and complex phenomenon. More specifically, the DMM is based on the assumption that there are a number of open systems (i.e. LS1/LS2/LS3 etc.) depending on psychological factors. Each system is interdependent and not autonomous from the other ones and the stability of the system depends on language maintenance and the language choices of the multilingual speakers, affected by the perceived communicative needs. The holistic approach described in the model is crucial to understand the dynamic interaction among complex systems in multilingual language processing. Indeed, multilingual proficiency (MP) is described as the dynamic interaction among various psycholinguistic systems, crosslinguistic interaction (CLIN), and the M(ultilingualism)-factor or M-effect (LS1, LS2, LS3, LSN + M-factor = MP) (Jessner 2008b).

3. The role of Metalinguistic Awareness and other mediating factors on additional language learning

Which are the necessary conditions responsible for the development of MLA? Does the context and type of acquisition of previous languages play a determining role? One of the first studies taking into account the context of acquisition of the L2 as an individual difference variable is Thomas' experiment (Thomas 1988). The research compares adult bilinguals who learnt their second language informally with those who had already received formal classroom training in both languages. The data gathered in the study suggest that bilingual

students who received formal training in both languages perform better than students who received no formal training. Moreover, the findings provide convincing evidence that bilinguals who acquire two language systems naturalistically, and later acquire literacy only in their first language, do not necessarily develop the skills required to learn an additional language in a formal setting. Thus, Thomas maintains that to fully exploit the advantages of learning a language (that is typologically related to the target language) students must necessarily have explicit instruction in the second language. Interestingly, she maintained that even at an elementary level of foreign language learning, students' performance is facilitated by MLA and that it works as 'a monitor to create acceptable spoken or written utterances in a third language' (Thomas 1988: 236).

Along similar lines, in a work by Roehr and colleagues (Roehr, Gànem & Gutiérrez 2009), the impact of MLK on TLA has been tested in English speaking University-level learners of German and Spanish. The findings appear to suggest that language learning experience in formal settings considerably affected the level of MLK attained by the participants. Additionally, a closer look at the data indicates that, despite a considerable relationship with language learning aptitude and working memory, MLK is separable and distinct and constitutes an individual difference variable on its right in the field of language learning research. Another remarkable concept is that the nature of MLK has been described as a learnable, task-dependent and malleable feature rather than stable. This means that it can be brought into awareness, and articulated with processes involving these types of knowledge, drawing on the higher level of mental faculties of reasoning and analysis.

3.1 *Level of Bilingualism: the Role of Proficiency in L2*

An influential paper by Roehr (2008) specifically looks at the correlation between proficiency in L2 and MLK in L1 English learners of German as a second language. The author points out that knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, as evident in proficient L2 performance, may not only be built upon the basis of explicitly acquired MLK but may also help a learner develop their MLK in the first place. In other words, she argues that knowledge about knowledge may arise from language competence (i.e. proficiency) rather than the other way round. Besides, the research raises other important questions, including the extent to which metalinguistic description and explanation ability may have different roles to play at different levels of second language proficiency. In particular, it suggested that to investigate the cause-effect relationship between explanation and language analytic abilities, it is necessary to compare several proficiency levels through a longitudinal study assessing whether MLK about specific features is constructed based on the knowledge of the L2.

One of the most interesting approaches into the field comes from the work of Cenoz & Valencia (1994) that considered the influence of bilingualism on third language learning comparing Basque/Spanish bilinguals learning English as an L3. Assuming the Interdependence Hypothesis as a starting point, (Cummins 1981), they claim that if instruction in one language is effective in promoting proficiency in this language, the transfer of this proficiency to another language will occur, provided there are enough exposure and motivation. In agreement with previous studies, the findings show that: first, bilingualism has a positive mediating effect on TLA; second, the regression analysis demonstrated that the inclusion of bilingualism significantly improved the effects of other predictors and, most importantly, there were no interaction effects between bilingualism and other predictors. This means that the effects of bilingualism were obtained regardless of the effects of cognitive, sociocultural, psychological variables. Hence, the experiments confirm the thesis propounded by Swain and colleagues (Swain et al. 1990) that literacy in a heritage language is associated with higher levels of achievement in a third language.

Jaensch (2009), on the other hand, in an interesting contribution from a different perspective of study, i.e. Universal Grammar, investigates the impact that the level of proficiency in L2 has on the acquisition of TLA. The three languages involved in the research are Japanese (L1), English (L2), and German (L3). The significance of the work relies on demonstrating that L3 learners perform better than monolinguals, both in terms of general and specific features proficiency. Also, it raises the question of whether the proficiency level in an L2 can affect the performance on a specific element in the L3 which is absent in the participants' first and second language. Notably, the results indicate that even though grammatical gender is not marked on determiners in English, participants with a similar proficiency level in German but higher proficiency in English L2 performed better in the gender assignment task. To interpret these findings, the author resorts to two different theories: i.e. the additive effect of bilingualism hypothesis (Lambert 1974) and the threshold hypothesis (Cummins 1976). Based on the evidence provided, it is here suggested that learners of a third language exhibit more refined MLA, a wider lexical knowledge, and more developed cognitive skills which lead them to become more sensitive to new features in the third language. Specifically, Jaensch has named this skill "enhanced feature sensitivity", which is responsible for helping third language learners to trigger the setting of Universal Grammar parameters.

3.2 *The Role of Literacy in Prior Languages*

On the role of literacy in prior languages, it is worth recalling the aforementioned question raised by Swain and colleagues (Swain et al. 1990) on the role of Heritage Language (HL). Specifically, it deals with the impact on third language learning of HL use including literacy compared to HL use which does not include literacy. Results showed that literacy in the HL has a strong positive impact on learning French as a third language in the bilingual programme, whereas HL use without literacy has little effect. The learning of second language literacy skills is enhanced through having developed such skills in the first language. The effect of first language literacy has been reported per se, independently of first language oral language skills, the general level of proficiency and typological proximity between the two languages. What is remarkable is that HL literacy provides them with a broader understanding of 'what reading and writing are for, using the medium of a language that [they] speak fluently' (Hudelson 1987: 830). Besides, it may help them to enhance pride and self-confidence, which, as the authors suggest, may breed further success and linguistic interdependence.

Another work looking at the specific role of literacy comes from Cristina Sanz (2000), who investigated the relationship between biliteracy in the minority and majority language, i.e. Catalan and Spanish, and the acquisition of English as a foreign language. In this research, apart from separating the effects of biliteracy and bilingualism, several predicting factors in the acquisition of additional languages were also controlled, including intelligence, motivation and sociolinguistic status. Additionally, despite not having operationalised the effect of cognitive variables, such as Working Memory and MLA, the study suggests interesting hypotheses based on previous studies results, which explain the advantage of bilinguals over monolinguals on TLA. Referring to the weak interface position in L2 acquisition theory (R. Ellis 1994), Sanz propounds the view that if on one hand explicit knowledge cannot be transformed into implicit knowledge of L2, it can still help in the acquisition process. Specifically, by acting as an advanced organiser, explicit knowledge focuses learners' attention on the relevant features of the language. Indeed, she states that bilingualism may naturally show the behaviour that different researchers working within the focus on form tradition (i.e. Doughty & Williams 1998) are trying to induce in classroom language learners.

Thus, it can be argued that literacy encourages MLA on account of language being turned into a visual medium. That is, readers focus on form and improve their memory skills, their aesthetic function as well as their reifying function, i.e. the meaning no longer resides in the speaker but in the text (Kemp 2001). Writing, in particular, provides the means of analysing language because it turns the language into an object. Therefore, literacy is fundamental for the development of MLA in that it permits people to visualise the language. Besides, once acknowledged that biliteracy enhances MLA and, consequently, the process of language learning itself, it is worth pointing out that even a limited amount of formal L2 learning help develop the aforementioned metalinguistic skills. Indeed, an interesting study by Yelland et al. (1993) appears to validate such a view since it proved that advanced bilingualism is not necessary for a learners' metalinguistic skill to develop. That is, even limited contact with a second language can have beneficial effects, which have also been observed to carry on into the acquisition of literacy.

3.3 Early and Late Bilingualism: the Role of Age of Acquisition of Previous Languages

A controversial issue, largely debated among scholars, on the benefits of bilingualism in the acquisition of additional languages, concerns the age of acquisition and the type and amount of instruction required to bilinguals in the L2 to show an advantage in the process and outcome of learning an additional language. In an influential work, after comparing previous research into the field, Rothman (2015) argues that early bilinguals outperform late bilinguals in TLA due to having two activated grammatical systems developed from an early age. On the other hand, Jaensch's view (2012), following the Universal Grammar approach, relies on the assumption that there are more advantages for learners of an L3 if their L2 experience begins at an older age since they can have access to a more enhanced MLA in contrast to the more implicit learning environment of younger learners.

Cenoz (2001) presents similar findings in her study on cross-linguistic influence on TLA. The results indicate that older learners show more cross-linguistic influence than younger learners. According to the author, this is due to the higher MLA developed by older students which allow them to perceive the typological distance of the languages involved and to choose which one is the most suitable to use as a source of transfer when acquiring a foreign language. Specifically, the older participants involved in the study were reported to transfer more words from Spanish than Basque when learning English as a third language since they were aware of the linguistic distance. On the other hand, younger participants with a lower degree of MLA used both, Spanish and Basque terms, as a source of transfer since they were not able to perceive the objective linguistic distance.

In an additional paper (Park & Starr 2015), it has been claimed that both early and late bilinguals have benefits in TLA following different routes and learning strategies. Indeed, if on one hand early bilingualism is achieved in a more implicit language learning environment, it is also true that learners can access two more developed grammatical systems. On the other hand, late bilingualism is more explicit in that it facilitates the acquisition of formal rules in a subsequent language. In other words, both explanations account for enhanced levels of MLA with a difference concerning the routes of acquisition and the particular type of this fundamental cognitive skill.

3.4 The Role of Language Use and Language Knowledge

Further evidence to better understand the role of MLA under specific circumstances of language learning, i.e. language proficiency and use, comes from Bialystok and Barac's work (2012). In their study, an accurate portrait of the different factors associated with the reported

advantages found in fully bilinguals is propounded to dissociate the effects of MLA and executive control. More specifically, the research aim was to identify the specific features of the bilingual experience responsible for different performances on metalinguistic and executive function tasks in children becoming bilingual. The results demonstrated that the two areas investigated are affected by different aspects of bilingualism. That is, metalinguistic performance improved with increasing knowledge of the language of testing whereas performance in executive control tasks improved with more experience in a bilingual education environment.

This dissociation has a great impact on the interpretation of previous research into bilingualism. Indeed, previous studies did not always share the view that literacy fosters the process and outcome of language acquisition. Mägiste's work, for example, in 1984, suggests that differences in performance are to be attributed to whether a language is used or not rather than to the level of literacy achieved in the second language (Mägiste 1984). This pattern was evident with different types of tests administered. The popular view in the literature that people who become bilingual at an early stage will later have greater facility in picking up a third language is only partially acknowledged by the author. She states that if, on one hand, this is certainly the case at certain metalinguistic levels, on the other, it does not occur automatically at a very elementary level of language learning. In this case, it seems to be more a question of strategy.

On the other hand, Bialystok and Barac's aforementioned work (2012) questions previous research assumptions that fully balanced bilingualism is necessary for modifications in executive functioning to occur (e.g. Bialystok & Majumder 1998, Carlson & Meltzoff 2008). Instead, the study shows that the accumulation of experience in a formal bilingual setting also contributes to the development of executive control for those children. Additionally, their results shed light on the relationship between metalinguistic performance and bilingualism providing evidence to promote the formal study of languages too. Indeed, unlike executive control, metalinguistic advantages have been reported even in participants with lower levels of bilingualism. Hence, the study highlights the importance of spending time in a bilingual education program in order to have improvements in children's executive functions. Interestingly, they noticed that what makes the difference in metalinguistic tasks is not the degree of bilingualism but the level of linguistic proficiency attained in the specific language examined. That is to say, knowledge of English was associated with higher metalinguistic performance in English but this relationship would be expected in monolingual children too.

Thus, the two main areas where a positive bilingual effect has been observed, i.e. MLA and executive control, seem to be influenced by different kinds of experiences: achievement of adequate linguistic proficiency and accumulated practice in the language. That is, an increased level of bilingualism was not necessarily associated with enhanced performance in the task. The authors explained these findings by the fact that bilingualism helps to develop and understand structural relations within languages but, beyond that insight, more bilingual experience does not lead to further development in that area. What makes the study particularly relevant is the contribution it gives to the understanding of the mechanism by which bilingualism affects cognitive and linguistic outcomes by taking into account two aspects of bilingualism responsible for differences between monolinguals and bilinguals: i.e. proficiency and use.

4. From Metalinguistic Knowledge to Metalinguistic Awareness

A crucial aspect of MLA concerns its linguistic or cognitive nature and whether it is a cause or effect of cognitive and linguistic development. Again, this remains unclear because all develop through childhood and it is not always possible to separate them experimentally in children. Although relatively little research takes place in adults' MLA, psycholinguists argue that the development of MLA is related to cognitive development in that it involves cognitive processes that are different from those operating for language perception and production.

Bialystok's interpretation to account for different findings, coming from research into bilingualism and MLA, employing different tasks and looking at specific variables, concerns the difference between analysis and control (Bialystok 2001). After an accurate review of previous research into the effects of bilingualism and literacy, she concluded that higher levels of control increase with bilingualism, whereas higher levels of analysis increase with literacy. This explains the different performances in different types of tasks on behalf of bilinguals with different linguistic and cognitive backgrounds. In particular, it has been observed that the advantage occurred most often when the level of bilingualism was controlled, i.e. balanced bilinguals performed better in all tasks. Another possible interpretation provided by Bialystok accounts for the progression from MLK and MLA observed in the participants. Indeed, this progression reflects an increase in the amount of attentional control required to accomplish the tasks. Therefore, participants begin to show different results as soon as the task aims at assessing MLA rather than MLK.

Rebuschat and Williams (2012) state that, in psychology, the most commonly used criterion for discerning between implicit and explicit knowledge is the presence or lack of awareness. That is, implicit knowledge is unconscious knowledge that subjects are generally not aware of possessing whereas explicit knowledge is conscious knowledge that subjects are aware of possessing even though they may not always be able to provide an explanation for it. The same view is shared by Robinson (2017), which highlights the role of attention as a measure to determine the aforementioned distinction between implicit and explicit learning. Attention and awareness are presented as two related concepts playing a fundamental and different role in the process of language learning. Specifically, the two types of attention described are perceptual attention, that is automatic and involuntary, and focal attention, which relies on some degree of voluntary executive control.

As discussed, the issue of the amount and type of attention to input, necessary for subsequent learning to occur, as well as the difference between noticing and understanding, has attracted a large amount of interest among academics in SLA (see Truscott & Sharwood Smith 2011). In cognitive and language acquisition domains, non-attentional learning means learning without focal attention to the input stimuli, selecting them for further processing and encoding in memory. It has been reported that, in some cases, simple detection of input at a stage of perceptual processing before selection contribute to learning. That is to say, learning could be said to take place without awareness since focal attention is widely acknowledged as a precondition for awareness (Tomlin & Villa 1994).

5. Conclusion

After comparing and contrasting previous and current research focused on specific aspects of the intricate relationship between the level of MLA developed, previous language learning experience and TLA, it can be argued that there are a number of aspects that still need to be further investigated. That is, to have a broader understanding of these concepts as well as a common agreement into the field of research, task construal and sensitivity of measurement of awareness need to be considered as crucial factors in future studies. Accordingly, it would be worth adopting sensitive measures to detect the status of awareness under different points of

view, i.e. cognitive, psychological, linguistic. On the other hand, new methodologies to explore and operationalise these fundamental aspects of language learning are needed.

Besides, the context of acquisition of bilinguals' second language should be considered as a separate individual variable that affects the process and outcome of language learning for different reasons. First, based on the evidence provided by the most influential works taken into account, it can be claimed that it plays a crucial role in the development of more effective learning strategies and enhanced MLA. Second, as discussed in the present work, to observe any positive effects of bilingualism in the acquisition of TLA in a formal environment, bilingualism must be supported by instruction in both first and second language.

To conclude, despite the considerable amount of interest shown across all the studies examined in the relatively new area of research, what emerges is that there is still a lot to investigate due to the high complexity of the field of TLA. Indeed, the numerous variables which need to be controlled at the same time, including the age of acquisition, context of acquisition, level of proficiency and typological proximity of at least three different languages involved on one hand and the difficulty to measure and determine what is implicit and explicit on the other, make the domain of multilingualism difficult to analyse and portrait. To say it in Larsen-Freeman's words, 'there is a multitude of interacting factors that have been proposed to determine the degree to which the SLA process will be successful [...]. Perhaps no one of these by itself is a determining factor. The interaction of them, however, has a very profound effect' (Larsen-Freeman 1997:151).

Indeed, variation in multilingual development and use is strongly linked to the dependence of the system on social, psycholinguistic, and individual factors (Herdina & Jessner 2002), not to mention the mode of language learning in the form of either natural or instructional learning, but also various combinations of both (see Cenoz & Genesee 1998). In future research, A DST approach using dynamic modelling to investigate properties of the dynamic adaptation to contexts in change, is able to take all the relevant characteristics of multilingual learning and use into account (Jessner 2008a: 272-273). In particular, the model bridges the gap between research on the effects of bilingualism and research on additional language acquisition. It suggests that future language acquisition studies should go beyond the study of language contact between two languages to include other forms of bilingualism, considered as the knowledge of two or multiple languages. Moreover, it allows predicting multilingual development based on all the numerous factors involved in the process, in a more holistic approach. Finally, it overcomes the implicit and explicit monolingual bias of multilingualism research through the development of an autonomous model of multilingualism providing a scientific means of predicting multilingual development on the basis of the numerous factors involved (Herdina & Jessner, 2002: 86-87).

Hence, as Cummins (1979) maintains, the expectation that research into the psychological, linguistic, and cognitive consequences of bilingualism should produce completely consistent results is a false premise. That is to say, there is not one single phenomenon called bilingualism that ought to influence the mental lives of all bilinguals in the same way. Accordingly, research should be directed towards identifying those conditions under which bilingual learning experiences are likely to enhance all the different aspects of cognitive growth, with the context of acquisition of previous languages being one of the most important.

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IL PASSATO PERFETTIVO IN ITALIANO L2: ANALISI DI TESTI SCRITTI

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the strategies used by university students to express completed actions in the past in their written work in Italian as a second language. In particular, we focus on issues of morphological nature; however, we also pay attention to phenomena of cross-linguistic influence. In conclusion we share our observations as far as the teaching of the perfect aspect during Italian L2 classes. Data has been collected by the researcher in various Italian Universities.

Keywords

Italian as a second language, perfect aspect, morphology, cross-linguistic interference.

1. Introduzione

Con questo articolo intendiamo esplorare le strategie adottate da apprendenti universitari per esprimere il passato perfettivo in italiano L2. In maniera particolare, esamineremo due tipi di comportamenti: i costrutti che non trovano riscontro nella lingua di arrivo e le strutture non documentate in altri studi precedentemente condotti su apprendenti principianti.

Non mancheranno, inoltre, i riferimenti a un importante fenomeno che caratterizza gli scritti dei nostri informanti, ossia l'interferenza interlinguistica dalla L1 o da altre lingue conosciute, soffermandoci, tuttavia, soltanto su aspetti di carattere morfologico.

Infine, focalizzeremo la nostra attenzione su alcuni problemi di carattere glottodidattico.

2. I dati

I risultati che presenteremo in questo lavoro rientrano in un progetto di ricerca più ampio in cui si è cercato di analizzare lo sviluppo delle categorie funzionali Tempo-Aspetto-Modo negli scritti di studenti universitari internazionali. Per avere dei dati utili, abbiamo formulato delle domande, che saranno mostrate nei paragrafi successivi insieme alle risposte degli apprendenti, rifacendoci al modello della *quaestio*, modello "secondo cui un testo può essere visto come risposta a una domanda" (Chini 2010: 10).

Per la suddetta ricerca abbiamo raccolto dati presso otto atenei italiani: Università della Valle d'Aosta, Università degli Studi di Torino, Università degli Studi di Udine, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Università degli Studi di Pisa, Università per Stranieri di Siena, Sapienza Università di Roma, Università Federico II di Napoli¹.

Prima di presentare alcuni dati, un *caveat* è doveroso: tutti i testi che gli informanti ci hanno consegnato sono stati da noi trascritti con precisione filologica, riportando, di

¹ Ringraziamo i direttori dei centri linguistici che ci hanno autorizzato, i docenti dei corsi che ci hanno accolto in aula e gli informanti che hanno collaborato per la realizzazione della nostra ricerca. I dati di Torino sono longitudinali, raccolti durante le lezioni tenute da chi scrive; i dati degli altri atenei sono trasversali, anch'essi raccolti personalmente da chi scrive. La raccolta dati è avvenuta dal 2015 al 2020.

conseguenza, eventuali cassature e altri elementi che non coincidono con la norma della lingua target.

Nel produrre i testi, gli informanti non hanno mai usato alcun supporto elettronico né appunti personali. Per questioni strettamente legate alla privacy, segnaleremo con la lettera maiuscola seguita da asterisco eventuali nomi propri presenti nelle produzioni scritte.

Avendo raggiunto poco più di trecento informanti, i dati a nostra disposizione sono ovviamente numerosi²; pertanto, in queste pagine daremo maggiore enfasi a quelle strategie impiegate dagli apprendenti nel costruire strutture che non trovano riscontro nella lingua di arrivo, anche se nei testi che forniremo a titolo di esempio sono altresì presenti forme di passato perfettivo correttamente costruite. Per motivi di spazio, per ogni fenomeno rilevato presenteremo soltanto una selezione di esempi e indicheremo con [...] eventuali tagli che apparterremo ai testi dei nostri informanti.

3. Il quadro teorico di riferimento

Dagli studi sull'acquisizione dell'italiano come lingua seconda sono emersi dei risultati interessanti che hanno portato alla rilevazione di alcune sequenze evolutive, che indicano l'ordine con il quale determinate strutture emergono nelle produzioni degli apprendenti locutori di diverse L1 (Bosisio 2012: 110-111). Le sequenze che maggiormente interessano il presente lavoro sono quelle concernenti il sistema verbale e le categorie funzionali di cui esso è composto (Banfi, Bernini 2017 [2003]: 90-95):

- presente e infinito > (ausiliare) + part. passato > imperfetto > futuro > condizionale > congiuntivo;
- aspetto > tempo > modo.

I ricercatori che hanno preso parte agli studi di cui sopra concordano nell'affermare che le sequenze rilevate, soprattutto quella relativa al sistema verbale, hanno valore implicazionale; di conseguenza, un elemento che si trova a destra della sequenza non può svilupparsi se prima non sia emerso l'elemento alla sua sinistra, ragion per cui tali sequenze vengono altresì definite "sequenze implicazionali" (Vedovelli 2003: 178).

4. Lo sviluppo dell'aspetto perfettivo

Dai suddetti studi acquisizionali è emerso che negli apprendenti si sviluppa il valore aspettuale perfettivo allorquando si manifesta il participio passato con il morfema *-to* (Bernini 2008: 44). Tale morfema, dunque, è la spia che permette di posizionare l'interlingua, o varietà di apprendimento, dell'apprendente in uno stadio successivo rispetto a quando si esprime con i verbi all'infinito o al presente (Balboni 2008: 29).

A tal proposito, tuttavia, vogliamo presentare due testi prodotti dopo dieci ore di lezione e compararli alla luce di quanto è stato affermato sopra sulla comparsa del morfema *-to*:

² Sebbene disponiamo di numerosi testi, purtroppo non ci è possibile condurre un'analisi quantitativa perché, nel momento in cui abbiamo iniziato la raccolta dati, alcuni docenti che ci hanno accolto in aula non ci hanno permesso di somministrare l'intero questionario, visto che non avevano trattato alcuni argomenti grammaticali utili per rispondere alle domande formulate. La trattazione degli argomenti da parte dei docenti per noi non era necessaria, anzi ci avrebbe permesso di osservare le strategie impiegate dagli apprendenti per esprimersi; tuttavia, pur di avere dei dati, abbiamo accettato le condizioni di chi ci ospitava in aula. Stando così le cose, non abbiamo lo stesso numero di risposte per ogni singolo studente, fatto che non ci permette di condurre un'analisi statistica, ma interpretativa.

L1 spagnolo

Che cosa fai durante il giorno a Torino?

La prima cosa è alzarse, lavarse e preparare il mangio. Allora quando finito questo, va a la università dove io studio Scienze agrarie. Alla 1 mangio il Pranzo alla mensa. Per la sera arrivo a casa per descansar. Per la notte mangio e va a dormire.

L1 greco

Che cosa fai durante il giorno a Torino?

Ogni mattina, Io vado a l'università a 9:00 to 14:00.

Après, Io vado a le supermercato e io prendo di chibo. Io ritorno a mi casa et cuchia il chibo a 15:00.

Io mango et après Io dormo. A 18:00 Io surf l'internet et guardo la televisione.

A 20 P e Io partiamo le bus et andiamo a la pub et bevono biere.*

A 22:00 noi retornato a la casa et a 23:300 noi dormiamo subito.

Considerare la L1 dei due apprendenti è di fondamentale importanza perché si tratta in un caso di una lingua affine all'italiano, lo spagnolo, e nell'altro caso di una lingua non affine, il greco. In entrambi i testi, possiamo notare la comparsa del participio passato, ma è una comparsa che ha avuto luogo in modo del tutto spontaneo dato che in aula non era ancora stato affrontato il passato prossimo. Pertanto, da una lettura superficiale, si potrebbe sostenere che entrambi gli apprendenti hanno già sviluppato nella L2 il valore aspettuale perfettivo.

Leggendo attentamente i testi, anche alla luce della consegna data agli apprendenti con la quale si chiede di parlare al presente, si possono notare delle profonde differenze sull'uso di tale participio passato. Nel primo testo, lo studente spagnolo usa il presente sebbene con qualche difficoltà, dato che usa la terza persona singolare; tuttavia, con una subordinata temporale, l'apprendente esprime il valore perfettivo delle azioni a cui si riferisce, attraverso il participio passato "finito". Nel secondo testo, invece, l'apprendente grecofono usa il presente, coniugandolo sia alla prima persona singolare sia alla prima persona plurale e solo alla fine usa un participio passato che, in realtà, non ha alcun valore di passato perfettivo. Lo studente, infatti, usa tale forma verbale per raccontare quello che solitamente fa alle 22:00 di ogni giorno, così come usa il presente per le altre azioni.

A nostro avviso, l'apprendente ispanofono è stato sicuramente aiutato in questo passaggio grazie a un fenomeno di interferenza dalla L1, nella quale il participio passato si forma con il morfema *-do*, molto vicino, quindi, al morfema *-to*. Pertanto, l'apprendente avrà avuto modo di riconoscere tale morfema nella lingua dei nativi, riuscendo a fare questo progresso nel suo apprendimento dell'italiano.

Il testo dello studente grecofono, invece, è sicuramente interessante per i numerosi fenomeni di interferenza da altre lingue straniere, tuttavia, nonostante ci sia una lingua romanza nel suo repertorio linguistico, l'apprendente ha usato erroneamente il participio passato. Anche questo errore, a nostro avviso, è da studiare in chiave acquisizionale e interlinguistica. Lo studente conosce il francese, ma non riesce a collegare le forme verbali italiane terminanti in *-to* al passato perché il morfema *-é*, usato in francese per la formazione del participio passato, è troppo distante dal morfema italiano. Il nostro apprendente avrà, quindi, appreso tale voce verbale attraverso il contatto con i nativi, ma senza riuscire ancora ad attribuire ad essa il valore aspettuale perfettivo.

Alla luce di quanto appena affermato, possiamo sostenere che nelle prime produzioni il participio passato può emergere, ma senza il suo valore aspettuale perfettivo. I nostri risultati, dunque, si allineano con Giacalone Ramat (1993: 371) e con Andorno (2009: 13), le quali sostengono che nelle prime fasi dell'apprendimento le voci verbali possono emergere senza alcun valore funzionale Tempo-Aspetto-Modo.

5. Interferenze morfologiche

L'argomento del precedente paragrafo ci permette di collegarci a un'ulteriore questione relativa all'espressione del passato perfettivo nell'interlingua dei nostri informanti. Come abbiamo visto con l'esempio dello studente spagnolo, gli apprendenti ispanofoni sono decisamente più avvantaggiati nell'apprendere la categoria dell'aspetto in quanto, a livello morfologico, i suffissi nelle due lingue, italiano e spagnolo, sono simili.

Non sempre, tuttavia, è possibile registrare tale passaggio spontaneo dal suffisso spagnolo *-do* al suffisso italiano *-to*; vi sono casi, infatti, in cui gli apprendenti, a causa della percezione della vicinanza tra la loro L1 e la lingua target *in fieri*, attribuiscono anche alla morfologia della loro lingua il compito di esprimere il passato perfettivo in italiano:

L1 spagnolo

Che cosa hai fatto ieri?

Ieri me e mangiato piu ta pranzado piu tarde por che la sera prima abbiamo andato con mi amici a una festa che ha finito piu tarde. I ho studiato tutto il pomeriggio per mi essamene di italiano che ho finito diecci minuti fa. Anche ieri e andato per la casa di una amicca chi ritornaba a su paese oggi e Io mi piacciava salutarla prima a su ritorno

L1 portoghese

Che cosa hai fatto ieri?

Ieri, io ho studiato per il esame di italiano.

È molto importanti conoscere la lingua italiana qui, perchè non tutti parlano inglese.

Lo studio dei due testi sopra richiederebbe un'analisi minuziosa visti i numerosi fenomeni linguistici in essi presenti, ma che esulano dall'argomento sul quale ci stiamo focalizzando nel presente articolo (e.g. la presenza di subordinate in entrambi i testi e una frase con ordine sintattico marcato nel secondo testo in cui possiamo rilevare un caso di soggetto postverbale, costruito emerso spontaneamente). Tornando, invece, all'espressione del passato perfettivo, possiamo notare come, in entrambi i casi, sia presente un fenomeno di interferenza dalla L1 per la selezione del suffisso grammaticale da legare al morfema lessicale nella formazione del participio passato. Nel primo testo, inoltre, sempre in termini di interferenza linguistica, possiamo altresì notare **e andato*, che richiama lo spagnolo *he ido*, e il morfema spagnolo *-aba* per la formazione del passato imperfettivo anche in italiano.

A livello acquisizionale, tali fenomeni sono molto importanti perché da studi pregressi è emerso che difficilmente la morfologia possa essere intaccata da fenomeni di interferenza (Chini 2005: 56). Tale assunto potrebbe essere valido per quanto concerne l'acquisizione spontanea della lingua, in cui gli apprendenti si esprimono inizialmente con i verbi all'infinito o con quella che viene definita forma base del verbo, vale a dire la terza persona singolare del presente (Banfi 1990: 39). In contesto guidato, però, ricevendo un *input* corretto, gli apprendenti assimilano ben presto che l'italiano è una lingua flessiva; di conseguenza, come possiamo notare, anche nella morfologia delle interlingue degli apprendenti è possibile registrare fenomeni di interferenza linguistica, in special modo se gli apprendenti sono parlanti di una lingua affine all'italiano.

6. Vari modi di espressione della perfettività

Nell'ambito della nostra ricerca abbiamo raccolto dati anche all'interno di corsi in cui non era previsto l'insegnamento del passato. Molti di questi apprendenti, dunque, nel momento in cui

si sono trovati a dover rispondere ad una domanda alla quale veniva richiesto di esprimersi al passato, hanno utilizzato gli unici strumenti linguistici a loro disposizione:

L1 olandese

Che cosa hai fatto ieri?

Ieri io studiare curso di Italiano.

*e cucinare di pasta con mi amigo H**

L1 spagnolo

Che cosa hai fatto ieri?

Ieri io vado a classe d'italiano, doppo io vado a la mia casa per prendere il pranzo.

A la sera io esco con mi amici per prendere una birra.

Doppo io arrivo a la mia casa e guardo la TV.

Dai testi emerge che l'unico mezzo linguistico che ci permette di posizionare al passato quanto affermato dagli informanti è l'avverbio di tempo "ieri", ripreso dalla domanda. I verbi, invece, sono all'infinito nel primo caso e al presente nel secondo. Anche se non è stato ancora spiegato come esprimersi al passato, i nostri informanti non sono riusciti ad apprendere nemmeno spontaneamente, eventualmente attraverso le interazioni con i nativi, i mezzi morfologici per svolgere tale compito. Come si può notare, inoltre, neppure gli ispanofoni sono stati in grado di progredire spontaneamente nel loro processo di apprendimento dell'italiano.

Dagli studi acquisizionali (§1) è emerso che nel momento in cui gli apprendenti sviluppano la categoria dell'aspetto perfettivo, tendono ad esprimersi utilizzando inizialmente il participio passato, senza l'ausiliare, tendenza che abbiamo notato anche nelle interlingue dei nostri informanti:

L1 inglese

Che cosa hai fatto ieri?

Ieri pulito i miei vestiti e fatto i compiti d'Italiano. Dopo a 2 al notte, andato cenare con le mie amiche.

Riteniamo utile precisare che tale comportamento è stato rilevato sia in apprendenti che hanno frequentato un corso in cui non era stato spiegato l'uso del passato prossimo sia in apprendenti che sono stati destinatari di un insegnamento esplicito di tale tempo verbale. In ogni caso, tale fenomeno è sicuramente dovuto alla scarsa salienza fonica dell'ausiliare (Chini 2005: 96).

Vogliamo ancora presentare altri testi in cui gli apprendenti hanno già sviluppato il valore perfettivo grazie all'azione didattica, ma nei loro testi è possibile rilevare altri usi di forme verbali:

L1 azero

Che cosa hai fatto ieri?

Ieri io preparato esame. Dormo alle 4.00 la mattina.

Anche cucinato la pasta per cena. a casa. Andato a letto.

L1 portoghese

Che cosa hai fatto ieri?

Ieri mi e ~~mi~~ amici sono andato a mia casa dopo le lezione perchè oggi abbiamo un test di italiano.

Ceniamo ~~i en~~ nella pizzeria vicino mia casa e io sono dormito alle 22h

In entrambi i testi si nota che gli apprendenti hanno sviluppato la categoria dell'aspetto perfettivo, come lo testimonia l'uso del passato prossimo o del solo participio passato. I testi,

però, ci dimostrano che sviluppare l'aspetto perfettivo con i corretti strumenti morfologici non esclude la presenza di tempi verbali coniugati ancora al presente.

Sempre in merito a questioni prettamente morfologiche, abbiamo potuto rilevare un altro modo di costruire il participio passato:

L1 giapponese

Che cosa hai fatto ieri?

[...] Sono andato a casa [...]

Abbiamo mangiato cucina italiana e abbiamo bevuto vino bianco

Tutto è buonissimo

L1 turco

Che cosa hai fatto ieri?

Ho venuto all'università, ho visitato mia amica lì. Io ho visto il suo amico. Voi siete andati al bar e abbiamo bevuto un caffè e spremuta d'arancia.

Oltre al corretto morfema, gli apprendenti usano un suffisso non coincidente con la norma della lingua target. Considerando che i testi sono stati prodotti alla fine del corso, crediamo che tale struttura sia emersa a causa di una confusione dovuta all'apprendimento della perifrasi progressiva: una volta appresa la costruzione del gerundio con i morfemi *-ando/-endo*, alcuni apprendenti utilizzano il morfema **-nto* per la formazione del participio passato, sebbene sia una costruzione non riscontrabile nella lingua di arrivo.

7. Le costruzioni analitiche

All'interno dei nostri dati, i costrutti più interessanti sono quelli composti da formazioni analitiche, in cui è possibile rilevare la strategia adottata dallo studente per esprimere separatamente, ossia attraverso due o più elementi, il significato grammaticale e il significato lessicale, sebbene nella forma non siano coerenti con la norma della lingua italiana,

Da studi precedenti (Banfi, Bernini 2017 [2003]: 107), tale tendenza alla formazione di costrutti analitici era stata rilevata, ma i nostri dati divergono da un punto di vista: gli studiosi, infatti, hanno rilevato che tali costrutti vengono maggiormente formati con l'ausiliare *essere* perché è il verbo che si specializza presto come copula e in seguito come ausiliare. Un caso di tale costruzione potrebbe essere l'esempio che segue:

L1 turco

Che cosa hai fatto ieri?

Mi sono svegliata alle 9, mi sono vestita e ~~hai~~ sono vada al parco di Valentino. Hai tornato a casa mia per pranzo. Sono cucinato pollo e le patate. Sono guardano TV di turchia alle 3 in giorno (election day). Ho bevuto troppo vino e bibite.

Nella nostra ricerca, però, la maggior parte delle formazioni analitiche rilevate è costruita con l'ausiliare *avere*:

L1 vietnamita

Che cosa hai fatto ieri?

Ho studiato in mia casa perché Io ho testa.

L1 spagnolo

Che cosa hai fatto ieri?

Ieri ho esco con gli amici a mangiare la pizza e il babá.

È singolare notare come tali costrutti analitici siano presenti non soltanto nelle interlingue degli informanti la cui L1 è tipologicamente lontana dall'italiano, ma anche nelle interlingue di chi ha una L1 affine. Sempre dagli studi precedenti sull'acquisizione dell'italiano come L2, è stato notato che tali costrutti analitici emergono per far fronte alla mancanza di mezzi morfologici adeguati (Banfi, Bernini 2017 [2003]: 107). Nei nostri dati, invece, notiamo la presenza di tali costruzioni anche nelle interlingue di apprendenti che hanno appreso ad usare il passato prossimo:

L1 russo

Che cosa hai fatto ieri?

Ieri sono andata all'università. Dopo lezioni ho ~~prende~~ preso la mia borsa ~~dal~~ dal laboratorio, ho fatto la spesa e sono andata a casa mia. Lì ho preparato la cena e poi ho fatto il compiti. Ho chiamato con mamma e ho fatto la doccia.

L1 portoghese

Che cosa hai fatto ieri?

Ieri, io ~~ho~~ sono vado a lezione de'italiano dopo io ^{ho} mangiato il pranzo e io ho studiato italiano. A la sera, io ho mangiato la cena e io sono dormita.

L1 lettone

Che cosa hai fatto ieri?

Ieri ho faccio colazione. Io ho mangiato l'uove ~~te~~ e ho bevato ~~it~~ la caffè. Poi sono andato a l'università.

Io ho fatto il pranzo a l'università. Ho mangiato insalata. Poi io sono andato a centro di Roma. Io ho comprato il gelato e poi sono andato a la casa.

A la casa io ho guardato le TV e poi ho fatto la cena con mio amico. Abbiamo ~~fa~~ mangiato la pizza. e ~~poi sono~~

È bene precisare che tali costruzioni emergono in ambito didattico in numero molto limitato: abbiamo rilevato ventidue costruzioni analitiche composte con l'ausiliare avere e sei con ausiliare essere; altre cinque costruzioni analitiche sono state riscontrate con i verbi riflessivi coniugati con l'ausiliare essere e mai con avere, di cui forniamo un esempio qui di seguito:

L1 spagnolo

Che cosa hai fatto lo scorso fine settimana?

Il sabato mi sono sveglia a mezzogiorno. Mi sono vesto e dopo ho andato con un'amica a mangiare.

Mi amica si chiama Elena.

Dopo avete andato a visitare il Monte Cappuccini. I è molto bello! [...]

I numeri, però, dicono ben poco, dato che spesso si rilevano più costrutti analitici nelle produzioni di uno stesso apprendente. Sui trecento informanti, infatti, soltanto ventinove hanno usato le costruzioni analitiche.

Negli scritti di alcuni apprendenti, tuttavia, sono emerse delle formazioni analitiche costruite con qualche elemento differente rispetto alle precedenti, ossia il verbo fare al passato, usato come ausiliare, mentre al verbo che segue, all'infinito o al presente, viene affidato il valore lessicale:

L1 tagico

Che cosa hai fatto ieri?

Ieri mi sono svegliato alle 11 e dopo ho fatto pregare e dopo ho parlato con i miei amici e con miei genitori e dopo ho fatto compiti e dopo ho giocato in computer con il mio amico. E dopo siamo fatti cena e dopo sono dormito alle 1 notte.

L1 giapponese

Che cosa hai fatto ieri?

Io ha fatto sveglio alle 6:00 e ha cucinato. Io ha sonno ma ~~ha~~ vado la biblioteca per studiare perchè io ha TEST Questo è difficile.

Io ha comprato un nuovo e cheese. Poi io cuccino e faccio banngo.

Io vado mio letto 0:00.

In entrambi i testi, tra l'altro, è possibile osservare che gli apprendenti sono in grado di usare il passato prossimo, dato che alcuni verbi sono correttamente coniugati, anche se usano altresì verbi al presente per esprimersi al passato.

Interessanti, inoltre, sono i costrutti in cui le forme verbali che costituiscono le forme analitiche con il verbo fare sono entrambe al passato:

L1 amharic

Che cosa hai fatto ieri?

fatto lavorato Io studiato Io andiato scoula in mattina per corso Italiano lezione. Dopo, fatto studitto in librerio.

L1 inglese

Perché hai deciso di fare l'Erasmus a Roma? Ti piace stare con le nuove persone che hai conosciuto? Perché?

~~*Io ho deciso*~~

Io fatto deciso di fare l'erasmus a Rome é perché la università è famosa e Roma é una bella città con molto fantastico persone.

Nel primo testo sono presenti due forme analitiche in cui l'ausiliare fare e il verbo portatore di significato sono entrambi al participio passato. A nostro avviso, l'apprendente affida la perfezione dell'azione al verbo ausiliare e la temporalità al participio passato del verbo che ha valore lessicale.

L'interesse per le forme rilevate nel testo sopra è dovuto alla presenza di strutture diverse per lo stesso verbo: **Io studiato / *fatto studitto*. L'uso di due diverse forme per l'indicazione di una stessa azione dimostra che vi è stato sicuramente un ragionamento diverso da parte dell'apprendente: nel primo caso l'apprendente avrà semplicemente posizionato nel passato l'azione dello studio; nel secondo caso, ancora una volta, specifica la conclusione dell'azione attraverso il participio passato del verbo fare e posiziona nel passato l'azione attraverso il participio passato del verbo studiare, tra l'altro costruito diversamente rispetto al precedente.

Nel secondo testo, prodotto dall'apprendente anglofono di origini nigeriane, ma residente in Georgia, è interessante notare come sia stata cassata una costruzione corretta per essere sostituita, ancora una volta, da un costrutto analitico formato con il participio passato del verbo fare.

Come si è potuto notare, le costruzioni analitiche sono state formulate con l'ausiliare avere. La causa di tale differenza con i dati degli studi precedenti, a nostro avviso, è da ricercare nel contesto in cui l'apprendimento ha avuto luogo. In contesto guidato, infatti, per la spiegazione del passato prossimo, il verbo avere è l'ausiliare maggiormente usato nelle spiegazioni per due ordini di motivi: regge un numero maggiore di verbi (i transitivi e alcuni intransitivi) e forma delle strutture non marcate a livello morfologico dato che non è richiesto l'accordo, in genere e in numero, del participio passato con il soggetto a cui il verbo si riferisce.

7.1 False costruzioni analitiche

Alcune costruzioni analitiche presenti nei nostri dati, se analizzati soltanto dal punto di vista della forma, ossia la presenza di due o più elementi, possono trarre in inganno. Se si analizzano in maniera più dettagliata e, soprattutto, nell'ambito del testo in cui sono prodotte, si può giungere a considerazioni differenti:

L1 turco

Che cosa hai fatto ieri?

Mi sono svegliato presto, alle 06:30. Ho fatto la doccia e mi ~~sono~~ ho vestito. Ho fatto la colazione. Sono andato a scuola. Ho ascoltato il mio corso di Restauro.. Ho preso a tram 3 per corso di Italiano. Sono arrivato a scuola. Poi ho conosciuto con il mio amico. Poi abbiamo vado a Parco Arancia. Poi sono tornata a casa. Ho preparato la cena. Ho mangiato la pasta. Poi ho ascoltato la musica. E ho guardato il Youtube. Poi sono andata a letto alle 00:00.

L1 arabo

Che cosa hai fatto ieri?

Ieri, ho ~~fatto~~ parto alla università per mia lezione, è ho fatto le spese per la mia casa. È ho fatto pulizia ~~pe~~ a mia stanza. Ho cucinato cena. È noi abbiamo visito la fontana di trevi con una amica.

Nel primo testo si evince come l'apprendente turcofono ha ormai assimilato il passato prossimo, usato per la coniugazione di numerosi verbi. Nel testo, tuttavia, troviamo due occorrenze di **ho ascoltato*. Tale costrutto potrebbe appunto sembrare una formazione analitica come quelle presentate nei paragrafi precedenti; tuttavia, ci sembra che finendo in *-to*, la seconda parte del costrutto possa essere stata considerata dall'apprendente come un participio passato. La nostra ipotesi si basa sia sul corretto uso di tutti i verbi al passato prossimo presenti nel testo, a parte l'accordo di genere, ma anche per il costrutto **ho preso*, presente nello stesso testo: anche qui possiamo notare che l'apprendente ha voluto utilizzare il morfema *-to* per formare il participio passato del verbo prendere.

Nel secondo testo è possibile notare come l'apprendente abbia assimilato il passato perfettivo attraverso l'uso del morfema *-to* nei verbi utilizzati, ma si rileva altresì la costruzione analitica **ho visito*. Anche in questo caso, dunque, crediamo che si tratti, appunto, di una forma verbale considerata come participio passato proprio perché termina in *-to*.

Sempre dalla lettura dei testi, però, emergono delle vere costruzioni analitiche: **ho cucinato* e **abbiamo vado*. La presenza di questi costrutti ci permette di sostenere che un apprendente può continuare a far uso di tali strategie anche dopo aver appreso a esprimere il passato perfettivo con gli strumenti morfologici corretti.

8. Altri costrutti per il passato perfettivo

Dalle ricerche pregresse è risultato che alcuni tempi verbali, come il passato remoto, non emergono nelle produzioni degli apprendenti principianti (Banfi, Bernini 2017 [2003]: 92).

Nei nostri dati raccolti a Roma, però, sono emerse timide forme di passato remoto:

L1 portoghese

Parla della tua infanzia!

Mi infanzia fuoi benissimo, io ho giocato con mi sorella e mi fratello e io ho studiato molto.

L1 tedesco

Che cosa hai fatto ieri?

Ieri mi ho incontrato con mi amici per fare un projecto per la università. Dopo fui mangiare ~~spage~~ spaghetti carborna e finalmente ho visto un film in casa.

Nel primo caso, l'apprendente lusofono è stato facilitato dalla sua L1: il portoghese, infatti, esprime il passato perfetto attraverso un tempo verbale sintetico, il *pretérito perfeito*, che, tra l'altro, nella forma somiglia molto al passato remoto italiano.

Difficile potrebbe essere l'analisi del passato remoto emerso nell'apprendente tedescofono. Lo studente, infatti, ha formulato un costrutto analitico in cui all'ausiliare è stato affidato il compito di trasmettere la temporalità e all'infinito il compito di esprimere il valore lessicale.

Durante la raccolta dei dati, però, l'apprendente aveva dichiarato di conoscere lo spagnolo, come del resto lo dimostrano i fenomeni di interferenza presenti in un altro scritto dello stesso studente:

L1 tedesco

Parla della tua infanzia!

~~Nacito~~ *È nascito in Germania, a una piccola città vicina di Francoforte. Ho giocato molto con mi amici calcio e con il computador. ~~Ho es~~ In estato e sempre ho viaggiato in Polonia per andare al mare. Era un tempo bello.*

Avere più produzioni di uno stesso informante, quindi, aumenta le probabilità di poter confermare determinate ipotesi formulate dal ricercatore. Alla luce di quest'ultimo dato, infatti, possiamo affermare che la costruzione analitica elaborata con il passato remoto è il frutto di un chiaro fenomeno di interferenza da un altro idioma, diverso dalla L1, presente nel repertorio linguistico dell'apprendente e che svolge un ruolo facilitante nella costruzione del nuovo sistema linguistico.

La questione del passato remoto in italiano L2 è molto interessante anche perché non soltanto non emerge negli apprendenti principianti, ma da ricerche precedenti condotte da Duso (2002: 19-20) è stato dimostrato che tale tempo verbale è presente nelle interlingue di apprendenti avanzati a cui tale tempo verbale è stato esplicitamente spiegato. Duso, tuttavia, sottolinea che il passato remoto emerge soltanto in un compito per lo svolgimento del quale gli apprendenti sanno di doversi esprimere al passato, come, per esempio, dover raccontare una fiaba.

La nostra analisi, invece, dimostra che il passato remoto emerge in maniera spontanea grazie all'influsso della propria L1 e delle altre lingue straniere presenti nel repertorio linguistico degli apprendenti.

Tra le strutture assenti nella sequenza acquisizionale poiché non rilevate durante le ricerche precedenti ricordiamo anche la diatesi passiva (Banfi, Bernini 2017 [2003]: 92), che dovrebbe comparire in stadi più avanzati (Rastelli 2009: 45). Nei nostri dati, invece, abbiamo potuto rilevare un caso di passato prossimo passivo nell'interlingua di un nostro informante:

L1 spagnolo

Parla della tua infanzia!

Io é vivito in Belgique cuando era piccolo per chi mio padre avete sido trasferito per lavoro per otto anni. Io ho ritornato a Argentina dopo otto anni e ho perduto tutto mi amici di Belgique. Quando era piccolo, Io giocava molto al calcio con mio padre per che Io non ho un fratello, solito ho tre sorella più grandi.

Si tratta di un caso isolato, ma a nostro avviso significativo. Essendo un ispanofono, il nostro informante era decisamente molto avvantaggiato nell'apprendere la lingua italiana, fatto

che ci permette di mettere in risalto l'importanza della percezione della lontananza, nel nostro caso meglio parlare di vicinanza, che un individuo sviluppa in merito alla sua L1 nei confronti del nuovo sistema linguistico in formazione (Calvi 2004: 63; Della Putta 2011: 82).

Ovviamente, la struttura usata dallo studente nella forma risente fortemente della L1, ma, ricordiamo che la struttura emersa è frutto di un'acquisizione spontanea, dato che l'insegnamento della diatesi passiva non era ovviamente contemplato dal sillabo del docente che teneva il corso.

A tal proposito, vorremmo appunto sottolineare l'importanza del ruolo svolto dalle lingue, materne e straniere, presenti nel repertorio degli apprendenti: attraverso la disamina dei comportamenti linguistici degli studenti, infatti, è possibile rilevare anche i numerosi fenomeni di interferenza (cfr. Onesti 2013: 16). In questo caso, infatti, anche se in studi precedenti (Giacalone Ramat 1998: 26) è stato sostenuto che i fenomeni di interferenza linguistica possono manifestarsi nelle varietà più avanzate, nei nostri testi abbiamo potuto appurare che l'interferenza della lingua materna e delle altre lingue conosciute può essere rilevata sin dall'inizio dell'apprendimento. Tali conoscenze linguistiche pregresse, tra l'altro, possono facilitare il processo di apprendimento perché possono permettere lo sviluppo di strutture verbali molto complesse, che difficilmente appaiono nelle produzioni di apprendenti principianti.

9. Questioni didattiche

Occupandoci di apprendimento dell'italiano in contesto guidato, non possiamo non fare riferimento a quello che è il problema più spinoso dell'insegnamento del passato prossimo: la scelta dell'ausiliare. Non appena si affronta l'argomento, infatti, gli apprendenti chiedono la regola da applicare. Rastelli (2009: 80-81) consiglia di spiegare tale regola facendo affidamento alla nozione di verbi inaccusativi e di verbi inergativi.

Da una recente ricerca condotta da Favata (2018: 232-234) è emerso, tuttavia, che nonostante alcuni linguisti nelle loro grammatiche scientifiche abbiano dedicato dei capitoli a tali categorie di verbi, nelle grammatiche scolastiche per l'italiano L1 e L2, in merito alla selezione dell'ausiliare per la formazione dei tempi composti, tali categorie non vengono affatto menzionate.

La questione ci sembra molto più complessa soprattutto per l'italiano L2: se teniamo in considerazione lo sviluppo acquisizionale, ci rendiamo facilmente conto di come sia impossibile insegnare la selezione dell'ausiliare attraverso la presentazione dei verbi inergativi e inaccusativi ad apprendenti principianti. Ricordiamo, infatti, che uno dei parametri utilizzati per discriminare un verbo inaccusativo da uno inergativo è la sostituzione del soggetto con il pronome "ne", pronome che si sviluppa molto tardi negli apprendenti (Chini 2005: 95), a differenza di quanto avviene con il passato prossimo, che emerge presto ed è un argomento spesso affrontato nei corsi per principianti.

Alla luce di queste considerazioni, quindi, tenendo conto di avere come pubblico degli apprendenti universitari, con cui è possibile affrontare anche discorsi metalinguistici, la soluzione potrebbe essere una didattica a spirale: inizialmente si potrebbe spiegare che i verbi transitivi richiedono l'ausiliare avere; per quel che concerne gli intransitivi, invece, sarebbe utile spiegare che possono essere suddivisi in altre due sottoclassi: gli inaccusativi (che richiedono l'ausiliare essere) e gli inergativi (che richiedono l'ausiliare avere). Per quanto riguarda quest'ultima classificazione, però, si tratterebbe soltanto di un accenno, visto che gli apprendenti non possiedono i requisiti per mettere in atto la discriminazione di cui sopra; pertanto, in un primo momento si potranno fornire le regole più semplici presenti nei manuali di italiano L2, rimandando la trattazione più completa a un momento successivo, che può avere

luogo sempre in aula, se il corso ha una lunga durata, oppure in separata sede se l'apprendente decide di proseguire lo studio della lingua italiana anche una volta terminata l'esperienza della mobilità internazionale.

10. Conclusioni

Con la nostra ricerca, abbiamo voluto restituire alla comunità scientifica dei dati di prima mano, attraverso la disamina dei quali è stato possibile rilevare quelli che sono i reali comportamenti linguistici degli studenti universitari che si accingono ad apprendere l'italiano come lingua seconda.

I dati a nostra disposizione hanno dimostrato che non sempre il percorso di apprendimento dei discenti coincide con il sillabo del docente. Attraverso i testi realmente prodotti dagli apprendenti, infatti, è stato possibile rilevare la presenza di verbi coniugati al passato prossimo anche laddove tale verbo non era stato introdotto in classe, fatto che dovrebbe farci riflettere sulla necessità di alzare il livello dei corsi di italiano L2 organizzati in ambito accademico. Questo fatto, quindi, dovrebbe spingere i docenti a prevedere la trattazione di tale argomento anche nei corsi per principianti, evitando, quindi, di dedicare l'intero corso alla spiegazione di tutti i verbi al presente indicativo.

Un'altra riflessione utile relativa alla quantità dei dati va fatta anche in assenza di una analisi quantitativa. Molto spesso, infatti, gli studi acquisizionali vengono criticati perché condotti con un numero esiguo di informanti (cfr. Rastelli 2009: 50); avere un numero elevato di informanti permette invece di giungere a delle conclusioni con dati più sicuri alla mano. In questo caso, inoltre, anche se non sempre si può disporre di dati longitudinali, riuscire a ottenere più dati da uno stesso informante è sicuramente un aspetto importante della ricerca perché si possono effettuare dei controlli incrociati dei diversi testi per poter confermare o meno le ipotesi del ricercatore.

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Dentro la rete degli apprendenti. Un'applicazione della social network analysis ai MOOC linguistici*

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Abstract

The year 2020 has been defined “the second year of the MOOC”. In the last year many changes happened in the world of e-learning, mainly due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent measures adopted on a global scale. Therefore, it is not surprising that we are attending to a rising interest in MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), even from a critical point of view. In this scenario, LMOOCs are constantly gaining popularity, so there is a need for new perspectives, that should allow to study the language teaching and learning in massive contexts, considering these contexts as complex systems.

This paper aims to analyse *Introduction to Italian* (Università per Stranieri di Siena), a linguistic MOOC hosted by FutureLearn, from a social network analysis point of view. Moreover, the LMOOC is investigated by means of a series of directed and weighted graphs, in which every user is a *node* that, when interacting with another user, builds an *edge*. The study investigates the communicative relationships represented by the graphs, calculating the betweenness centrality values and relating them with learners' performances. Results give on one hand the chance to reflect upon the importance, for learners, to participate in the conversations that take place inside the LMOOC; on the other hand, data allow to consider the role of tutors as facilitators in building and maintaining a positive and effective learning environment.

Keywords

italiano L2, LMOOC, social network analysis, centralità

1. Introduzione

Un recente *report* dell'aggregatore Class Central (Shah 2020a) ha definito il 2020 come “il secondo anno dei MOOC”, dopo il 2012, anno della prima esplosione del fenomeno (Pappano 2012). La sigla MOOC sta per Massive Open Online Courses e indica corsi svolti in Rete, gratuiti e pensati per grandi numeri di apprendenti, nell'ordine delle decine o addirittura centinaia di migliaia.

In effetti, il 2020 può essere definito come uno snodo fondamentale. La pandemia e le conseguenti misure di contenimento del contagio hanno impresso un'enorme, e imprevista, spinta alla formazione online, che ha avuto riflessi sia sull'aumento esponenziale degli apprendenti, che sugli sforzi di investimento da parte delle piattaforme (Shah 2020b). Tra le materie più richieste nei MOOC sono entrate, per la prima volta, anche le lingue straniere, con gli LMOOC (MOOC linguistici). La comparsa dei primi LMOOC risale all'ottobre del 2012¹, qualche anno dopo le pionieristiche esperienze di cMOOC (MOOC connettivisti) del 2008; questi si presentavano come MOOC caratterizzati da una decentralizzazione di contenuti e

* Il contributo prende le mosse da una ricerca più ampia, svolta da chi scrive presso l'Università per Stranieri di Siena tra il 2017 e il 2020, ricerca alla quale sarà dedicato un volume di prossima pubblicazione.

¹ Un riferimento relativo ai primi anni di sviluppo dei LMOOC è Sokolik, 2014.

strumenti e da una visione del gruppo di apprendenti in cui il confine di ruolo tra studente e insegnante risulta piuttosto labile.

In generale, l'idea di imparare una lingua straniera superando, almeno negli auspici, ogni costrizione di spazio e tempo, risulta affascinante per gli utenti; tuttavia, un corso di lingua online pone alcune questioni in ordine alla sua implementazione, più articolata rispetto a quella relativa a corsi disciplinari. Per i corsi di lingua, infatti, la necessità di articolare il percorso secondo un "prima" e un "dopo" si fa più pressante. Inoltre, l'insegnamento e apprendimento delle lingue (anche in Rete) deve vivere di conoscenza sia dichiarativa sia procedurale e, come è stato osservato, i corsi linguistici online di massa dovrebbero combinare "the best of formal and informal learning, bringing structured educational course content and activities together with appropriate social media tools and technologies" (Read 2014: 93). In più, "the possibilities they hold for developing language competences, especially the productive and interactive ones, arguably go way beyond what is available in small student-number online courses" (Read 2014: 93). A questo proposito, il modello dei MOOC connettivisti non sembra confacente alla progettazione di un corso di lingua straniera online. Gli xMOOC, invece, cioè quei MOOC ispirati, in termini di progettazione, ai corsi più tradizionali, pur mantenendo il gran numero di apprendenti, si strutturano come serie ordinata di passi costituiti da materiali scritti e audiovisivi, intervallati da semplici esercizi di autovalutazione. Per questa ragione, la collaborazione tra apprendenti in ottica socio-costruttivista rischia di venire meno, tratteggiando uno scenario di apprendimento nel quale i singoli apprendenti rimangono isolati, a fruire di contenuti predefiniti e "immutabili"².

In ogni caso, la fortuna dei MOOC linguistici è indubbia, e proprio per questa ragione è molto difficile delinearne un quadro complessivo, stante la vastità dell'offerta. Il recentissimo contributo di Salvati (2020) cerca di fornire un quadro degli LMOOC erogati su scala mondiale, ad integrazione del progetto europeo LangMOOC³ del 2015⁴. A questa fortuna "di pubblico", corrisponde un crescente interesse critico, anche in Italia.

In questo contributo ci poniamo come obiettivo generale quello di studiare le relazioni comunicative all'interno del MOOC linguistico *Introduction to Italian* dell'Università per Stranieri di Siena, ospitato dalla piattaforma FutureLearn, nella sua prima edizione, svoltasi dal 16 maggio 2016 al 27 giugno 2016, per una durata complessiva di sei settimane. L'analisi viene affrontata dalla prospettiva della *social network analysis*, come metodologia di elezione per indagare le modalità con cui si configurano le relazioni comunicative tra gli utenti⁵.

I paragrafi successivi saranno così organizzati: nel secondo, prima della definizione degli obiettivi specifici dello studio, si daranno alcuni riferimenti teorici, dall'interazionismo simbolico di Blumer al connettivismo di Siemens, passando per il concetto di *capitale sociale*, grazie ai quali si potrà comprendere la logica che permette di considerare la *social network analysis* come una metodologia adeguata, efficace ed efficiente per l'analisi di un MOOC linguistico; il terzo paragrafo, dedicato agli "informanti"⁶ del nostro studio, precederà un paragrafo in cui si approfondirà la metodologia utilizzata nella ricerca, in particolare attraverso una descrizione dettagliata del procedimento di indagine seguito. Nel quinto paragrafo diremo

² Un approccio che mira a coniugare le potenzialità dell'apprendimento formale (a cui sono più vicini gli xMOOC) con quelle dell'apprendimento informale (più prossimo ai cMOOC) è stato di recente sviluppato all'Universidade Aberta di Lisbona, con il modello iMOOC (Teixeira, Mota 2014).

³ LangMOOC <http://www.langmooc.com/>

⁴ Dello stesso anno è il report di Perifanou (2015) che fa riferimento al modello MOILLE, già proposto nel 2014 dalla stessa studiosa (Perifanou, Economides 2014).

⁵ L'analisi è stata condotta a partire da due *dataset* forniti dalla piattaforma FutureLearn. Il primo contiene i commenti lasciati dai partecipanti durante il LMOOC. Il secondo contiene i dati, spontaneamente dichiarati dagli utenti, di cui al terzo paragrafo di questo lavoro.

⁶ Le virgolette vengono qui utilizzate non casualmente, ma in relazione al fatto che, come esplicitato nel terzo paragrafo, lo studio è stato condotto *ex post*.

brevemente degli strumenti utilizzati per la nostra indagine, mentre i due successivi saranno riservati rispettivamente ai risultati ottenuti e alla loro discussione in relazione agli obiettivi prefissati. Il contributo si chiuderà con un paragrafo che raccoglie alcune conclusioni parziali, sulla base dell'interpretazione dei risultati ottenuti.

2. L'applicazione della *social network analysis* ai MOOC linguistici. Quadro teorico e obiettivi specifici

Il quadro generale, relativo all'apprendimento in Rete in contesti di massa, a cui abbiamo accennato nel paragrafo introduttivo, ci conduce a una considerazione sulla necessità di superare una certa tipologia di analisi "aneddotica" legata ai MOOC. Vi è, infatti, l'esigenza di oltrepassare la tendenza a individuare singoli esempi, apparentemente significativi, in riferimento a contesti che ci pongono di fronte a decine di migliaia di apprendenti e centinaia di migliaia di interazioni. In tal senso, tratteremo qui, per sommi capi, un percorso teorico per definire come consideriamo l'apprendente in un MOOC linguistico, al fine di studiarne le azioni e interazioni in maniera coerente.

Il profilo dell'utente medio dei MOOC linguistici è stato già definito sulla scorta di dati che si fanno sempre più solidi (Villarini 2020); possiamo ben immaginare come questo utente, adulto e spesso non più giovanissimo, già lavoratore o addirittura in pensione, sia inquadrabile come *self-directed learner*. A partire da questa figura, individuata e descritta anni addietro in ambito andragogico da Knowles (1975), ci sembra di poter operare una breve riflessione, prendendo spunto dalle acquisizioni del sociologo Herbert Blumer. Lo studioso statunitense, di formazione pragmatista, già nel 1969 giungeva a una sistematizzazione dell'interazionismo simbolico. Per Blumer, ogni individuo agisce verso le cose in base al significato che queste assumono per lui; tale significato, che non è intrinseco alle cose, deriva dall'interazione sociale di ciascuno con i propri simili. I significati vengono poi utilizzati da ciascun individuo sulla base di un processo di interpretazione che si articola in due fasi: nella prima, l'individuo come attore sociale precisa a sé stesso che le cose verso cui agisce hanno significato; nella seconda, "lavora" con i significati in base alla direzione della sua azione sociale. Se trasferiamo questa riflessione generale al caso specifico dell'apprendente, possiamo considerare il discente come attore sociale che riconosce, a partire da un'offerta formativa sempre più ampia, singole istanze che hanno significato per lui. Questo significato, che nasce da un processo di interpretazione mediato dalle interazioni sociali con gli altri, anche semplicemente nella forma dell'appartenenza a un dato gruppo che ha determinati bisogni formativi, per esempio imparare una lingua straniera, fornisce al *self-directed learner* una direzione da intraprendere, per esempio partecipare ad un LMOOC.

Tale tipo di utente/apprendente si trova a fare i conti, già al di fuori dei contesti formativi, con il cosiddetto *capitale sociale*. Mantenendoci a cavallo tra le acquisizioni di Lin (2001) e quelle di Pizzorno (1999) definiamo sinteticamente il capitale sociale come l'insieme delle relazioni che si instaurano all'interno di una data rete sociale, e che consentono agli individui facenti parte della rete di ottenere vantaggi materiali e/o immateriali.

Ciò premesso, vi è da dire che l'utente che sfrutta la Rete, anche per scopi di apprendimento, si trova immerso in uno scenario che è stato ben definito da Siemens (2004); la proposta connettivista dello studioso canadese, atta a superare le tre teorie pedagogiche classiche, comportamentismo, cognitivismo e costruttivismo, dà conto di una rete fatta di individui, risorse, macchine, e tutti questi soggetti e oggetti sono considerabili come "nodi" all'interno della rete stessa. In questo quadro, la conoscenza non è qualcosa di immutabile e dato una volta per tutte, né, possiamo dire, viene co-costruita, ma risiede nella rete. Per questo

motivo, l'elemento più importante diventa la capacità di sapere dove andare a cercare la conoscenza⁷, letteralmente percorrendo la rete da un nodo all'altro.

Tutto ciò premesso, dunque, la *social network analysis* appare come la metodologia che, opportunamente declinata, consente di rendere giustizia alla complessità delle interazioni che si danno all'interno di un LMOOC. In altre parole, attraverso questa metodologia riusciamo ad analizzare in maniera coerente ed estesa le interazioni fra gli utenti, come traccia di quei processi di azione di cui parla Blumer, processi che si servono (e dipendono) anche della capacità di mobilitare capitale sociale e hanno luogo in uno scenario connettivista.

In questo contributo utilizziamo, più nello specifico, una misura di centralità, la *betweenness centrality*, mediante la quale potremo quantificare la capacità di un certo utente di assumere il ruolo di "ponte" fra altri utenti nella circolazione delle informazioni.

Ci poniamo dunque tre obiettivi specifici: 1) calcolare il valore di *betweenness centrality* di ciascun apprendente all'interno della prima edizione di *Introduction to Italian*; 2) rilevare gli apprendenti con i valori più alti di *betweenness centrality*; 3) porre in relazione i valori rilevati con la *performance* degli apprendenti (completamento/non completamento del corso). Il raggiungimento degli obiettivi specifici consentirà di riflettere sulle modalità con cui la conformazione della rete sociale all'interno del MOOC linguistico influisce sui risultati degli apprendenti, almeno nei termini del cosiddetto "tasso di sopravvivenza", vale a dire la percentuale di utenti che porta a termine il percorso di apprendimento previsto.

3. *Introduction to Italian* e gli "informanti"

Introduction to Italian è un MOOC di lingua italiana, gratuito⁸, per apprendenti principianti (livello di competenza A1 del QCER), pensato per un'utenza numerosissima e organizzato, in linea generale, secondo i principi dell'xMOOC e con un approccio di tipo socio-costruttivista, e particolare attenzione all'interazione scritta fra apprendenti.

Il corso è articolato in sei moduli, le *settimane*, ciascuna con tre *focus*, espressi in termini di obiettivi linguistici di tipo funzionale, lessicale e grammaticale⁹. La lingua d'istruzione è l'inglese, richiesta dalla piattaforma.

L'edizione di *Introduction to Italian* considerata ha visto la partecipazione di 48.757 apprendenti; di questi, 5.129 hanno completato il corso¹⁰. Guardando alle caratteristiche degli apprendenti in termini di età, genere, paese di provenienza, livello di istruzione, situazione occupazionale, settore occupazionale, si è rilevato¹¹ quanto segue:

- Fasce d'età: dichiaranti (n=6.498); oltre i 65 anni (n=1.310) (20,1%); 56-65 anni (n=1.268) (19,5%); 26-35 anni (n=1.210) (18,6%);
- Genere: dichiaranti (n=6.648); femminile (n=4.814) (72,4%); maschile (n=1.809) (27,2%);

⁷ Si veda a questo proposito il volume di Weinberger (2012).

⁸ Con l'eccezione della richiesta di un certificato di completamento del corso, a pagamento.

⁹ Per un interessante contributo sulla percezione degli aspetti linguistici e sul ruolo della riflessione metalinguistica all'interno di *Introduction to Italian*, si veda Cassandro (2020).

¹⁰ Specifichiamo qui che, in linea con le scelte della piattaforma ospitante, FutureLearn, con "completamento del corso" intendiamo che l'utente ha provato a rispondere a tutti i quiz proposti durante il corso e ha contrassegnato come "completato" almeno il 50% degli *step* previsti, vale a dire delle singole pagine in cui *Introduction to Italian* si articola.

¹¹ Annotiamo che per ogni ambito non tutti i partecipanti al corso hanno dichiarato il dato, dunque riporteremo, ove non diversamente indicato, il numero dei dichiaranti, seguito dalle tre variabili categoriali più riscontrate in ordine decrescente e dalle percentuali ad esse relative (ad una cifra decimale, con arrotondamento per eccesso in caso di valore decimale che superi lo 0,05).

- Paese di provenienza (rilevato automaticamente dalla piattaforma, con percentuali sul totale dei partecipanti): Gran Bretagna (n=15.929) (32,6%); Stati Uniti (n=3.765) (7,7%); Italia (n=1.676) (3,4%)¹²;
- Livello di istruzione¹³: dichiaranti (n=6.620); University degree (n=2.760) (41,7%); University masters (n=1.808) (27,3%); Secondary (n=808) (12,2%);
- Situazione occupazionale: dichiaranti (n=6.604); Working full time (n=2.014) (30,4%); Retired (n=1.593) (24,1%); Working part time (n=842) (12,7%);
- Settore occupazionale: dichiaranti (n=4.969); Teaching and education (n=1.411) (28,3%); Health and social care (n=495) (9,9%); Creative arts and culture (n=367) (7,4%).

Da questi dati emerge una “figura” piuttosto chiara di apprendente tipo: età uguale o superiore a 56 anni, genere femminile, anglofono, con un alto livello di istruzione, occupato a tempo pieno nell’ambito dell’educazione, quando non già in pensione¹⁴.

4. Metodologia

La concezione dello studio ha richiesto presupposizioni e scelte, che descriviamo in quanto necessarie per comprendere il disegno della ricerca e il procedimento di indagine seguito.

In particolare, abbiamo dovuto presupporre che all’interno di un MOOC linguistico si possa generare una rete sociale attraverso le interazioni comunicative fra apprendenti e con i tutor, mediante l’uso della funzionalità di commento offerta dalla piattaforma. Una seconda presupposizione è che vi sia la possibilità di rappresentare la rete sociale con un grafo, struttura matematica costituita da un insieme di punti, definiti come *nodi* o *vertici*, che rappresentano gli utenti del MOOC, e sono collegati tra loro da *archi* che esemplificano una relazione tra due nodi, cioè tra due utenti.

Nel nostro caso, è stato costruito un grafo *orientato* e *pesato*. Si dice “orientato” un grafo in cui le relazioni tra coppie di nodi non sono simmetriche, e quindi viene considerato il verso, la direzione in cui l’interazione *si muove*. In più, il grafo è stato concepito anche come pesato; in esso, cioè, se una singola relazione comunicativa tra due nodi occorre più volte, quella relazione acquista maggior peso nell’economia complessiva della rete sociale.

Per il nostro lavoro di ricerca, abbiamo poi considerato come “istanza comunicativa” ogni commento lasciato sul forum dai partecipanti a *Introduction to Italian* e come “interazione comunicativa” ogni risposta fornita a un dato commento lasciato sul forum. In altre parole, si instaura una relazione comunicativa debole, nel senso di *legame debole* (Granovetter 1973) nel momento in cui un apprendente risponde al commento di un altro apprendente. In un contesto in cui la conversazione e l’utilizzo della funzionalità di commento vengono incoraggiate fortemente, se non esplicitamente richieste nelle istruzioni, rileviamo quanto all’aumentare delle interazioni comunicative, aumentino per il singolo apprendente le possibilità di ricevere e/o fornire informazioni, ma più ancora e conoscenze, sia dichiarative che procedurali, attraverso la conversazione.

In questo senso, abbiamo ritenuto opportuno considerare:

- i commenti che hanno ricevuto almeno una risposta;
- i commenti rimasti senza risposte;

¹² Il dato relativo all’Italia come paese di provenienza rilevato automaticamente dalla piattaforma, quindi, si suppone, relativo alla localizzazione del luogo da cui gli apprendenti accedono al corso, fa pensare a stranieri residenti o domiciliati in Italia.

¹³ I livelli di istruzione sono tarati sui sistemi di tipo anglosassone.

¹⁴ Si vedano La Grassa, Villarini 2010 e Cardona, Luise 2018 per l’apprendimento delle lingue nella terza età.

- le occasioni in cui un determinato apprendente risponde a sé stesso (anche qualora la risposta si trovi fra altre risposte).

Rientrano in quest'ultimo caso le situazioni in cui un dato utente lascia un commento che ottiene molte risposte, e alcune di queste sono risposte dell'utente originario. Accordiamo così maggiore rilevanza alla ricorrenza e al rafforzamento di legami deboli ottenuti tramite singole risposte a singoli commenti.

In termini operativi, la prima fase ha visto lo svolgimento di un'analisi esplorativa preliminare (*exploratory data analysis* o EDA) per operare qualche considerazione iniziale sulla popolazione in esame.

Dopo aver assegnato a ciascun utente un codice numerico identificativo univoco (ID), è stata prodotta una *edge list*, cioè una lista delle coppie di apprendenti in relazione tra loro, e a partire da essa è stato poi costruito il grafo rappresentante le relazioni comunicative in *Introduction to Italian*; per la costruzione del grafo non sono stati considerati i nodi isolati, vale a dire quei commenti che non hanno ricevuto alcuna risposta. Sul grafo sono state rilevate misure generali, vale a dire:

- ordine, cioè il numero di nodi e quindi di utenti;
- misura, vale a dire il numero di archi, cioè le interazioni comunicative che si sono instaurate;
- *loops*, che consistono in quelle occasioni in cui un utente risponde a un suo stesso commento;
- grado medio dei vertici, cioè il numero medio di archi incidenti in un vertice o, in parole più povere, il numero di interazioni comunicative in cui ciascun utente è stato coinvolto, sia in termini di risposte date a commenti di altri, che di risposte ricevute a propri commenti;
- diametro, che viene misurato considerando i percorsi (o cammini) più brevi che collegano, da un punto di vista comunicativo, ciascuna coppia di utenti, e selezionando poi il più lungo di questi percorsi;
- densità, cioè la relazione tra il numero degli archi del grafo e il numero di archi teoricamente possibili; quest'ultimo è esprimibile, nel caso di un grafo orientato e pesato, anche come rapporto in cui al numeratore abbiamo il numero degli archi presenti nel grafo e al denominatore il numero dei nodi del grafo moltiplicato per il numero dei nodi del grafo - 1;
- componenti debolmente connesse, cioè due o più nodi collegati tra loro da un qualche cammino, con il cammino che può andare in ciascun verso, trattandosi di un grafo orientato, lungo qualunque arco;
- componenti fortemente connesse, vale a dire due o più nodi collegati tra loro da un cammino che si sviluppa in maniera strettamente orientata, seguendo quindi la stessa direzione;
- *transitivity* globale, il rapporto tra il numero di triple chiuse (cioè tre vertici/utenti collegati da tre archi/interazioni, non considerando l'orientamento degli archi) esistenti e il numero di triple (aperte, cioè fatte da tre utenti in cui ciascuno non è connesso a ciascun altro, e chiuse) possibili.

Nella fase successiva è stata calcolata, per tutti i nodi della rete, la *betweenness centrality*, misura di centralità statistica basata sulla presenza di un nodo all'interno dei cammini più brevi fra tutte le paia di nodi presenti all'interno del grafo. Successivamente, sulla base dei risultati ottenuti è stato condotto un riordinamento degli utenti in ordine decrescente per i valori di *betweenness centrality*. Questa operazione ha messo in evidenza gli utenti con i valori più elevati di centralità e, di conseguenza, è stato verificato se essi avessero completato il corso. Nella presente ricerca abbiamo considerato i primi cinque utenti, tuttavia l'analisi può essere estesa a un campione anche molto più numeroso in maniera semi-automatica. Tutte le analisi

descritte sono state compiute considerando tre *endpoint* di ricerca, posti dopo la prima settimana di corso, dopo la terza settimana (cioè a metà del corso) e a fine corso, vale a dire dopo sei settimane.

5. Gli strumenti

Per il nostro studio abbiamo utilizzato il software *R* nella sua versione 4.0.1, rilasciata il 6 giugno 2020 e nota come *See Things Now*. Ci siamo inoltre serviti di *RStudio*, nella versione 1.3.959 (18 maggio 2020, nota come *Middlemist Red*) come IDE (Integrated Development Environment), o ambiente di sviluppo integrato, cioè un *software* che assiste il programmatore in tutte le fasi di lavoro, dall'analisi esplorativa preliminare, alla scrittura del codice in linguaggio di programmazione (*coding*) e fino alla correzione degli errori (*debugging*). Per quanto riguarda i pacchetti aggiuntivi utilizzati, si è trattato di `{dplyr}` e `{tidyr}` per la manipolazione dei dati, `{tibble}` per la creazione di *data frame*, `{readr}` per l'importazione di *dataset* e `{igraph}`, che contiene una serie di strumenti per l'analisi delle reti, per la creazione dei grafi e la rilevazione della maggior parte delle misure.

6. Dati generali sul grafo e *betweenness centrality*: i risultati delle analisi

Le rilevazioni sul grafo si sono concentrate in primo luogo sui dati generali relativi alla topologia. Più nello specifico (Tab. 1), il primo dato rilevato è stato il numero di nodi isolati, cioè utenti che hanno prodotto commenti che non hanno ricevuto risposte, piuttosto elevato (da 9.054 all'*endpoint* 1 a 9.514 all'*endpoint* 3). La misura del grafo, invece, è cresciuta da 6.121 fino a 15.604, a fronte di un aumento relativo molto più contenuto dell'ordine. Oltre al numero dei *loops*, che cresce da 1.107 al primo *endpoint* fino a 1.792 all'ultima rilevazione, aumenta anche il grado medio (da 3,32 a 8,83).

I restanti dati generali sul grafo (Tab. 2) riguardano il diametro, la densità, le componenti debolmente e fortemente connesse e la *transitivity* globale. Il diametro, 24 dopo la prima settimana, passa a 19 già alla terza settimana di corso e tale rimane fino alla fine del corso. Per quanto concerne la densità (che può assumere un valore compreso tra 0 e 1), i dati ci parlano di un grafo pochissimo denso: 0,0006718 dopo la prima settimana, 0,00082257 dopo la terza settimana e 0,00095532 all'*endpoint* 3. In altre parole, dopo la prima settimana di corso vi è poco meno dello 0,07% di possibilità che due nodi qualsiasi all'interno della rete siano adiacenti, cioè connessi tra loro. La percentuale passa, come vediamo, a poco più dello 0,08% a metà corso e 0,09% a fine corso. In merito al calcolo delle componenti debolmente connesse e fortemente connesse, alla fine della prima settimana abbiamo 148 componenti debolmente connesse, che diventano 107 al secondo *endpoint* e 90 al terzo. Per quanto riguarda le componenti fortemente connesse, invece, ne abbiamo 2657 (*endpoint* 1), 2880 (*endpoint* 2), 2982 (*endpoint* 3). Osserviamo poi come il valore della *transitivity* a livello globale, considerando un intervallo di valori tra 0 e 1, vada da 0,01507251 al primo *endpoint* a 0,04380192 a fine corso.

Venendo ai valori di *betweenness centrality*, dopo una sola settimana di corso (Tab. 3)¹⁵, osserviamo che l'utente con ID 40072 ha il più alto valore di *betweenness centrality* e rileviamo che si tratta di un tutor del LMOOC; questa rilevazione è coerente con la presenza del tutor sui forum con una certa quantità di messaggi, presenza che rende il nodo più "centrale" degli altri, per questa particolare misura, sin dalle prime battute del corso. L'utente con il secondo valore

¹⁵ Nelle Tabelle 3, 4 e 5 indichiamo in grassetto gli ID degli utenti che hanno completato il corso, in corsivo gli utenti dei quali abbiamo dati relativi a età, paese di provenienza, ecc., ed evidenziamo gli utenti tutor del corso.

più alto, ID 40331, è uno studente uomo, proveniente dalla Gran Bretagna, tra i 56 e i 65 anni, in pensione e in possesso di un titolo di studio universitario, e che ha completato il corso. Anche l'utente in posizione #3 (id: 26484) ha completato il corso, e si tratta di una donna, dal profilo simile a quello delineato in precedenza come età, status occupazionale (pensionata) e titolo di studio, proveniente dal Lussemburgo. La posizione numero 4 in termini di *betweenness centrality* è occupata da un altro tutor di *Introduction to Italian*, e anche in questo caso vale la considerazione fatta in precedenza. Del quinto utente col più alto valore (ID 17758), sappiamo che ha completato il corso, è una donna tra i 56 e i 65 anni di età, giapponese, in possesso di un titolo di studio universitario e che dichiara, alla voce "employment area": "charities and voluntary work".

Guardando all'*endpoint* 2 (Tab. 4) posto alla conclusione della terza settimana di *Introduction to Italian*, le rilevazioni cambiano di poco. Le prime due posizioni sono le medesime, l'utente con ID 26484 "scivola" dal terzo al quinto posto, il tutor (ID 46943) in quarta posizione risale in terza, mentre alla posizione #4 si inserisce un altro tutor, con ID utente 7343.

Le rilevazioni alla fine del corso (Tab. 5) confermano pienamente quanto era evidente sin dall'inizio. Tra i cinque utenti con i valori più alti di *betweenness centrality*, abbiamo tre tutor (prima, seconda e quarta posizione) e due utenti che hanno completato il corso per tempo e fornito numerose informazioni su di sé in fase di registrazione.

7. Discussione dei risultati

I risultati delle analisi effettuate ci consentono almeno due riflessioni, la prima in ordine al ruolo dei tutor all'interno di un corso online, anche quando questo presenta decine di migliaia di apprendenti; l'altra circa quegli apprendenti con valori alti di *betweenness centrality*, che dimostrano di essersi avvicinati a svolgere una funzione di *tutoring* nei confronti degli altri partecipanti.

In generale, i dati relativi alla misura di centralità che stiamo considerando ci dicono con chiarezza che il ruolo del tutor è ancora forte, nonostante le variegata opinioni presenti in letteratura¹⁶. Un'ulteriore conferma giunge dal confronto fra *in-degree* (commenti ricevuti dai tutor a propri post) e *out-degree* (commenti lasciati dai tutor a post non propri), alla fine del corso, per ciascun tutor individuato:

- tutor con ID utente 40072: in-degree: 70, out-degree: 432
- tutor con ID utente 46943: in-degree: 38, out-degree: 819
- tutor con ID utente 7343: in-degree: 34, out-degree: 650

Osserviamo come il numero di *out-degree* sia sensibilmente più elevato di quello degli *in-degree*; in questo senso si manifesta la presenza dei tutor all'interno dei percorsi/cammini che collegano i nodi tra loro. Se poi guardiamo a *in-degree* e *out-degree* degli altri due utenti presenti nella Tabella 5, notiamo la medesima tendenza:

- utente con ID 40331: in-degree: 36, out-degree: 497
- utente con ID 26484: in-degree: 65, out-degree: 219

Tornando ai valori di *betweenness centrality*, è dunque interessante la presenza di studenti nelle prime posizioni. Nei termini rilevati da questa misura di centralità, gli studenti con i valori più alti hanno avuto una funzione che, come si diceva, se non si può ancora definire di *tutoring*, comunque li ha visti costantemente presenti in *Introduction to Italian*. Va inoltre

¹⁶ Si vedano, a titolo esemplificativo della contrapposizione fra chi sostiene l'indispensabilità del tutor nei contesti di apprendimento in Rete, e chi invece non ritiene necessaria questa figura, rispettivamente Brinton et al. (2013) e Tomkin, Charlevoix (2014).

ribadito come la “configurazione” iniziale, esaminata dopo la prima settimana di corso, sia rimasta, nella sostanza, invariata fino alla fine del LMOOC. Questo ci suggerisce come la *betweenness* tenda ad essere indicativa di una ottima *performance* dell’apprendente. Più semplicemente osserviamo, provando qui, almeno in parte, a generalizzare, che quegli utenti che sin dall’inizio si pongono all’interno degli scambi comunicativi e continuano ad interagire in maniera costante durante tutto il percorso, ottengono risultati migliori, in termini di completamento del corso con successo, all’interno di un contesto di apprendimento linguistico online di massa.

8. Conclusioni

In conclusione, è utile ripercorrere sommariamente l’indagine condotta. Partendo da uno scenario teorico utile per “trattare” il nostro apprendente all’interno di un LMOOC come un attore sociale che agisce in maniera autonoma e consapevole entro una cornice connettivista, siamo giunti alla costruzione di una struttura matematica, il grafo, che rappresenta le relazioni comunicative fra gli apprendenti. Questa rappresentazione ci ha consentito di concepire *Introduction to Italian* come una rete sociale; in tal modo, abbiamo in primo luogo potuto rilevare le caratteristiche generali della rete e le trasformazioni a cui essa è andata incontro durante le sei settimane di corso. Successivamente, con l’applicazione della *betweenness centrality*, come misura che dà conto della presenza di ciascun utente all’interno dei flussi comunicativi, è stato possibile identificare gli utenti, studenti e tutor, con i valori più elevati e mettere gli studenti in relazione con i dati relativi al completamento del corso. In questo modo si è osservata, limitatamente agli utenti riportati nelle rappresentazioni tabellari, una sovrapposizione totale fra utenti con valori elevati di *betweenness centrality* e completamento del corso.

	Nodi isolati	Misura	Ordine	Loops	Grado medio
Endpoint 1	9054	6121	3019	1107	3,32
Endpoint 2	9431	11423	3727	1564	5,29
Endpoint 3 (finale)	9514	15604	4042	1792	6,83

Tabella 1

	Diametro	Densità	Componenti debolmente connesse	Componenti fortemente connesse	Transitivity globale
Endpoint 1	24	0,00067180	148	2657	0,01507251
Endpoint 2	19	0,00082257	107	2880	0,03167682
Endpoint 3 (finale)	19	0,00095532	90	2982	0,04380192

Tabella 2

Posizione	Id utente	<u>Betweenness centrality (endpoint 1)</u>
#1	40072	0,04609498
#2	40331	0,02973532
#3	26484	0,02145654
#4	46943	0,02140831
#5	17758	0,02130445

Tabella 3

Posizione	Id utente	<u>Betweenness centrality (endpoint 2)</u>
#1	40072	0,04813768
#2	40331	0,03636575
#3	46943	0,03525943
#4	7343	0,02935705
#5	26484	0,02755180

Tabella 4

Posizione	Id utente	<u>Betweenness centrality</u> (endpoint 3)
#1	40072	0,04824136
#2	46943	0,04437319
#3	40331	0,03409500
#4	7343	0,03401165
#5	26484	0,02933206

Tabella 5

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Una proposta didattica basata sul *translanguaging* per l'inclusione e il supporto a studenti universitari plurilingui

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Abstract

This paper presents some results of an experimental research aimed at observing the impact of translanguaging for university students of immigrant background. A sample of students, paired according to shared language, carried out collaborative reading and writing tasks in academic Italian, in two different sessions. In the first, they were allowed to only use Italian, whereas in the second, they were encouraged to make use of their whole linguistic repertoire, in line with the principles of a translanguaging pedagogy. Such an approach has garnered positive attention among scholars and educators as a way to capitalize on students' plurilingualism, no longer considered a detriment, on the contrary, an asset for learning, both language and academic content.

Through the analysis of students' interactions, task resolution and perceptions, elements pointing towards a positive effect of translanguaging were identified. These, combined with well-established guidelines, resources and strategies of a translanguaging pedagogy, contributed to the design of a translanguaging unit hereby presented, which has the goal to support plurilingual students' inclusion and academic success in higher education.

Keywords

Translanguaging, Italian L2, Higher education, Language Education, Students of immigrant background.

1. Introduzione

La proposta didattica presentata in questo contributo si basa sull'approccio del *translanguaging* ed è parte di un progetto di ricerca che ha come intento quello di osservare gli effetti di tale approccio per studenti universitari alloglotti, di *background* migratorio, in ottica di inclusione e successo accademico degli stessi (Piangerelli 2020). Anche a livello universitario, infatti, in linea con quanto rilevato in tutti i livelli di istruzione, si evidenziano non soltanto una sottorappresentazione di tale gruppo di studenti (OECD 2018), ma anche un divario nel loro rendimento, spesso anche a fronte di una lunga o completa carriera scolastica nel Paese di accoglienza (Grassi 2018; Duso 2017).

Per quanto riguarda l'ateneo bergamasco, è stato evidenziato da Grassi (2018) un notevole squilibrio nei risultati del Test di Valutazione Iniziale di lingua italiana, obbligatorio per tutte le matricole in quanto atto a verificare le competenze nella letto-scrittura in lingua italiana, che spesso coincide con la lingua dell'istruzione. La percentuale media di superamento su quattro anni mostra una differenza di 15 punti percentuali fra studenti nativi e gli studenti di seconda generazione e di ben 40 punti fra i primi e gli studenti di recente migrazione. Tutto questo, è importante notarlo, nonostante la facilitazione dell'esame¹ per i secondi due gruppi

¹ Sebbene il test sia il medesimo, gli studenti di recente migrazione hanno a disposizione il doppio del tempo, la possibilità di utilizzare il vocabolario bilingue, oltre che una soglia di superamento al 33% invece che al 50%. Gli studenti con background migratorio con diploma italiano hanno una soglia di superamento del 40% (Grassi, 2018:365)

(Grassi 2018: 365). Anche Duso (2017) ha descritto una situazione simile presso l'Università di Padova, notando che gli studenti plurilingui, non solo neoarrivati ma anche di seconda generazione, trovano difficoltà nel passare il test iniziale, nonostante un'istruzione estesa, per alcuni completa, in lingua italiana (Duso 2017).

A fronte di tali risultati, sembra opportuno interrogarsi su interventi *ad hoc* rivolti ai bisogni degli studenti plurilingui, anche perché gli interventi finora loro destinati, sia in ambito italiano che in ambito internazionale, sono stati tradizionalmente volti al solo rafforzamento delle competenze nella lingua della scolarizzazione, senza tenere conto del loro plurilinguismo, e non sembrano aver dato i risultati sperati.

Una “strada percorribile” per valorizzare il patrimonio linguistico e culturale degli studenti di origine straniera, sfruttandone simultaneamente i vantaggi cognitivi, sociali e linguistici (Carbonara 2017: 241), sembra essere il *translanguaging* (García 2009), che si allinea ad altri approcci basati sulla valorizzazione dell'intero repertorio degli studenti con *background* plurilingue, che hanno iniziato a prendere piede nella ricerca glottodidattica².

Il concetto di *translanguaging* è complesso e sfaccettato, al punto che non si è ancora arrivati ad una sua concettualizzazione univoca. A livello descrittivo/individuale, mette a fuoco la prospettiva del parlante plurilingue, il quale accede e attinge in modo fluido e integrato al suo intero repertorio linguistico per comunicare efficacemente (García 2009; 2012). A livello didattico/educativo, propone l'impiego strategico di tale repertorio, per un adeguato supporto nell'apprendimento sia linguistico che disciplinare mediante lo *scaffolding* e il *leveraging* sulle conoscenze linguistiche pregresse, utilizzate come una risorsa (García Li Wei, 2014: 92-93). A livello politico/ideologico, si concretizza nello scardinamento della visione deficitaria delle lingue degli studenti plurilingui e del “doppio standard” che distingue le lingue in prestigiose e minorizzate, vedendo le prime in ottica positiva, le seconde in ottica negativa (Slembrouck, Rosiers 2018). A livello teorico, infine, il *translanguaging* viene identificato da Li Wei (2018) come *practical theory of language*, con funzione interpretativa – e non predittiva – di fenomeni e pratiche, in questo caso quelle che interessano diverse lingue e risorse semiotiche e cognitive (Li Wei 2018: 28).

Nella ricerca alla base di questo contributo, sono stati messi al centro principalmente i primi due livelli di sviluppo del *translanguaging*: l'accezione descrittiva da una parte e didattica dall'altra. Esplorare le potenzialità del *translanguaging* per l'implementazione delle pratiche plurilingui degli studenti con *background* migratorio in maniera ottimizzata e sistematica in ambito accademico italiano, dove sono ancora scarsi gli studi sul tema, sembra particolarmente promettente per rispondere ai bisogni di tali studenti.

2. L'indagine

2.1 Obiettivi

Gli obiettivi della ricerca, i cui risultati confluiscono nell'Unità didattica proposta in seguito, sono anzitutto l'osservazione delle pratiche di *translanguaging* emerse nell'interazione fra coppie di studenti universitari plurilingui, suddivisi in coppie sulla base delle lingue in comune oltre l'italiano, nello svolgimento collaborativo di compiti accademici disciplinari; l'analisi del loro impatto, ossia in quale modo e con quali conseguenze tali pratiche abbiano influito nello svolgimento dei compiti; la rilevazione delle percezioni dei soggetti riguardo al ricorso al *translanguaging* in attività legate allo studio accademico, non solo per quanto riguarda l'opportunità e l'utilità di simili pratiche, ma anche per quanto riguarda la loro liceità, per

² I cosiddetti Approcci plurali, fra cui *Éveil Aux Langues* e Intercomprensione fra lingue affini, per una descrizione approfondita dei quali rimandiamo a Candelier et al. (2012)

verificare l'effettiva percezione dell'ambiente accademico istituzionale come “zona di solo italiano”, emersa dagli studi di Carbonara (2017), Casini, Siebetchu (2017), Scaglione, Caruana (2018).

Come anticipato, i risultati di tale ricerca sono funzionali alla definizione di strategie e strumenti per una didattica che ottimizzi le potenzialità del *translanguaging* e le implementi formalmente e strategicamente, ai fini dell'inclusione e del supporto degli studenti plurilingui. Rilevare dal basso lo spontaneo ricorso al *translanguaging*, infatti, è imprescindibile per il modello “ricerca-azione trasformativa” teorizzato da García, Kleyn (2016) e delle “*evidence-based educational policies*” di Cummins (2011), secondo cui i risultati della ricerca scientifica informano la didattica e viceversa, attivando una sinergia di risorse e competenze che trasforma le pratiche e le politiche educative.

2.2 Metodologia

La ricerca è basata su una sperimentazione che ha coinvolto coppie di studenti di *background* migratorio, formate sulla base delle lingue condivise, materne o veicolari, le quali coppie hanno partecipato a tre sessioni audio- e videoregistrate. Nelle prime due, le coppie hanno svolto collaborativamente un *task*, articolato in una attività di comprensione testuale (globale, analitica, lessicale) e una di produzione di riassunto, in relazione a due testi disciplinari. Questi ultimi sono stati ritenuti paragonabili, oltre che per autore, ambito disciplinare e lunghezza, anche per leggibilità, misurata sia mediante la formula GULPEASE (Lucisano, Piemontese 1982) sia mediante lo strumento ReadIt (Dell'Orletta et al. 2011).

Ciò che ha distinto le due sessioni è una variabile fondamentale: mentre nella prima è stata fornita esplicita istruzione di ricorrere, sia per quanto riguarda l'interazione che per quanto riguarda i vocabolari, alla sola lingua obiettivo, nella seconda, al contrario, è stato incoraggiato l'uso di tutte le lingue del repertorio condiviso, oltre che il ricorso a vocabolari bilingui e/o a strumenti di traduzione online.

La terza ed ultima sessione è stata dedicata ad una intervista guidata da un questionario (adattato da Carstens, 2016) relativa alla percezione dell'esperienza degli studenti nelle due sessioni.

2.3 I partecipanti

I partecipanti alla sperimentazione sono stati selezionati fra gli studenti plurilingui immatricolati al primo o secondo anno della Laurea Triennale in Lingue e Letterature Straniere Moderne dell'Università degli Studi di Bergamo, che non hanno superato il Test di Valutazione Iniziale (TVI) di Lingua Italiana e/o l'esame di Lingua Italiana. Il primo, di cui si è già fatto cenno come particolarmente difficoltoso per gli studenti plurilingui immatricolati nell'ateneo bergamasco (Grassi, 2018), ha come obiettivo quello di “(attestare) una competenza linguistico-comunicativa avanzata, declinata nella capacità di comprensione scritta, sintesi e corretta elaborazione di testi dei diversi ambiti disciplinari del percorso universitario” (Grassi 2018: 363). Il secondo, invece, è finalizzato all' “acquisizione di abilità e competenze per la fruizione e l'uso efficace della lingua italiana scritta di ambito scientifico”³.

Il livello di competenza di lingua italiana dei partecipanti è controllato mediante il punteggio conseguito nel Test di Valutazione Iniziale, mentre il loro profilo sociolinguistico è delineato mediante un questionario online, adattato da García, Johnson, Seltzer (2017).

Le informazioni emerse dal questionario sono risultate indispensabili per la formazione delle coppie.

³ <https://www.unibg.it/ugov/degreecourse/52897>

Nella Tabella 1 è presentato il campione di studenti partecipanti al progetto. L'asterisco indica che la lingua condivisa è veicolare, in quanto materna per un solo membro della coppia. Il doppio asterisco segnala che i partecipanti hanno un genitore italofono.

	Genere	Diploma	Anni in Italia	Anno di corso	Punteggio TVI	Madrelingua	Lingue condivise
Coppia 1							
RAN	f.	estero	<5	I	23%	arabo egiziano	arabo
MAR	m.	estero	<5**	I	40%	arabo palestinese	
Coppia 2							
VIY	f.	estero	>1	I	17%	bielorosso/russo	russo
EKA	f.	estero	1	II	10%	russo	
Coppia 3							
ALE	f.	estero	<3	I	40%	spagnolo	spagnolo*
JUA	m.	estero	>3	II	53%	francese	
Coppia 4							
KLA	f.	estero	>1	I	23%	albanese	albanese
ALB	f.	estero	<1	II	33%	albanese	
Coppia 5							
LAU	f.	estero	>1**	I	27%	spagnolo	spagnolo
SAR	f.	estero	>1**	I	33%	spagnolo	
Coppia 6							
LUO	f.	italiano	<10	I	50%	cinese	cinese
ZHA	f.	estero	1	I	10%	cinese	

Tabella 1: Campione dei partecipanti

3. Risultati dell'indagine

I dati interazionali raccolti durante lo svolgimento dei compiti da parte delle coppie, una volta trascritti e codificati sono stati analizzati comparando le due sessioni di lavoro, quella in cui era evitato il ricorso al *translanguaging* e quella in cui era incoraggiato.

Dall'analisi puntuale delle interazioni di ciascuna coppia⁴ emergono tendenze interessanti riguardo al ricorso al *translanguaging* e del suo impatto nello svolgimento dei compiti.

Una tendenza degna di nota è quella che vede l'aumento, dalla prima alla seconda sessione, di turni di argomento *on task – cognitively oriented – sense making* (Storch, Aldosari 2010; Duarte 2016) dedicati cioè alla comprensione vera e propria dei testi oggetto di analisi e delle consegne dei *task*, punto di partenza fondamentale per lo svolgimento degli stessi. Questo aumento costituisce un dato non banale, specialmente se osserviamo la misura in cui le coppie ricorrono al *translanguaging* proprio in turni di tale argomento. La presenza di *translanguaging* induce ad ipotizzare, per alcune coppie più che per altre, che il ricorso alle lingue del repertorio permetta una maggiore focalizzazione sulla comprensione dei testi e delle attività date, con un più facile accesso a significati e concetti, una maggiore riflessione metalinguistica e il passaggio di competenze fra i partecipanti, soprattutto nell'attività di comprensione, coerentemente con la natura del *task*, ma anche in quella di riassunto.

Un'altra tendenza degna di nota è quella, coerente con quanto appena descritto, dell'aumento dei *Language Related Episodes* (Swain 1998), ossia dei momenti di riflessione

⁴ Per una descrizione approfondita di tale analisi rimandiamo a Piangerelli (2021).

mhm

- 341 ZHA "più abituale"是"更经常"的那个"偶然"是反义词啊
 "più abituale" è "più frequente", e allora quello, "occasionale", è il contrario

In altri casi, con negoziazioni molto più brevi e caratterizzate dal trasferimento di conoscenze, soprattutto da parte del membro della coppia più competente in lingua italiana, verso il più inesperto:

Esempio (10b) Coppia 4, sessione monolingue, comprensione testuale

100 KLA	sostantivo çfare eshte? sostantivo cosa vuol dire?
101 ALB	emër nome
102 KLA	emër

Proprio l'aspetto della collaborazione, facilitata dal ricorso al *translanguaging*, specialmente per coppie caratterizzate da un ampio divario di competenze in lingua italiana, è sottolineato nel questionario percettivo come utile mezzo di confronto e condivisione di conoscenze e competenze. Tale impatto era già stato identificato da Storch (2002), de la Molina e Garcia Mayo (2009) come particolarmente utile all'apprendimento delle lingue, rispetto al lavoro individuale.

Infine, un ruolo importante è ricoperto dal vocabolario bilingue e degli strumenti di traduzione online, almeno in potenza: se in alcuni casi il ricorso alle risorse di traduzione si è rivelato cruciale per la risoluzione corretta del *task*, in altri casi l'uso che alcune delle coppie ne hanno fatto si è rivelato quanto meno limitato, se non scorretto, talora con l'utilizzo dei vocabolari online a mo' di motore di ricerca, talora con la ricerca di termini nella loro forma flessa.

4. Applicazioni nella didattica

4.1 Il modello della pedagogia del *translanguaging*

Le tendenze appena illustrate, che puntano verso un ruolo favorevole del *translanguaging* nello svolgimento di compiti accademici, sono coerenti con le *translanguaging pedagogical strategies* proposte da García, Johnson e Seltzer (2017: 75-77): l'assegnazione di partner che condividono una lingua materna, l'incoraggiamento a riflettere e discutere ricorrendo all'intero repertorio, insieme alla guida all'uso degli strumenti di traduzione e dizionari plurilingui, sono infatti elencati fra le strategie relative all'obiettivo di supportare gli studenti nella comprensione di testi e contenuti complessi. L'incoraggiamento a tradurre e riscrivere i testi utilizzando tutte le risorse linguistiche a disposizione, co-costruendo i significati mediante la discussione di gruppo, anche confrontando aspetti lessicali e morfologici delle diverse lingue, facendo leva sulle conoscenze linguistiche pregresse degli studenti risultano funzionali all'obiettivo di fornire agli studenti l'opportunità di sviluppare pratiche linguistiche per il contesto accademico.

Queste strategie, che si inseriscono nella pianificazione didattica (*design*), sono complementari ad altri due pilastri di una didattica del *translanguaging* secondo García, Johnson e Seltzer (2017): imprescindibili sono anche una *stance*, ossia una presa di posizione positiva, da parte dell'insegnante, rispetto alle lingue del repertorio degli studenti, in ottica di rinuncia alla visione deficitaria del plurilinguismo, e uno *shift*, ossia un cambio di prospettiva, votato alla flessibilità e al flusso della *translanguaging corrente* all'interno della classe

(García, Johnson, Seltzer 2017). È evidente, quindi, che la messa a punto di attività didattiche basate sul *translanguaging* debba accompagnarsi alla formazione e al coinvolgimento degli insegnanti in questo senso.

La pianificazione delle attività si svolge, secondo García, Johnson e Seltzer (2017) in due fasi: la prima teorica, definita *Translanguaging Unit Design* (TUD) che delinea i contenuti, gli obiettivi e i materiali sulla base delle linee guida locali, la seconda pratica, definita *Translanguaging Instructional Design Cycle* (TIDC), che, traccia un percorso ciclico, suddiviso in cinque fasi di lavoro, da svolgere in classe (García, Johnson, Seltzer 2017). Questi strumenti, nati in ambito nordamericano, sono stati adattati per il contesto italiano da Carbonara e Martini (2019), che hanno proposto, in linea con il modello del TUD, il Quadro generale dell'Unità, e, in linea con il modello operativo del TIDC, quello dell'Unità di Lavoro/Apprendimento (UdLA) di Pona, Cencetti, Troiano (2018).

Il Quadro Generale dell'Unità comprende tre livelli di competenza fondamentali: le Competenze chiave per l'apprendimento permanente (2018), gli obiettivi di apprendimento descritti nelle Indicazioni Nazionali (2012) e le Competenze e i saperi di tipo plurilingue riferiti al FREPA/CARAP, Quadro di Riferimento per gli Approcci Plurali alle Lingue e alle Culture (Candelier et al. 2012). Non mancano tuttavia altri elementi, fra cui Metodologie, Risorse umane e Valutazione, cui spesso si ricorre nella pianificazione didattica in ambito italiano (Carbonara, Scibetta 2020). L'Unità di Lavoro/Apprendimento, invece, a partire da un focus sul testo, consente all'insegnante di fornire gli stimoli utili al raggiungimento degli obiettivi di apprendimento. Questo modello è strutturato secondo una precisa scansione in Fasi di Sviluppo, alcune delle quali parzialmente sovrapponibili al TIDC, che sono riassunte nella Tabella 2.

INSEGNANTE	STUDENTE
Motivazione	Riscaldiamoci!
Globalità	Incontriamo il testo!
Analisi	Cerchiamo e ricerchiamo!
Sintesi	Facciamo a modo nostro!
Riflessione	Scopriamo la regola(rità)!
Verifica e valutazione	So fare!
Feedback	Che cosa ho imparato? Come mi sono sentito?

Tabella 2: Fasi di sviluppo dell'UdLA (Pona, Cencetti, Troiano 2018)

4.2 Una proposta di UdLA

La proposta didattica qui presentata adotta gli strumenti appena descritti, già sperimentati per una didattica basata sul *translanguaging* in ambito italiano (Carbonara, Martini, 2019; Carbonara, Scibetta, 2020), pur con alcuni ulteriori adattamenti dovuti al contesto di riferimento, quello universitario, e al target, quello degli studenti plurilingui. In particolare, invece degli obiettivi delle Indicazioni Nazionali (2012) relativi alla scuola dell'infanzia e alla scuola primaria, è sembrato appropriato ricorrere agli obiettivi delineati dal Quadro Comune Europeo di Riferimento per la Conoscenza delle Lingue, su cui l'Università stessa si basa per stabilire il livello linguistico richiesto agli studenti universitari che intendono iscriversi all'Università. L'intervento così ipotizzato è da intendersi come punto di partenza per sperimentazioni successive e, eventualmente, da inserirsi nel già previsto piano rimediabile per il Test di Valutazione Iniziale di lingua italiana, in particolare quello dedicato agli studenti plurilingui.

In coerenza con la struttura del TVI, l'UdLA qui proposta prevede un input in lingua italiana, costituito da un breve testo di ambito disciplinare, con relative attività di comprensione

(globale, analitica, e lessicale) – da svolgere ella prima lezione – e di riassunto – da svolgere nella seconda. In questo caso, si è scelto di utilizzare lo stesso testo della prima sessione della sperimentazione, con le rispettive attività, adattate agli obiettivi e alle fasi di sviluppo appena illustrati (Tabella 5, vedi oltre).

Il Quadro generale dell'Unità qui proposta si delinea come rappresentato dalla Tabella 3.

Quadro generale dell'Unità	
Destinatari	Studenti plurilingui del I o II anno del CdS in LLSM, che non hanno passato il TVI di lingua italiana
Disciplina	TVI lingua italiana
Competenze chiave per l'apprendimento permanente (2018)	Competenza alfabetica funzionale; Competenza multilinguistica; Competenza digitale; Competenza personale, sociale e capacità di imparare a imparare;
Obiettivi di apprendimento (CEFR)	<p>Lettura:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - leggere articoli e relazioni su questioni d'attualità in cui l'autore prende posizione ed esprime un punto di vista determinato (B2); - comprendere testi letterari e informativi lunghi e complessi, articoli specialistici e istruzioni tecniche piuttosto lunghe (C1); - comprendere testi teorici strutturalmente o linguisticamente complessi (C2). <p>Scrittura:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - scrivere saggi e relazioni, fornendo informazioni e ragioni a favore o contro una determinata opinione, esponendo argomenti complessi, evidenziando i punti che ritengo salienti (B2); - scegliere lo stile adatto ai destinatari (C1); - scrivere riassunti e recensioni di opere letterarie e di testi specialisti (C2).
Competenze e saperi di tipo plurilingue (FREPA/CARAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conoscere alcuni principi di funzionamento delle lingue (K1); - Conoscere alcuni principi di funzionamento della comunicazione (K3); - Sapere che esistono tra le lingue / le varietà linguistiche somiglianze e differenze (K6); - Sapere che ci si può basare sulle somiglianze (strutturali/discorsive/pragmatiche/) tra le lingue per apprendere le lingue (K 7.2); - Sapere che si può apprendere meglio quando si ha un atteggiamento di accettazione nei confronti delle differenze linguistiche (K 7.3); - Disponibilità a impegnarsi nella comunicazione (verbale/non verbale) plurale seguendo le convenzioni e le consuetudini adeguate al contesto (A 7.2) - Essere pronto ad affrontare le difficoltà legate alle situazioni e alle interazioni plurilingui / pluriculturali (A 7.3) - Disponibilità a condividere con altri le proprie conoscenze linguistiche/ culturali (A 7.4) - Motivazione a studiare / confrontare il funzionamento delle diverse lingue {strutture, lessico, sistemi di scrittura ...} / culture (A 7.5) - Ritenerne il funzionamento delle lingue e delle loro diverse componenti {fonemi / parole / frasi / testi} come oggetti di analisi e di riflessione (A 9.2.1) - Avere fiducia in sé quando ci si trova in situazioni di comunicazione (°di espressione / di ricezione / di interazione / di mediazione°) (A 14.2) - Avere fiducia nelle proprie capacità rispetto alle lingue (/alla loro analisi / alla loro utilizzazione/) (A 14.3)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Essere disposto a cercare di raggiungere in maniera autonoma apprendimenti linguistici che hanno avuto già inizio in un contesto istituzionale di apprendimento (A 18.3) - Saper °osservare / analizzare° °elementi linguistici / fenomeni culturali° in °lingue / culture° più o meno familiari (S1) - Saper °osservare/ analizzare° strutture sintattiche e/o morfologiche (S 1.4) - Saper °identificare [individuare]° °elementi linguistici / fenomeni culturali in °lingue / culture° più o meno familiari (S 2); - Saper confrontare i fenomeni °linguistici / culturali° di °lingue / culture° diverse [Saper percepire la contiguità e la distanza °linguistica / culturale°] (S 3) - Saper esprimere le proprie conoscenze sulle lingue (S 4.3); - Saper utilizzare le conoscenze e le competenze delle quali si dispone in una lingua per attività °di comprensione / di produzione° in un °altra lingua (S 5) - Saper effettuare transfer interlinguistici (/transfer di identificazione <che stabiliscono un rapporto tra un elemento identificato della lingua familiare e un elemento della lingua non familiare da identificare > / transfer di produzione <attività di produzione linguistica in una lingua non familiare>/) da una lingua conosciuta ad una lingua non familiare (S 5.3) - Saper interagire in situazione di contatti °di lingue/ di culture° (S 6) - Saper comunicare in gruppi bi/plurilingui tenendo conto del repertorio dei propri interlocutori (S 6.1) - Saper °appropriarsi di/ apprendere° elementi o usi linguistici / riferimenti o comportamenti culturali° propri di °lingue / culture° più o meno familiari (S 7)
Metodologie	<i>Translanguaging, brainstorming</i> , scrittura collaborativa
Strumenti e Materiali	input testuale (in lingua italiana), lavagna, <i>device</i> personali con accesso ad internet (<i>BYOD</i>)
Risorse Umane	Insegnante, studenti
Valutazione	griglia di valutazione del docente (FREPA/CARAP), valutazione oggettiva (task di comprensione), valutazione con scala di adeguatezza funzionale (task di riassunto)
Tempi	2 lezioni da 90' l'una

Tabella 3: Quadro generale dell'Unità

Le Fasi di Sviluppo sono invece scandite secondo la Tabella 4.

Prima lezione		
motivazione – riscaldiamoci! globalità – incontriamo il testo!	<i>explorar</i>	<i>strategically grouping</i> (5') <i>skimming</i> del testo (10') ricerca di parole affini (10') introduzione alla ricerca lessicale autonoma (5')
analisi – cerchiamo e ricerchiamo! sintesi – facciamo a modo nostro!	<i>evaluar</i>	ricerca lessicale autonoma discussione sul contenuto del testo negoziazione dei significati (30')
rinforzo – alleniamoci!	<i>imaginar</i>	svolgimento delle attività di comprensione globale, analitica, lessicale (30')
verifica e valutazione – so fare!	<i>presentar</i> <i>implementar</i>	correzione fra pari delle attività di comprensione (30')
Seconda lezione		
motivazione – riscaldiamoci! globalità – incontriamo il testo!	<i>explorar</i>	<i>strategically grouping</i> (5') <i>recap</i> contenuto e lessico del testo (10) introduzione alla stesura del riassunto (15') rilettura del testo (15')
analisi – cerchiamo e ricerchiamo! sintesi – facciamo a modo nostro!	<i>evaluar</i>	<i>the “gist”</i> (15') rielaborazione/ <i>retelling</i> (15')
rinforzo – alleniamoci!	<i>imaginar</i>	scrittura collaborativa del riassunto (20')
verifica e valutazione – so fare!	<i>presentar</i> <i>implementar</i>	introduzione alla correzione fra pari del riassunto (10') correzione fra pari delle attività di riassunto (30')

Tabella 4: Fasi di sviluppo dell'Unità

La prima lezione, della durata complessiva di due ore, prende le mosse dalla suddivisione strategica (*strategically grouping*, Celic, Seltzer, 2013: 62-65) degli studenti in coppie per lingue condivise e, se possibile, ai livelli di competenza in lingua target, sulla base di informazioni precedentemente raccolte mediante il questionario adattato da García, Johnson, Seltzer (2017).

Successivamente, viene presentato il testo al centro dell'attività. Ciascuna coppia è incoraggiata a farne un rapido *skimming* e a ricorrere a qualsiasi lingua del repertorio per avanzare ipotesi relative all'argomento del testo. Subito dopo, l'insegnante invita ciascuna coppia a porsi la domanda se qualche parola presente nel testo somigli ad un'altra della lingua materna, per focalizzare l'attenzione sulle parole affini (*cognates*). Dopo una breve discussione, l'insegnante riporta le parole individuate da ciascuna coppia scrivendole alla lavagna (*cognate charts*, Celic, Seltzer, 2013:153), mettendole in relazione con quelle presenti nel testo, in lingua italiana, sia in caso di effettiva affinità fra le parole sia in caso dei cosiddetti *false cognates* (Celic, Seltzer, 2013:153). Un *excursus* su prefissi e suffissi con basi intercomprensibili, non soltanto con le lingue materne, ma con tutte le lingue presenti nel repertorio, come pure le principali lingue veicolari o di studio è opportuno in questa fase. Riflettendo su tali prefissi e suffissi, gli studenti acquisiscono autonomia e imparano a fare leva su tali conoscenze per la comprensione lessicale anche nel futuro.

In seguito, l'insegnante introduce la fase di ricerca lessicale, esortando gli studenti ad avvalersi di dizionari monolingui o bilingui e di *tool* di traduzione come Google Translate. L'approccio per tale ricerca è *Bring Your Own Device*: ciascuno studente si serve dei propri dispositivi connessi ad internet, con il vantaggio di consentire a ciascuno di personalizzare gli strumenti a lui più utili e di ricorrere ad essi anche fuori dalla classe, per un apprendimento anche informale (Afreen, 2014). Prima di lasciare che gli studenti lavorino in coppia per la

ricerca lessicale, è importante fornire una *checklist* utile a stabilire quali parole sia opportuno cercare per comprendere il testo, in modo che gli studenti sviluppino un metodo critico e strategico nella ricerca/traduzione del lessico. Generalmente, risulta infatti più utile cercare una parola se questa ricorre più di una volta nel testo, se si trova all'inizio o alla fine del paragrafo, se è in corsivo, grassetto, sottolineato, se non si riesce a comprenderne il significato continuando a leggere, e se questo compromette la comprensione del paragrafo o della frase (Celic, Seltzer, 2013: 93). Le traduzioni o i significati verranno copiati sul foglio a fianco ai termini presenti nel testo, per favorire la comprensione di quest'ultimo e la memorizzazione del lessico (Celic, Seltzer, 2013: 92).

Inizia così la fase di lavoro che possiamo far corrispondere a quella che nel TUC è denominata *evaluar*, in cui gli studenti, all'interno delle coppie, lavorano autonomamente sull'input, discutendo e negoziando il significato grazie al ricorso a qualsiasi lingua del repertorio, ai dizionari e agli strumenti di traduzione come indicato dall'insegnante. Infine, gli studenti rielaborano le informazioni per lo svolgimento delle attività di comprensione globale, analitica e lessicale in lingua target (*imaginar*).

Una volta terminata questa fase, viene lasciato spazio per un *feedback* fra pari, in cui gli studenti possono presentare le proprie argomentazioni e negoziare collettivamente significati, anche facendo riferimento alle lingue condivise e ai dizionari bilingui. Questa attività comprende sia la fase di *presentar* che di *implementar* secondo il modello del TIDC (García, Johnson, Seltzer, 2017).

Nella seconda lezione, gli studenti vengono nuovamente divisi nelle coppie e riprendono in mano il testo della lezione precedente, arricchito delle informazioni lessicali e traduzioni, insieme alle *cognate charts* create in precedenza, proiettate dall'insegnante per riepilogare il lavoro svolto finora. In seguito, ha inizio l'attività di riassunto, anche questa svolta nella massima libertà di ricorrere a ciascuna lingua del repertorio per pianificarne la stesura e per rielaborare a parole proprie il contenuto del testo. Gli studenti sono incoraggiati ad appuntarsi un elenco di idee fondamentali, creare una mappa concettuale, effettuare una prima stesura di frasi in qualsiasi lingua del repertorio. Queste note preliminari, definite in Espinosa, Ascenzi-Moreno, Vogel (2016:51) come "*the gist*", sono particolarmente utili ad approfondire la comprensione degli studenti e a far sì che questi memorizzino le informazioni lette. Gli studenti, quindi, effettuano una rilettura del testo e discutono per produrre collaborativamente il relativo riassunto.

Per quanto riguarda le fasi *presentar/implementar* relative a quest'attività, ancora una volta viene messa in atto una correzione fra pari dei riassunti, mediante linee guida per il *feedback*, che rendono il processo focalizzato e utile per gli obiettivi di apprendimento (Espinosa, Ascenzi-Moreno, Vogel, 2016:87).

In Tabella 5 è visibile l'intera Unità di Lavoro/Apprendimento così delineata:

Prima lezione - Task di comprensione

1) Leggete rapidamente il testo. Di cosa parla, secondo voi? Discutetene in qualsiasi lingua

Che le lingue e i comportamenti linguistici siano un territorio diffusamente contrassegnato dalla varietà e differenziazione è ovvio e ampiamente noto al pensiero comune, ben al di là dello stesso mito della Torre di Babele, sin dall'antichità, almeno sotto l'aspetto del riconoscimento delle varietà dialettali, ben evidente già nel mondo classico. Ma non mancano nemmeno, nella storia remota della linguistica, spunti di teorizzazione della variabilità intrinseca delle lingue. [...] Dante, in quello che com'è noto si può per più aspetti considerare il primo trattato sulla variabilità linguistica diatopica, e riferendosi appunto al tipo di variazione più appariscente, quella dialettale, caratterizza molto bene la natura generale della variazione, sottolineandone l' 'unico ed esclusivo motivo razionale', il fatto che essendo l'uomo 'un animale instabilissimo e mutevolissimo', anche la lingua, il comportamento linguistico, 'come tutte le altre cose che ci appartengono, quali abitudini e mode, deve necessariamente variare in rapporto alle distanze di spazio e di tempo'.

2) Riconoscete nel testo delle parole simili a parole che già conoscete in altre lingue? Sottolineatele e discutetene in qualsiasi lingua. Poi, discutetene con la classe e con l'insegnante.3) Cercate la traduzione o la definizione delle parole o espressioni che non conoscete. Ricordate: più una parola è frequente nel testo, più è importante! Potete usare il vostro telefono per connettervi al vocabolario, a Google Translate etc.4) Copiate sul testo le traduzioni o i significati delle parole che avete cercato.5) Rispondete alle domande, confrontandovi fra voi in qualsiasi lingua.

1. Qual è, secondo voi, il titolo del testo?

- Italiano parlato e comunicazione mediata dal computer
- Note sul repertorio linguistico degli emigrati italiani in Svizzera tedesca
- Sul posto della variazione nella teoria linguistica

2. Qual è, in generale, l'argomento del testo?

- Il mito della Torre di Babele
- La variazione linguistica
- Il pensiero di Dante sulla variabilità linguistica

3. In base a quanto dice il testo, indicate se ciascuna affermazione è vera, falsa, o non presente nel testo.

	VERO	FALSO	NON PRESENTE
Gli studi sulla variazione delle lingue sono piuttosto recenti			

Dante non riconosceva la variabilità linguistica			
Tutti sanno che le lingue sono variabili			

4. Trovate nel testo la parola o l'espressione di significato equivalente a ciascuna di quelle indicate sotto e trascrivetela negli spazi bianchi.

lontano nel tempo (agg.)

che si nota (agg.)

per forza (avv.)

6) Confrontate le vostre risposte con quelle dei vostri colleghi, con l'aiuto dell'insegnante.

Seconda lezione – Task di riassunto

1) Riprendete il testo della lezione precedente e rileggetelo, per memorizzare di nuovo le traduzioni e le parole affini.

Che le lingue e i comportamenti linguistici siano un territorio diffusamente contrassegnato dalla varietà e differenziazione è ovvio e ampiamente noto al pensiero comune, ben al di là dello stesso mito della Torre di Babele, sin dall'antichità, almeno sotto l'aspetto del riconoscimento delle varietà dialettali, ben evidente già nel mondo classico. Ma non mancano nemmeno, nella storia remota della linguistica, spunti di teorizzazione della variabilità intrinseca delle lingue. [...] Dante, in quello che com'è noto si può per più aspetti considerare il primo trattato sulla variabilità linguistica diatopica, e riferendosi appunto al tipo di variazione più appariscente, quella dialettale, caratterizza molto bene la natura generale della variazione, sottolineandone l' 'unico ed esclusivo motivo razionale', il fatto che essendo l'uomo 'un animale instabilissimo e mutevolissimo', anche la lingua, il comportamento linguistico, 'come tutte le altre cose che ci appartengono, quali abitudini e mode, deve necessariamente variare in rapporto alle distanze di spazio e di tempo'.

<p>2) <u>In questo spazio, prendete nota delle idee fondamentali del testo, dopo aver discusso fra voi in qualsiasi lingua. Potete fare una mappa concettuale o scrivere frasi in qualsiasi lingua. Se ne avete bisogno, usate il vocabolario o il traduttore sul vostro telefono.</u></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>3) <u>Scrivete ora il riassunto del testo dato, a partire dalle vostre note e discutendo fra voi in qualsiasi lingua.</u></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>4) <u>Scambiate il vostro riassunto con quello della coppia vicina a voi. Leggetelo attentamente e riflettete, discutendo fra voi in qualsiasi lingua:</u></p> <p>a. Faccio fatica a capire questo testo oppure è chiaro e facile da comprendere?</p> <p>b. Le idee principali del testo originale sono presenti nel riassunto o ne mancano alcune?</p> <p>c. Queste idee sono ben collegate fra loro?</p> <p>d. Il lessico e la struttura del riassunto sono adeguati al contesto universitario?</p> <p>e. Ci sono delle frasi nel riassunto che sembrano copiate dal testo?</p>
<p>5) <u>Discutete fra voi, in qualsiasi lingua, per proporre modifiche o correzioni al riassunto dei vostri compagni.</u></p>
<p>6) <u>Riscambiate i riassunti con la coppia vicina a voi e condividete le vostre impressioni sul loro lavoro.</u></p>

Tabella 5: Proposta di Unità di Lavoro/Apprendimento

5. Considerazioni conclusive

La proposta così delineata costituisce, è importante ribadirlo, un primo punto di partenza, sulla base di quanto emerso dalla ricerca illustrata in precedenza, grazie anche all'ausilio di strumenti e strategie già testate, sebbene in contesti differenti da quello universitario. In tale ambito, infatti, è ancora scarso il numero di proposte relative all'implementazione di una didattica del *translanguaging*, cosa che rende necessaria una sperimentazione sul campo di una simile UdLa, per verificarne l'efficacia, non solo effettiva, ma anche percepita, per gli studenti cui è rivolta, e per implementare ulteriori migliorie e modifiche per massimizzarne l'impatto positivo.

Come detto in precedenza, una simile progettazione didattica non è sufficiente per implementare in maniera sistematica e strategica il *translanguaging* nella didattica, in questo caso dell'italiano per studenti plurilingui: deve necessariamente affiancarsi ad una opportuna

formazione degli insegnanti, per il superamento della visione deficitaria del plurilinguismo, ancora radicata nell'istruzione.

Fatte queste doverose premesse, non sembra irragionevole ritenere che gli strumenti e le strategie di *translanguaging* incorporate nella UdLA qui proposta possano costituire un valido supporto agli studenti universitari plurilingui, nello specifico, nell'ambito dell'intervento rimediale per il recupero del Test di Valutazione Iniziale di lingua italiana, per il superamento di tale esame. Ulteriori sperimentazioni future, si auspica, approfondiranno questo tema e getteranno luce sulle possibili applicazioni della didattica del *translanguaging* anche in ambito universitario, per renderlo più inclusivo ed equo per gli studenti di *background* migratorio.

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The Adult Foreign Language Learner Some Proposals for Andragogical Language Teaching

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Abstract

This paper provides an overview of what it means to explore, from an andragogical approach, the process of foreign language learning and teaching. The relationship between adults and learning experiences is complex and multifaceted. The conceptual categories of multiplicity and diversity of motivations, needs, expectations, and strategies to which the teaching principles of multiplicity and flexibility of methods and techniques can be applied are relevant. Teaching adults requires assuming new roles and adopting novel teaching methods. On a methodological level, language activities must be linked to the needs, interests, and experiences of the adult, provide appropriate language models, vary in the methods, tools, and materials used, and guarantee greater awareness and autonomy.

Keywords

andragogy; self-directed learning; autonomy; foreign language teaching

1. Who are Adults?

For a long time, human development has been considered as the evolution of biological and psychological structures according to pre-established patterns and criteria of continuity and irreversibility. In this conception, adulthood is considered a well-defined period of life—the moment in which the completeness and stability of an individual representing a primary goal of the development process is achieved—a stage at which, ultimately, one no longer grows or changes (Alberici 2002).

As stated by Rogers and Horrocks ([1986] 2010: 44) a wide range of concepts is invoked when we use the term ‘adult’. The word can refer: to a *stage* in the life cycle; to *status*, a form of societal acceptance that the person concerned has completed their novitiate and should be incorporated more fully into the community; to a social *sub-set* (adults as distinct from children).

Research models on adulthood can be grouped into two main categories. The *functional* model can be traced back to Erikson's evolutionary theory, which covers the entire life span based on a succession of developmental stages and psychosocial tasks (e.g. working, parenting) differentiated by age period. According to Erikson, each period of life has a unique challenge or crisis; a necessary turning point when development must progress one way or another, requiring individuals to marshal resources of growth, recovery, and further differentiation to address and resolve it in a positive way (1968: 16). The *structural* model, much like Levinson's research, examines the factors that modify overall personal identity through a conscious reformulation of life goals in direct correlation with daily experiences. The ‘life structure’ develops through an alternative series of structure-building and structure-changing (transitional) periods in which the individual reorganises goals in an emotional, cognitive, or practical sense or, vice versa, denies what they have experienced and elects to remain fixed on the original personal affirmation strategies (Levinson 1986: 6).

Biological, psychological, psychosocial, anthropological, and sociological research on models of human development developed since the second half of the 19th century have highlighted the impossibility of defining an adult identity by undermining the concept of arrest at a certain life stage. Scholars have focused on the entire course of life (Baltes *et al.* 1980) considering the adult

within a bio-psycho-social conception that sees them committed to growing and developing between moments of continuity and discontinuity throughout the course of life.

These orientations release the adult from a condition of accomplishment and permanence, maintaining them through their life span in a state of formation and growth.

2. Perspectives on Adult Learning

Adult education is a transition and frontier discipline situated in the space of encounter, comparison, and integration between multiple disciplinary areas and political-social purposes that can be defined based on two assumptions:

- the value of the concept of individual development as a plastic and dynamic process lasting a lifetime and that creates the possibility, need, and desire to learn at all ages and is sustainable; and
- recognition that the value of education is not purely and exclusively functional but also involves the desire to achieve aspirations of human development, growth, and freedom (Alberici 2002).

The overcoming of the staged concept of development has opened spaces for reflection on the importance that learning assumes in the various areas of private, social, and professional life, calling into question both the need and intentionality of an educational process that takes place life-long and life-wide.

There is no single, all-encompassing learning theory that fully explains the complex, context-bound, and highly personal adult learning process. However, among the literature of the past century, we will examine Knowles' adult learning theory, self-directed learning, and transformational learning to determine their didactic implications.

2.1 Knowles' Adult Learning Theory

The term *andragogy* was coined in Germany in 1833 by Alexander Kapp. Knowles (1968) was responsible for the revitalisation of the term and the subsequent development of a unitary theory of adult learning.

Adult learners have long been *a neglected species*. Knowles offered a paradigm for distinguishing andragogy (adult education) from pedagogy (child education) stating:

The andragogical model, as I see it, is not an ideology; it is a system of alternative sets of assumptions. This leads us to the critical difference between the two models. The pedagogical model is an ideological model which excludes andragogical assumptions. The andragogical model is a system of assumptions which includes pedagogical assumptions. ([1973] 1984: 62)

Knowles' andragogical model is based on six distinctive assumptions.

Need to Know is related to the expected benefits. The adult, before deciding to pursue a training course requiring investment of considerable effort, evaluates both the usefulness, advantages, and expected use of the new skills that they will acquire and the negative consequences of a lack of learning (Tough 1971). In a foreign language course intended for adults, it will thus be necessary to raise awareness of needs, via real or simulated experiences, so that learners discover the gap between the starting situation and final result.

Self-concept is the responsibility that adults assume during training. Although adults may be independent and self-directed in other areas, they may initially exhibit a 'teach me' attitude due to previous school experiences. Therefore, teachers must introduce learning experiences that transform the adult learner from being teacher-dependent to self-directed.

Role of Experience. Adults enter the learning path with greater and quantitatively different experience than that of young people. Notably, experience, typically regarded as a resource, can also constitute an obstacle in that it leads to taking on unidirectional, rigid, and stereotyped visions of reality that limit openness to new ways of seeing and thinking. Adult groups are characterised by a higher degree of heterogeneity in terms of knowledge, learning styles, interests, motivations, needs, and goals. This heterogeneity implies maximum personalization and individualisation of teaching but allows for making comparisons, appreciating cultural diversity, and showing that the richest resources for learning are based on the learners themselves. For adults, experience represents who they are, which is connected to their sense of identity, which, in turn, implies that what is newly learned must somehow graft onto and integrate with previous experiences: every situation in which the experience is ignored or devalued is experienced by the adults as a refusal, not only of their experiences but also of their identity. The most commonly used techniques are therefore experiential ones based on group discussions, simulations, problem-solving activities, case studies, workshops, and peer collaboration activities.

Readiness to Learn deals particularly with what you need to know or how to deal with real-life situations, tasks, and problems. The adults are willing to learn what they need to know or what they feel the need to improve, which implies the necessity of explaining reasons for learning specific skills and focusing on tasks that adults can perform rather than memorisation of content.

Orientation to Learning is centred on real-life tasks and problems rather than disciplines. To obtain maximum effectiveness in acquiring new knowledge, comprehension skills, and abilities, the presentation of knowledge must be contextualised in the subjects' real-life situations. This aspect is crucial in terms of teachers' selection of exposure methods, definitions of objectives and content, and planning of didactic intervention in general.

Internal Motivation. In adults, integrative motivation, which is connected to personal realisations, the growth of self-esteem, and the desire to improve one's quality of life, is stronger than instrumental motivation (e.g. securing a better job or a promotion). Adults also have fixed objectives that are often dictated by a sense of urgency or need to immediately implement new skills or understandings. However, achievement of these goals can be inhibited by a lack of confidence in one's skills, inaccessibility of opportunities, lack of resources or time, and programs that do not consider the peculiarities of the andragogical approach.

The andragogical model is a procedural model. In the traditional content model, the teacher decides in advance what knowledge and skills should be transmitted, divides the content into logical units, selects the most suitable means of transference (lessons, readings, exercises, etc.), and develops a plan to sequentially present units. The andragogical teacher prepares in advance a series of procedures to involve learners. This process typically includes the following elements: preparing the learner, creating a favourable learning climate, creating a shared design mechanism, diagnosing learning needs, formulating objectives that meet needs, designing a model for learning experiences, realising learning experiences using suitable techniques and materials, evaluating learning outcomes, and identifying new learning needs.

The difference between the traditional content model and the andragogical model does not lie in the fact that it deals with content and the other does not. Rather, while the content model aims to *transmit* information and skills, the procedural model aims to provide resources and procedures to *help learners acquire* information and skills (Knowles *et al.* 1998).

2.2 Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning (SDL) first emerged in the field of adult education in the 1970s, for which Knowles provided foundational definitions and assumptions that guided subsequent research.

SDL, which has been studied, theorised on, and practised for over 50 years, has been described as both a personal attribute of the learner and a process (Brockett, Hiemstra 1991, 2012; Candy 1991; Houle 1961; Knowles 1975; Tough 1967, 1971).

As Merriam and Bierema point out, self-directedness is synonymous with autonomy (2014:147). Therefore, even if this statement could be parsed further, it holds true, at least for the purposes of this paper, and the two terms will be used interchangeably moving forward.

Autonomy in education refers to ‘the ability to take charge of one’s learning,’ which implies having responsibility for all decisions concerning learning such as determining the objectives, content, and progression; selecting the methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedure of acquiring proper speech (rhythm, time, place); and evaluating the level of acquisition (Holec 1981: 3).

Approximately 70% of adult learning is self-directed (Cross 1981), and 90% of all adults attempt at least one self-directed learning project per year (Tough 1971).

Autonomous and self-directed adult language learners exhibit many of the characteristics previously noted in studies of ‘good language learners’ (Griffiths 2008). Good language learners often develop effective strategies that help them make significant progress in learning the target language; however, for every successful, motivated, and independent student, there are many others who, despite their best efforts, struggle to make progress or experience a lack of motivation and confidence. In these circumstances, the teacher's role is critical in providing support and guidance with clear objectives, appropriate resources, and effective strategies to help students become self-directed, independent, motivated, and successful learners (Thornton 2010).

2.3 Transformative Learning

Transformative learning (TL) is often described as learning that changes the way individuals think about themselves and their world, involving a change of consciousness.

Mezirow, one of the leading proponents of the theoretical orientation of TL, interested in understanding and explaining under what conditions adults can continuously rethink the course of their lives, sees TL as

learning that transforms problematic frames of reference—sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets)—to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change. (2003: 58-59)

TL is, therefore, a profound, constructive, and meaningful process that goes beyond the simple acquisition of knowledge and translates into a change in worldview and a transition from uncritical acceptance of information to reflective and conscious learning experiences that lead to emancipation. For Mezirow, the means by which the transformation takes place is reflection, intended as ‘the process of critically assessing the content, process, or premise(s) of our efforts to interpret and give meaning to an experience’ (1991: 104). *Content reflection* is an examination of the content or description of a problem; *process reflection* involves evaluating the problem-solving strategies that are being used. *Premise reflection* takes place when underlying assumptions or the problem itself are questioned and lead the learner to a transformation of meaning perspectives (1998).

Mezirow thus defines a concept of adulthood that is non-static but in a state of constant evolution and rebuilding, a fundamental principle underlying lifelong learning: the ability of individuals to rethink and formulate their ideas, beliefs, and constructs.

This brief description of TL indicates its potential value as an educational and didactic approach; Mezirow (2003) argues that effective adult education helps students move towards positions of greater autonomy and that this process must include the development of skills and attitudes necessary for critical reflection.

Approaches that can help students reach these goals include learner-centred, group-oriented, interactive, and participatory approaches. In particular, the literature emphasises the need for

educators to draw on students' previous experiences and engage them in role-playing games, simulations, case studies, critical incidents, group projects, autobiographical writing, and the use of films and stories (see Cranton 2002). In using these techniques, educators challenge students to identify and question not only their own assumptions but also those of others.

3. Adults as Foreign Language Learners

Knowledge of foreign languages is a qualifying element of both professional requalification and existential research. In this scenario, language teaching is called on to respond to the need to create—from kindergarten to well beyond retirement—citizens capable of learning multiple languages utilising linguistic, cultural, and intercultural knowledge and who possess sufficient linguistic-communicative strategies to give meaning to new texts and situations (Balboni 2015).

Smith and Strong (2009: 2) stated that

as language learners, adults have multifaceted identities in their dynamic and changing lives. They can communicate confidently and effectively in their first language (L1) and code switches between several other languages. They may be immigrants, international students, professionals, workers, or refugees. They may have their own interpretations of their culture and belief systems, as well as the ability to reflect and build on their cross-cultural experiences. Some are highly literate in their L1, while others are illiterate. Some may struggle, as many of us do, to move from beginners to capable users of the additional language. Most also want to develop their own identities as users of the language and realise that measuring their progress against a native speaker model is unrealistic.

Teaching adult students is increasingly characterised by a series of components present in the theoretical perspectives we have traced that consider the learner and the learning context. These include the ability to manage oneself (autonomy), the depth and extent of previous experiences and their influence on the drive to learn, the importance of reflection to be aware of the processes of building knowledge and the changes occurring with learning, the link between theory and practice, and the capacity for action.

3.1. *Teaching Adult Foreign Language Students*

The aforementioned components lead us to outline some fixed points that characterise the teaching of foreign languages to adult students.

Self-direction, responsibility, and autonomy. Adult students approach foreign language for a variety of reasons including cultural growth, specific professional needs, and the desire to transfer abroad. Their attitude reflects one of autonomous, motivated, and responsible persons as they have already gained a substantial set of experiences and made life choices that allow them clarity in expectations, needs, and professional goals.

The construction of curriculum should be understood as a partnership responsibility model in an ongoing process of negotiation between teachers and students over the selection of content, methodologies, and evaluation (Nunan 1989). For Tudor (2016), co-designing curriculum involves developing awareness in various areas.

- *Self-awareness* as a language learner concerns adults' motivation to learn the language, the amount of effort they are willing to invest, and their attitudes toward both the target language and the learning process itself.
- *Awareness of learning goals* is related to understanding and the analysis of why they are studying the language, the communication goals they wish to achieve, and the gaps that need to be filled.

- *Language awareness* involves understanding what it means to know a language in its dimensions of linguistic competence (the ability to understand and produce well-formed sentences from a phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical, and textual point of view); extralinguistic competence (the ability to understand and produce non-verbal language such as kinesics, haptics, proxemics, and chronemics); contextual skills related to the language in use, and therefore sociolinguistic competence (formal and informal registers, geographic or professional varieties); pragmalinguistic competence (the rules of linguistic action that regulate communication acts and moves); and (inter) cultural competence (Balboni 2015).

Orienting students to the development of awareness in these areas does not mean entirely transferring responsibility to students; the teacher remains responsible for actual learning and decides how much and in which areas responsibility is transferred to students (Tudor 2016).

The teacher maintains the role of a *knower*, a source of knowledge of both the target language and the most suitable methodologies. Additionally, the teacher serves as an *activity organiser*, setting and directing learning activities, motivating and encouraging, and providing feedback on student performance. Moreover, the teacher assumes the role of *counsellor*, helping students identify intentions (what they need and would like to do) and resources (what they are able to do), encouraging participation, and maintaining motivation to learn (Tudor 2016).

Previous Language Learning Experience. Experience is central to any discourse on adult learning practices involving the presence of variables that concern an adult's learning methods, the emotional and affective circumstances through which they learn, and the pressures experienced from a plurality of agencies (e.g. school, family). The history of the adult in relation to the learning of foreign languages must also be considered. Students who have previously studied one or more languages are often convinced that they know how to learn a language. However, the didactic methodologies adopted in the past are often obsolete or conflict with more recent methodologies. The teacher will then have to explicitly explain to adult learners the methodological principles to which they should refer (Balboni 2015).

The importance of awareness of the processes of building knowledge and the changes that occur with learning. Learning a foreign language is a process that involves 'thinking about something in a conscious and focused way' (Little and Perclová 2001: 45). This includes all learning stages: before engaging in a learning activity or communicative task (planning), while performing the activity or task (monitoring), and after completion (evaluation).

The language learning path requires reflection that has three objectives:

- reflection on the language, and therefore on the learning content, through the development of metalinguistic skills;
- reflection on the learning process through the enhancement of metacognitive skills, to ensure that the learner is aware of their learning method and the strategies most suited to them; and
- reflection as a means of 'deconditioning' (Holec 1981: 22) from negative behaviours or attitudes related to language learning and hostility to the enhancement of autonomy.

Adults have metalinguistic needs higher than those of children and adolescents, greater abstracting and systematic ability, need stable rules to refer to and correlate with the structures already acquired, and require explicit reflection greater than that offered by many of the teaching materials. The teacher will have to meet these needs using the adult's own cognitive tools, including explicit grammatical systemisation and integrating the didactic materials available (Balboni, 2015; Serragiotto, 2014).

TL outcomes identified in foreign language learning contexts include a deeper and more complex understanding of culture (for both learners' target language and their own), shifts in how learners view and position themselves to the target language and its culture, and changes in how learners see themselves as learners (King 2000; Crane *et al.* 2018; Johnson and Nelson 2010; Johnson 2015).

The teacher can investigate changes in values/beliefs/expectations during language learning through retrospective interviews, action research, scales, surveys, content analysis of various documentation (e.g. emails, journals), and the use of video-recorded interviews.

The necessary link between theory and practice and the capacity for action in facilitating learning. The approach to language teaching, from the European perspective, is ‘action oriented’ and conceives those who learn or use a language as ‘social agents’; ‘members of society’ who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, specific environment, and within a particular field of action by ‘taking into account the cognitive, emotional and volitional resources and the full range of abilities specific to and applied by the individual as a social agent’ (Council of Europe 2001: 9). In teaching a foreign language to adults, approaches that involve systematisation of meaningful learning, are oriented toward reality, and involve the subject in its entirety and in the plurality of its roles and social tasks have been found to be effective.

3.2 *The Learning Contract*

The inadequacy of pre-packaged course facilities, the differentiation of objectives, their elaboration based on the concrete needs of the adult, and the training project to be built interactively and in context necessitate a negotiated and concerted planning of the language learning path.

Balboni (2015) repeatedly stresses the need to define, agree on, and illustrate to adult students the objectives and methodologies of the language teaching intervention, referring them to the responsibility and shared nature of the project. This contract between two adults who assume complementary functions (that would be non-existent without each other) as a teacher and an autonomous and motivated pupil is articulated by Daloso (2009) as follows:

- *a psychological contract*, through which the teacher aims to probe and clarify previous experiences (considered effective or ineffective for language learning) and identify students’ motivations and expectations through a variety of tools (e.g. questionnaires, conversations) with the purpose of establishing, in a transparent manner, goals and language teaching objectives shared by the group/class; and
- *a didactic contract* aimed at making, together with students, some teaching choices to achieve the set objectives.

As stated by Knowles, the ‘learning contract’ solves the problems of (Knowles *et al.* 1998: 140):

- heterogeneity of background, training, experiences, interests, needs, and motivations that characterise groups of adults, allowing the individual to plan their specific learning objectives;
- making students feel that the objectives they will pursue belong to them;
- identifying a variety of resources so that students who must learn the same things can resort to different resources in relation to their specificity and characteristics;
- providing each student with a structure that allows them to visualise and systematise learning; and
- providing the learner with a systematic procedure that involves and allows them to evaluate the results of a specific training intervention.

3.3 *Adult Teaching Methodologies*

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is the most widely adopted approach to adult language teaching, based on the principle of teaching language as communication: the goal of learning is not to learn the language but to learn how to communicate (Widdowson 1972; Littlewood 1981). Foreign language teaching practice has shown that the use of methodologies such as communicative, playful, and cooperative learning activities can be effective for adults (Begotti 2019; Serragiotto 2010). Such humanistic-inspired approaches, which centre on subjective, emotional, and relational components,

tend to eliminate anxiety-inducing factors and reduce what Krashen (1981) defines as the ‘affective filter’.

Many activities require individual work, acknowledging adults’ personal or unique characteristics, which must be complementary to the social ones in which each individual uses the language in a meaningful way and collaborates with others to solve linguistic problems, from understanding or producing a text to elaboration of linguistic hypotheses or working on the lexicon. The distinction between collaborative activities, in which each student has a task and their integration leads to reaching the objective, and cooperatives, in which the objective must be achieved by working together, should be noted. In this way, the different types of intelligence, cognitive and learning styles, motivations, and personalities are integrated and each individual learns from the others, not only to solve that specific linguistic problem (understand a text, change its tense, analyse a passage syntactically, summarise it, etc.) but also learn that there are various strategies for solving a particular issue and that one's own approach is only one of several possibilities (Celentin 2020).

Equally important is the playful dimension of activities (Mollica 2010). Playfulness changes the aim of the action to play and, if possible, to win. However, games should be autotelic: they do not affect marks, inspire fear, or emphasize the contrast between teacher and students. Additionally, the learner does not have a judge (linguistics) but is an arbiter: language is used, forgetting that the ultimate goal is to perfect or acquire it (this is Krashen's ‘rule of forgetting’).

Under the broader umbrella of CLT, the task-based language teaching (TBLT) approach is quite popular in adult language teaching. The underlying principle of TBLT is that the primary objective of language teaching is not to make students demonstrate their knowledge of the language or to master grammar rules but to give them the opportunity to engage in meaning-oriented language use in the form of tasks:

An activity in which meaning is primary; there is some communication problem to solve; there is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities, task completion has some priority, and the assessment of the task is in terms of outcome. (Skehan 1998: 95)

A practical guide for conducting tasks in the classroom is offered by Willis' task-based learning framework, which consists of three phases (Willis 1996a, 1996b):

- *Pre-task*, where the topic, task, and necessary vocabulary are introduced. Structures are not taught during this stage. Students are asked to think about how they would accomplish the task. Students may also hear a similar task being performed by native speakers, or the teacher may perform the task.

- *The task cycle* includes three sub-stages: *task*, *planning*, and *reporting*. In the *task phase*, the students perform the task; in the *planning phase*, they prepare a presentation for the report stage, and in the *reporting phase*, students report their findings to the class. The final part of the task cycle may involve students listening to native speakers performing the same task and comparing the strategies used in the classroom to the strategies used by native speakers.

- *Language focus* involves students performing an *analysis* of language, *practising* the language used in class, and conducting follow-ups, such as changing partners and performing the task a second time in light of the analysis and practice.

Willis describes six main types of tasks, roughly sequenced by difficulty: listing, ordering and sorting, comparing, problem solving, sharing personal experiences, and creative tasks.

Another suitable approach to teaching languages to adults is the dialogic approach, which combines humanistic and pragmatic-communicative issues to build and promote relationships. In the 1970s, Freire developed a theory of dialogic action that pointed out the dialogic nature of humans and the importance of dialogue as a tool for raising critical consciousness. Further dialogic conceptualisations of learning have arisen rapidly, building upon Vygotsky's sociocultural

psychology emphasising that people form meaning via interactions with others and the view of language as the most powerful tool mediating learning (Vygotsky 1962). On a methodological level, these approaches make extensive use of recapitulations, elicitation, repetition, reformulation, exhortation, narrative (descriptions, relationships, letters), and self-narrative (diaries, portfolios, stories of emblematic personal events) techniques (Mercer, 2000).

7. Conclusion

The change that can be experienced in education is an encounter between two cultural experiences: that of the teacher, who offers their own culture, plans, and prepares the path, and that of those who feel that their culture is insufficient, inadequate, and out of phase with the hands of the internal or social clock (Demetrio 1997).

The relationship between adults and language learning experiences is extremely complex and multifaceted. In this context, the conceptual categories of multiplicity and diversity of motivations, needs, expectations, strategies to which the didactic principle of multiplicity and flexibility of methods and techniques are applied, are relevant.

Teaching adults requires taking on new roles and adopting novel language teaching methods. For Rogers (1969), the teacher becomes a *facilitator* through practices that take into account the characteristics of adults; for Mezirow, the teacher is a *facilitator and provocateur* (1997) or *catalyst* of transformative change and learning (1991); for Tudor (2016) a *counsellor* for Tudor; and for Knowles, a *process designer and manager* (Knowles *et al.* 1998) who plans and coordinates the learning process, builds relationships, identifies needs, and actively encourages student involvement.

At the methodological level, classroom activities must be linked to the needs, interests, and experiences of each adult, provide appropriate language models based on these needs, vary the methods, tools, and materials used, and present the right balance between what is known and what is new, to ensure ever greater awareness and autonomy.

If the need is for lifelong learning, the revolution that educational language teaching must implement consists of transforming students, depending on the teacher and the teaching materials, into autonomous students who, at each stage of their life, know how to improve their mastery of a foreign language, how to set up autonomous learning, and how to ask their teacher for help. Teachers will, in turn, indicate the most suitable materials and most productive paths for them and follow the students if and when necessary.

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The Use of Corpora in Language Education An Overview of the Italian Language Corpora

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Abstract

This paper supports the power of the use of corpora in language education without giving up on the examination of the critical issues therein. By analysing the different types and functions of corpora, it will put forward the advantages of corpus-based linguistic analysis in foreign language teaching and learning. Furthermore, this contribution will offer a state of the art of Italian language corpora for the purpose of teaching and learning Italian as a foreign language.

Keywords

language education; corpus-based linguistic analysis; lexicon learning; Italian language corpora

1. Introduction

Corpora is used to refer to collections of authentic linguistic material inclusive of written texts and/or transcriptions of oral interactions. Through the analysis of these texts, it is possible to learn how to use the words therein and to get lexicon-level competence in a language directly through real language use, overcoming the idea of a separation between lexicon and grammar. In fact, corpora refer to lexical chunks. These are lexical items and lexical phrases, which favour the acquisition of linguistic patterns in an appropriate context of use, which is a valid support for language learning. Corpus-based analyses are very innovative and important tools in the study of the lexicon of a language.

Foreign language students need to acquire the pragmatic ability, in addition to meta-linguistic and metacognitive skills, to recognise and correctly and fluently use lexical chunks. In the case of native speakers, the lexical chunks are stored in the long-term memory by the unconscious and repeated exposure to the use of the mother tongue. They constitute an internal corpus that has a priming effect which can negatively influence the learning of a foreign language by suggesting to the learner inappropriate linguistic choices in the target language (Hoey 2005). To avoid this problem, it is necessary to learn the foreign language lexicon through an intense and repeated linguistic interaction and by using authentic linguistic material based on the real contexts regarding the use of the words therein.

Therefore corpus-based linguistic analysis is an important tool that can be used:

- To develop the meta-linguistic skills necessary to acquire the lexical peculiarities of a language. This is because the corpora highlight how the words behave in the use of a certain language.

- To facilitate the memorisation of the lexicon of a language thanks to the presentation of it in its constitutive composite, phraseological and idiomatic aspects according to the possible collocations and co-occurrences of the words.

Nevertheless, the data about a language, which can be obtained by researching the corpora, is rough data. This can be used successfully in language learning to solve problems related to the use of words, but it is not enough in isolation to learn the lexicon of a language. The data needs to be contextualised in oral interactions and adapted by the teachers to the specific teaching goals of each language classroom context. Students need to know how to search for information using the interface of the corpus software. They must interpret the results obtained by the linguistic research into the corpus and they must know how to read and contextualise the data they obtain according to their specific learning purposes. To take advantage of the use of corpora, language students need to be trained in the use of them with the support of teachers. Furthermore, they must regulate the use of this tool based on their proficiency, as well as according to the goals that are to be achieved.

2. Functions of the different corpora in language teaching and learning

Corpora provide a description of the real use of words in a language, showing general trends on a statistical basis (Lüdeling, Kytö, 2009; Reppen 2010; Freddi 2014). According to Corino (2014: 233-234, my transl.), corpora are “an observatory equipped to provide a picture of the language authentically used by real speakers and to enjoy the unlimited and full usability of these contexts of use”.

Starting from the real linguistic facts that the corpora show, language teachers and students can get linguistic material for studying the lexicon of a particular language. Teachers can analyse the list on the frequency of words to establish which words of the language students need to learn first. Language teachers can search for a word throughout the corpora to show the students the derived forms. They can use the examples of the contexts of use of the words to teach the different meanings by directly showing the word’s placement in the living language. They can also refer to the authentic linguistic material offered by the corpora to create exercises and tests. Students can use the corpora to answer any lexical or syntactical doubts by observing the semantic nuances assumed by the words in the different contexts in which they occur and to learn with which words it usually co-occurs.

The standard research tools of the corpora allow you to search for words by letter sequences, sometimes replacing the endings with a wildcard to find all occurrences referring to both primitive words and the inflected forms of a verb. The information that one receives in response to the linguistic query of the corpora concerns the frequency of occurrence of the searched words, the concordances of the words with their contexts of use and the co-occurrences, i.e. the other words that statistically, on the basis of the corpus reference, occur together with the searched word.

For each language, it is now possible to find collections of different types of text. A brief distinction between the different types of corpora is useful to understand how important it is to choose the corpora when making the linguistic search according to the specific teaching or study needs.

For instance, a ‘reference corpus for a language’ is a representative sample of a language in its different aspects that offer a general observation of the language since it collects different kinds of texts: written texts, transcriptions of the spoken language, formal and informal text registers, literary texts, and journalistic texts. It permits to get general data such as the most frequent words or lemmas of the reference language, the list of itself and information about its use, the adjectives that co-occur more frequently with a certain noun, the adverbs that usually appear after a certain verb and the prepositions that agree with a certain verb according to the different contexts of use. By consulting this kind of corpus, a language student can measure their lexical competence by verifying, for instance, if he/she knows the words necessary for a daily interaction in the language that he/she is learning.

While ‘a specialised corpus’ only includes texts from a specific sector (e. g. a corpora of medical language), texts of a particular type only (e. g. texts from the spoken language), texts by a particular author or texts from a specific historical period. They are particularly useful for investigating the micro-linguistic aspects of a language, to get the linguistic aspects of a sector lexicon, to deduce the basic lexicon of a language in reference to a certain specialised field.

Then, ‘learner corpora and teacher corpora’ come directly from language education contexts. A learner corpus includes written and/or oral textual material produced by the learners of second or foreign languages. Learner corpora could be used by linguists, teachers, and students. Linguists can use this kind of corpus to study the variety of a language, to detect the real difficulties encountered in the production of second or foreign language learners, and to create a list of the most frequent mistakes among the native speakers of a certain language (Corino 2014: 236, my transl.). Learner corpora can also provide to the expert teachers material that is useful for gathering information for didactic purposes and for preparing exercises and tests. Finally, learner corpora are an important tool for students because they permit them to observe the most common mistakes made by the learners of the language that they are studying, permitting to develop a meta-linguistic competence that allows them to self-correct and to avoid the same mistakes that they became aware of. Instead, the teacher corpora contain the texts used as teaching material by foreign language teachers, i. e. textbooks, various reading texts, transcriptions of oral texts used for training students to listen to during the lessons and previously submitted exercises. They include material to which the student has been exposed that can be reused in the language class or as a basis for creating language textbooks and tests for students.

3. The Italian language corpora

The first Italian language corpus was published in 1971 based on the “Lexicon of Frequency of the Contemporary Italian Language” (Lessico di Frequenza dell’Italiano contemporaneo. LIF). It included 500,000 words taken from novels, theatrical texts, film scripts, journal articles and parts of textbooks. The Italian linguist Tullio De Mauro used this corpus to draw up the list of words for his *Basic Vocabulary of Italian* published in 1980.

The more representative corpora of the Italian language online available are the corpus “Lessico di Frequenza dell’Italiano Scritto” (CoLFIS) (Lexicon of Frequency of Written Italian) and the “Corpus di Italiano Scritto Contemporaneo” (CORIS) (Corpus of Contemporary Written Italian. CoLFIS (<http://esploracolfis.sns.it/EsploraCoLFIS/>) is a lemmatised and annotated corpus of over 3 million words based on the ISTAT data of Italians reading trends. It contains texts from periodicals, newspapers, and various kinds of book.

CORIS (<http://corpora.dslo.unibo.it/TCORIS/>) is a larger corpus that counts 100 million words. It includes mostly journalistic and narrative texts, but also academic and juridical-administrative texts that are representative of contemporary Italian. There is a version of CORIS that is periodically updated in order to monitor the evolution of Italian, called CODIS (<http://corpora.dslo.unibo.it/CODIS/>). It is a dynamic and adaptive corpus that, according to the specific needs of the user or query, allows for the selection of one or more sub-corpora through which to search. It must be said that the CORIS/CODIS and CoLFIS interfaces are not user-friendly, although they are in English and they have the advantage of being rich in information and of being online and available for free. They are not immediately usable and limitless. The query methods are presented in a language that is too technical and it involves the selection of options that is not easily understandable. Nevertheless, to learn how to search through these platforms, teachers and students can use the video tutorials available on the CoLFIS website and the guide included on the CORIS/CODIS website.

The screenshot shows the CoLFIS search interface with several tabs: **Forme**, **Lemmi**, **Concordanze**, **Coricorrenze**, **Lista**, and **Opzioni**. The **Forme** tab is active, displaying search parameters:

- Forma:** [input field] [Azzera]
- Numero di lettere:** minimo: [input field] [Azzera] massimo: [input field] [Azzera]
- ▼ Dizionario**
 - Lemma:** [input field] [Azzera]
 - Parte del discorso:** [dropdown] [Azzera]
 - Sintagmaticità:** [dropdown] [Azzera]
 - Sintagmaticità della forma:** [dropdown] [Azzera]
- Statistiche**
- Risultati per pagina:** [dropdown with value 10]

Buttons for **Cerca** and **Azzera tutto** are at the bottom. Below the form, it says "EsploraCoLFIS" and "Laboratorio di Linguistica (SNS) - CELI".

CoLFIS Interface. Last access: September 2020

The screenshot shows the CODIS (100Mw) - Corpus query form. It has a header "CODIS (100Mw) - Corpus query form" and two main sections: **User Authentication** (purple) and **Query** (green).

User Authentication: CODIS access is now free for research purposes (Please, read the footnote carefully).

Query: [input field] ([Query Language Help](#))

Subcorpora selection:

Subcorpus	Size (in Mw)			
STAMPA	<input type="checkbox"/> 20	<input type="checkbox"/> 10	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
NARRATIVA	<input type="checkbox"/> 13	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
PROSA ACCADEMICA	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
PROSA GIURIDICO-AMM.	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
MISCELLANEA	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
EPHEMERA	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1

Concordance Options:

- Reduce to max: 30, 100, 300, 1000 lines.
- Sort using: [Unsorted dropdown]

Collocations:

- Get Collocates?: NO!, Yes
- Sort using: Log-Likelihood Ratio, Mutual Information, T-score, Raw frequency.

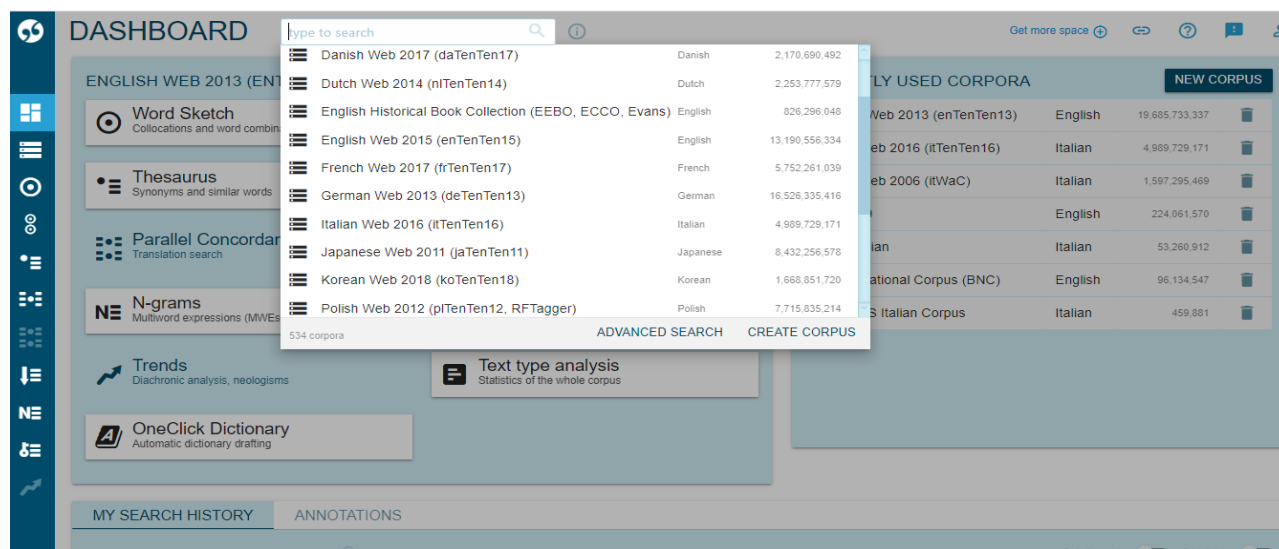
Buttons for **Esegui** and **Cancella** are at the bottom.

CODIS Interface. Last access: September 2020

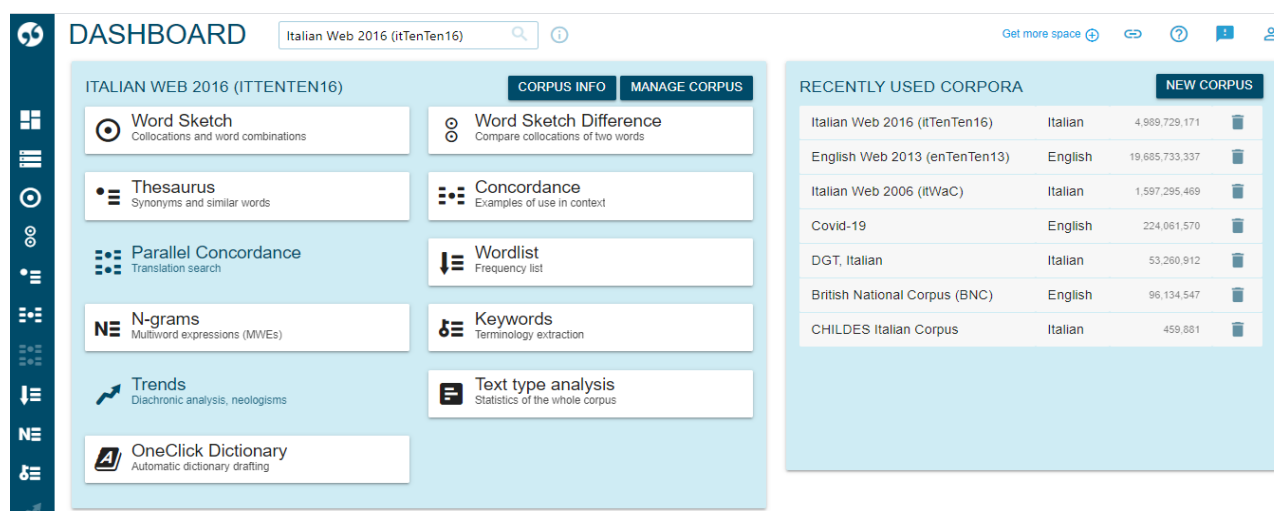
The corpus of the Italian newspaper “La Repubblica” is also considered to be a representative corpus for the Italian language since it was not born as a corpus for Italian because it did not set out to collect different types of texts. It only collects the journalist articles of “La Repubblica.” However, as it includes so many tokens (about 380 million) and it is an annotated corpus, it is an important tool for the study of Italian because it allows for an advanced search through the metadata, lemmas, and parts of the discourse. In addition, it has a user-friendly interface and is easily accessible. It is possible to select it among the corpora available on the free platform “NoSketchEngine” (https://corpora.dipintra.it/public/run.cgi/first_form).

Nevertheless, the biggest corpus for Italian is now the Italian Web Corpus (itWaC) (est. 1.5 billion of words) that includes texts automatically collected by the web. It is possible to search for it on the platform “Sketch Engine”, where you can also find metadata like general information, word counts, lexicon size, text type, common tag, and sub-corpora. Sketch Engine (<https://www.sketchengine.eu/>) has made available several different kinds of corpus for several languages. It includes, for instance, spoken language corpora such as the “British Academic Spoken English Corpus” and learner corpora such as the “Arabic Learner Corpus.”

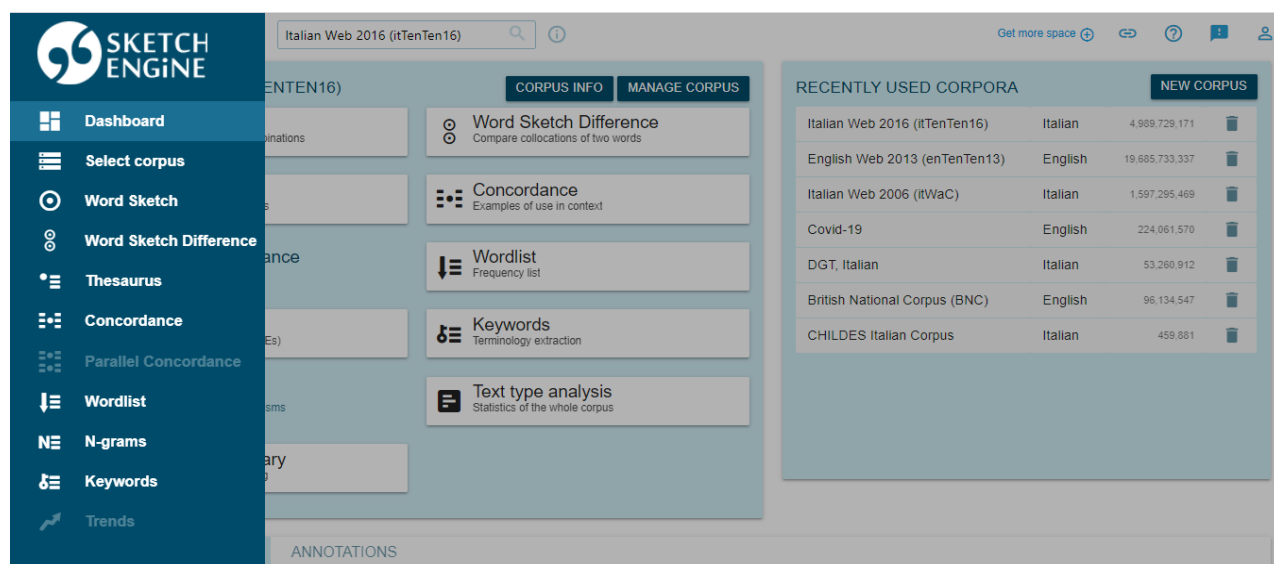
Searching on the Sketch Engine platform it makes possible to get word sketches that show, through examples, the use of the grammatical behaviour of words in terms of collocations and co-occurrences. It also allows for the user to obtain frequency lists of words and to investigate the synonyms by showing the differences in the use of similar words by selecting the thesaurus function. Sketch Engine’s interface is intuitive, and it is easy to understand. After selecting the corpus to query in the drop-down menu at the top, it is necessary to choose one of the different search options in the window. Subtitles which briefly explain the search function of each option are included. The selection of the corpus and the search setup can also be done through the toolbar located on the right of the page.



Selection of the corpus on Sketch Engine. Last access: September 2020.



Search setup on the interface of Sketch Engine. Last access: September 2020.

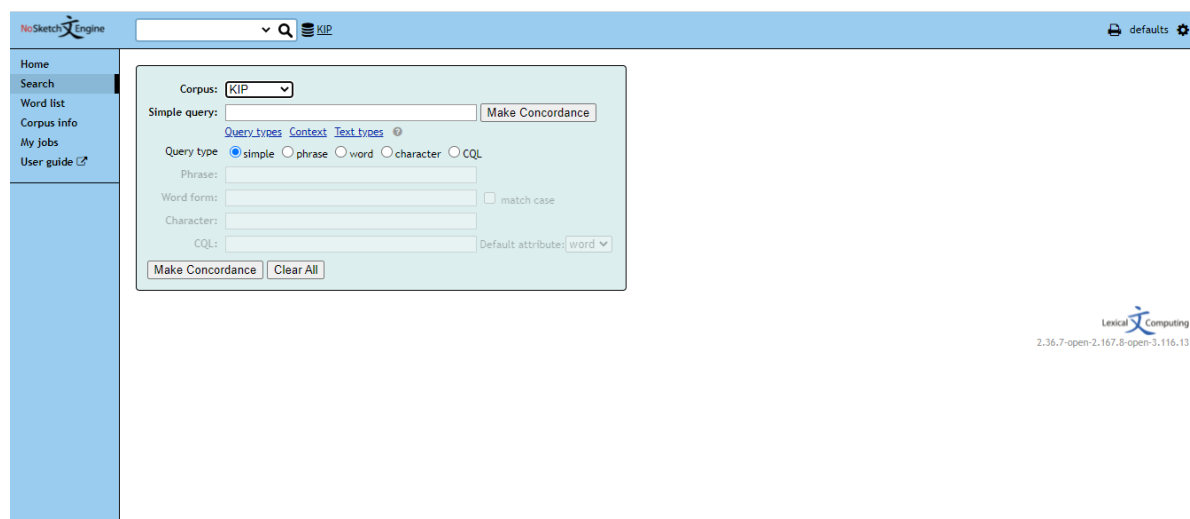


Selection of the corpus and search setup using the retractable toolbar on the right. Last access: September 2020.

The corpus of the “Lexicon of Frequency of Spoken Italian” is available on the open and free access platform BADIP (“Banca Dati dell’Italiano Parlato” 2003-2019, <http://badip.uni-graz.at>). It is a corpus created between 1990 and 1992 by a group of linguists directed by Tullio De Mauro. It is annotated and includes the transcription of recordings from four different Italian cities (Milan, Florence, Rom, and Naples) and has about 500,000 words total. It is one of the most used corpora for linguistic research. It has a user-friendly interface. The setting up of the query is guided by a clickable window that provides simple and clear instructions. The data obtained from the query can be easily exported and it is possible to set up the search by selecting the texts on the basis of their origin (Milan, Florence, Rome or Naples) and by the type of text showing the peculiarities of the different registers of native speakers (Guidetti, Lenchi, Storchi 2012).

The corpus of spoken Italian “Corpora e Lessici dell’Italiano Parlato e Scritto” (CLIPS), based on about 100 hours of speech, is equally divided between male and female voices. It is partly transcribed, segmented, and annotated from a segmental phonetic point of view and it is characterised by a double stratification, specifically the geographical variation and the style and register. The geographical variation was sampled through a preliminary sociolinguistic survey by the University of Lecce that involved the entire national territory. The points of collection of the material are representative both from the point of view of the variety of Italian, as well as from that of the demographic and socio-economic significance of the localities. The selected locations are the cities of Bari, Bergamo, Bologna, Cagliari, Catanzaro, Florence, Genoa, Lecce, Milan, Naples, Palermo, Parma, Perugia, Rome, and Venice. The variation of style and register linked to the variation of the communicative situations of the speakers is represented by the different types of collected materials: radio and television speeches, news, interviews, talk shows, dialogues collected directly during the interactions, spoken readings and telephone speech. On the basis of these variables, the corpus is divided into 5 folders corresponding to the sub-corpora: radio-television, dialogic, reading, telephone and speech. Each sub-corpus is divided into 15 folders corresponding to the 15 localities where the material was collected from. Registration on the site <http://www.clips.unina.it/> is required to access the corpus. Spoken language corpora are particularly important because they permit the observation of the strong linguistic variability that manifests itself in the spoken language (Mcenery, Wilson 1996).

A more recent corpus of spoken Italian is “Corpus KIParla. L’italiano parlato e chi parla italiano” (<http://kiparla.it/>). It collects more than 100 hours of partially structured interviews spontaneous conversations, and university lessons, exams, and talks between students and professors registered in Bologna and Turin. The perspective of the project is to increase the collections points of the material in order to offer an increasingly varied and extensive corpus. It is important to remark that each registered talk was transcribed and the transcripts are aligned with audios. Users also find metadata about each registration. The Corpus KIParla is accessible on the platform NoSketchEngine.



Last access: June 2021

Among the Italian specialised corpora, we find the “Corpus OVI dell’Italiano Antico” (Corpus OVI of Ancient Italian) (<http://gattoweb.oivi.cnr.it/>). It is a corpus that collects ancient Italian texts in the vernacular and it includes about 22 million words. As specified on the website of this corpus, for ancient Italian it means here the Italian of texts dating back to before 1400. It is a corpus that can be consulted for diachronic research on the lexicon and it has not a direct use for learners of Italian as a foreign language, but it could be useful for linguists and also teachers of Italian with lexicographic interests. It is open access and free: registration is not required.

There is also the collection of children’s corpora that provide data that is useful when observing the Italian learnt by the children. The CHILDES Italian Corpus is part of the large collection of CHILDES corpora which includes the corpora of children of different languages. They mostly consist of transcriptions of recordings of spontaneous conversations and they are included on the Sketch Engine platform.

The Corpus “Varietà Apprendimento Lingua Italiana Corpus Online” (VALICO.org <http://www.valico.org/valico.html>) is a portal that offers free and open access to an Italian learner corpus annotated by according to the part of the discourse it is from and the type of text. It collects texts written by the learners of Italian as second language and includes about 570,000 words. It is a tool for language teaching and linguistic research. The querying of the corpus gives the opportunity to get:

- Information about the variations in the writing of learners of different ages and mother tongues.
- Methodological and teaching ideas based on the analysis of the material produced by the students.
- Raw material to be developed as exercises and tests for students of Italian as a second or foreign language.
- Data on the behaviour of words in the contexts of the use of the language and information about the common mistakes made by learners, which is useful for developing meta-linguistic competence.
- An observation of the study of the variations of Italian and the problems of learning Italian as a foreign language.

VALICO.org also contains a paired corpus of texts created by Italian native speakers: “Varietà di Italiano di Nativi Corpus Appaiato” (VINCA). This paired corpus was initially thought of as a control corpus for VALICO but it has become a real support for studies about language teaching and applied teaching (Corino, Marengo 2009; 2017).

On the PAISÀ platform (“Piattaforma per l’Apprendimento dell’Italiano su corpora Annotati”), we can find a fully annotated Italian corpus of authentic texts from the web created in 2010 by Marco Baroni. It is a large corpus (it includes about 250 million tokens) for learners and teachers but as Barbera claims (2013, p. 56, my transl.), it “transcends the language teaching purposes for which it declares itself to be born.” The collected texts can be reused, and the corpus is queried through a very friendly interface that facilitates learners who want to take advantage of the use of this tool.

4. Advantages of the use of corpora in teaching the lexicon of a foreign language

The importance assumed by words for language learners depends on the specific stage of their language learning and its purpose. Nation (2001) divides the lexicon into four levels: high frequency words, intellectual lexicon, technical lexicon, and low frequency words.

If a teacher of Italian as foreign language intends to know what the most commonly used words are in Italian and therefore which words need to be taught first, the teacher can obtain this data by consulting a corpus like the Italian Web Corpus itWAC.

If the type of task proposed by the teacher or the goals which the student intends to achieve focus more on the spoken language, then it is preferable to use corpora like the CLIPS or the more recent KIParla. These types of corpora allow learners of Italian as a foreign language to know directly from concrete context of conversation regional varieties both from the point of view of expression and from that of pronunciation.

If there are learning needs from a lexical point of view, specialised lexicon learning is required and it is thus possible to use specialised corpora like, for instance, the EUR-Lex Italian 2/2016 Corpus available on the Sketch Engine platform. It collects European Union legislative documents currently translated into 24 European languages including Italian. Therefore, it is a corpus aligned with the same type corpora in the other 23 European languages and it offers useful data both for the analysis of micro-linguistic aspects of the legal lexicon that a learner of Italian as a foreign language with legal training could be interested in investigating and for translation studies.

Specialised corpora can also be useful to project the content of the language courses (CLIL, Content and Language Integrated Learning) to be developed in relation to the learning of a certain subject in a foreign language. For instance, law in English at the university. The access to the lexicon of a sector through specialised corpora is certainly a useful support for preparing adequate content and material in the lessons, considering the lexical skills necessary to deal with the specific learning.

Furthermore, regarding the learner corpora, according to a study by Corino and Marengo on the VALICO texts (2017), it is interesting to highlight the possibilities that these kinds of corpora offer when it comes to studying the errors committed by foreign language learners. Corino and Marengo (2017: 281) describe two experiments. One analyses the errors present in the VALICO texts of Spanish-speaking learners produced by Spanish native speakers aspiring to be teachers of Italian and the other one presents the analysis undertaken by Italian students of a foreign language consisting of the most frequent errors present in the VALICO texts written by French-speaking, English-speaking, and Spanish-speaking learners. Through the description of the results of the two experiments, Corino and Marengo have shown how learner corpora can be used for creating distractors in multiple choice exercises. Acquiring meta-cognitive competence regarding the most frequent errors of learners is advantageous both for the self-learning of students and for the self-training of teachers. It allows the teachers to produce tests based on real and specific problems of different native speaker learners. We have said before that one of the main types of data that we can derive from the analysis of the corpora is the frequency of use of a certain lemma in various linguistic contexts. When teaching a foreign language, having statistical data on the frequency of the use of words allows you to deduce the important information about which words need to be taught first to allow the learners to acquire a basic vocabulary. Since the data on the frequency of use of words obtained from the corpora will not only be of a quantitative type but also of a qualitative type, you will acquire information such as the degree of polysemy of the high-frequency words. This information may be submitted by the teacher to the students' analysis to develop in them the meta-linguistic competence necessary to use words appropriately in different contexts. The data on the frequency of the use of words collected through the corpora permits the foreign language teacher:

- To deduce important information about which words need to be taught first to allow the learners to acquire a basic vocabulary.
- To get quality information such as the degree of polysemy of the high-frequency words.

- To prepare teaching material that is adequate according to the language proficiency level of the learners and to check the lexical density of the texts to be used in the classroom. In fact, according to the didactic goals, it is necessary to choose the most appropriate type of text since each text includes words with a variable frequency of use. Therefore, it can be more or less adequate according to the purpose that the analysis aims to achieve.

We can put forward an example. If we take into consideration the list of frequency of Italian verbs obtained by searching through the itWAC corpus on Sketch Engine, we can observe that the verb *fare* (to do) is the statistically most frequent verb in the Italian language after the auxiliary *essere* (to be).

WORDLIST Italian Web 2016 (itTenTen16)

verb (494,030 items | 659,117,962 total frequency)

	Lemma	Absolute Frequency ?		Lemma	Absolute Frequency ?
1	essere	69,613,609 ...	11	stare	5,039,229 ...
2	fare	19,389,970 ...	12	vedere	4,435,222 ...
3	potere	18,418,603 ...	13	sapere	4,307,770 ...
4	avere	14,876,950 ...	14	mettere	3,744,514 ...
5	dovere	9,563,141 ...	15	portare	3,179,514 ...
6	dire	7,813,871 ...	16	parlare	2,895,330 ...
7	volere	6,243,285 ...	17	essere stare	2,892,017 ...
8	andare	5,888,949 ...	18	pensare	2,883,083 ...
9	trovare	5,219,251 ...	19	prendere	2,800,992 ...
10	dare	5,147,831 ...	20	arrivare	2,685,654 ...

You are only allowed to access 1,000 items. [Get more](#)

Rows per page: 20 1-20 of 1,000 1 / 50

By continuing the search and selecting other functions, we can get other important information concerning the qualitative aspects of the verb *fare*, including a series of co-occurrences in which the verb *fare* assumes different meanings from the generic “to do” in the meaning of carrying out an action (*fare ginnastica, fare chiarezza, fare compre, fare matematica*) through to the more specific meaning of *costruire, fabbricare* (to build, to manufacture) and idiomatic meanings such as *far quadrare, fare miracoli* and *non fare una piega*. The verb *fare* also performs different functions like replacing a repetition to make the speech more fluent, as in the sentence “*voglio dirglielo, ma non so come fare*” (I want to tell him, but I don't know how to do it) or the causal function: e. g. when *fare* accompanies the verb *ridere* (laugh) to make the sentence *mi fa ridere*, referring to someone or something that provokes the act of laughing. Other examples are *far riflettere, fare conoscere, fare scattare, fare funzionare, fare notare, fare emergere, fare piangere, fare tendenza* etc.

WORD SKETCH Italian Web 2016 (itTenTen16) Get more space ? ! 👤

fare as verb 19,389,970x

objects of "fare"	subjects of "fare"	modifiers of "fare"	prepositional phrases with nouns	prepositions after "fare"	pronominal subjects of "fare"
parte fa parte	anno anni fa	si far sì che	"fare" in	per fare per	tu
riferimento fa riferimento	giorno giorni fa	bene	"fare" a	con a che fare con	io
cosa	fine fine ha fatto	male fa male	"fare" per	da	noi noi facciamo
lavoro	 mese mese fa	più	"fare" di	di fatto di	lui
conte conto fare i conti con	tempo tempo fa	anche	"fare" con	in	lei lei fa
attenzione fare attenzione	cosa	sempre fa sempre	"fare" da	a fare a	loro loro fanno
passo	settimana settimana fa	solo	"fare" del	senza	voi voi fate
giro	Dio	su	"fare" della	ad	egli
domanda	governo	così	"fare" al	su	essi essi fanno
piacere fa piacere	uomo	molto	"fare" nel	durante fatto durante	essa essa fa
differenza fare la differenza	persona	prima	"fare" dal	dopo	esso esso fa
uso			"fare" ad	attraverso	

pronominal objects of "fare"	adjectives after "fare"	usage patterns	"fare" and/or ...
io	presente fa presente	poter "fare"	dire
la	proprio fatta propria	dover "fare"	fare
l'	politico fare politica	voler "fare"	essere
mi mi fa	salvo fatte salve le	stare per "fare"	andare
le	felice		avere
gli	breve Per farla breve		vedere
ti	grande fatto grande		dare
li	vivo		pensare
loro	freddo fa freddo		prendere
si Si fa	bello		disfare fare e disfare
vi	caldo fa caldo		mettere
se Se fai	franco di farla franca		cercare

CONCORDANCE Italian Web 2016 (itTenTen16) Get more space

qql [lempos==Tare-v] 19,389,970 (3.308.33 per million)

Details Left context KWIC Right context

1	cavallieri.it	lo... </s><s> Il Residence "Mini House" offre le bellezze di Roma senza	farà	rimpiangere le comodità e l'indipendenza di casa vostra... </s><s> Dalla
2	liberliber.it	azione dei redditi? </s><s> Puoi aiutarci anche con il 5 per mille. Non ti	fa	pagare più tasse, ma fa sì che una piccola parte dei tuoi soldi venga usa
3	toscana-mare.it	dente, nota con il nome di Granducato di Toscana. </s><s> Da allora ha	fatto	parte del Regno di Sardegna, del Regno d'Italia ed oggi della Republic
4	libero.it	nell'aula scolastica severa, passa la mano sui libri ruvidi e grandi che gli	faranno	compagnia per, cinque anni di grammatica, due di retorica e due di filost
5	libero.it	itirà presto parlare di questo santo plebeo, e sulla strada da lui tracciata	farà	un lungo cammino. </s><s> Un ciuffo di capelli per tracciare una strada
6	libero.it	'erma Joseph Lortz – un dilleggio del comandamento cristiano, e spesso	fanno	apparire la professione cattolica un'ipocrisia ". </s><s> Ma proprio menti
7	libero.it	' Paoli. </s><s> Nei 18 mesi che passa in seminario, Jean Baptiste può	farsi	un quadro completo della vita che conducono i ragazzi del popolo. </s>·
8	libero.it	ri e direttivi. </s><s> Una severa lezione che temprà il suo carattere e lo	fa	diventare " adulto " in brevissimo tempo. </s><s> C'è il problema del sar
9	libero.it	evi cercarlo nella tua famiglia. </s><s> Ma se ti accorgerai che possono	fare	senza di te, allora Dio continua a chiamarti per la strada del sacerdozio.
10	libero.it	o del suo vescovo, Jean Baptiste De La Salle è sacerdote. </s><s> Si è	fatto	un uomo alto e slanciato, Jean Baptiste. </s><s> Ha la fronte spaziosa,
11	libero.it	> Nei salotti della nobiltà si sussurrava anche delle sue stranezze: si era	fatta	scolpire una statua-manichino dalle perfette proporzioni del suo corpo, è
12	libero.it	ere ne ebbe pietà. </s><s> Senza che la padrona ne sapesse niente, lo	fece	riposare sulla paglia asciutta, in un angolo della scuderia. </s><s> Durai
13	libero.it	lla la mente da quel giorno: " il mendicante ha rifiutato la mia elemosina	fatta	con rabbia, e mi ha rimandato dall'altra vita il lenzuolo ". </s><s> Lei ha
14	libero.it	altra vita il lenzuolo ". </s><s> Lei ha respinto Cristo in persona </s><s>	Fa	chiamare padre Barré, un santo religioso conosciuto in tutta la Normand
15	libero.it	uno dei suoi servi. </s><s> Ma nel Vangelo, Cristo ha detto che ciò che	facciamo	ai piccoli, ai miserabili, lo facciamo a lui. </s><s> Respingendo in modo
16	libero.it	Vangelo, Cristo ha detto che ciò che facciamo ai piccoli, ai miserabili, lo	facciamo	a lui. </s><s> Respingendo in modo villano quel mendicante, lei ha resp
17	libero.it	ine e di bambini per le strade, senza scuola, che imparano a rubare e a	fare	il male. </s><s> – Mi presenti un progetto preciso, padre. </s><s> Non t

The information that the corpus-based analyses can provide about collocations are another advantage gained from the language-teaching point of view. Collocations are a widespread phenomenon in the language and they are difficult to frame and convey to students as a precise rule. This is because they often have a paradigmatic in nature and they depend on the use of the language itself. They can take on different forms. Examples include “boarding pass” [noun + noun], “hard-earned money”, “low cost”, [adjective + noun], “save time” [verb + noun] and “a great number of” [article + adjective + noun+ preposition] etc. Corpora allow not only for the viewing of the collocations and the memorising of them in the different contexts of use in which they occur, but also the increased awareness of their frequency.

The concordance lists provide many examples and information about the regular uses of the searched word, string of words or sentences (NATION 2014). They allow for the observation of the tendency of the lexical elements to connect into typical structures such as idiomatic sentences, the meaning of which is difficult to explain through a rule. The occurrence of words in specific sequences has oriented linguists to allow them to describe the language in phraseological terms, so we understand the meaning of some expressions only as they are part of a sentence. If we think, as Guidetti, Lenzi and Storchi (2012) suggested, of the difficulty of grasping the meaning of Italian idiomatic expressions such as *tagliare corto*, *vuotare il sacco*, *alzare il gomito*, the question will arise of how it is possible to teach them without showing their context of use. Language, as Sinclair (1991, 2004) points out, is configured by a set of lexicalised expressions and not as a sum of lexical units separated by grammatical units. The meaning is contained in the entire sentence as the co-occurrences obtained through corpora demonstrate.

6. Conclusions

Although recently corpora have been studied and appreciated as a teaching methodology, they are not yet widely used in language teaching. Teachers and students do not use them because they think that the use of corpora requires complex technical knowledge since they are tools created by computational linguistics. Teachers believe that in order to use corpora in the classroom or to teach their students how to use them, it is necessary to acquire and transmit a very specialised competence. This prejudice leads the teachers and learners to give up the advantages that linguistic research through corpora can offer when learning the lexicon of a language. To try to overcome the preliminary obstacle of acquiring technical competence concerning corpora, Zanca (2018) suggests that teachers to introduce corpora to the students directly by using them to solve concrete linguistic problems, thus showing the possibilities that they offer. Zanca proposes first introducing the use of corpora in the classroom through better known tools such as online dictionaries like “Reverso Context.” Zanca then suggests moving on to software, bringing the students into the more technical dimension of using corpora. The transition to the use of software that allows access to the corpora based on authentic and annotated material is an important opportunity to warn students of the risk of approaching the web as a corpus. The material with which one comes into contact on the web often presents with grammatical and spelling errors that a learner, especially one in the early language learning levels, is unable to recognise. Thus, a student could learn the wrong form of the language, replicating the errors in his writing and speaking of the foreign language.

Studies on the use of corpora as a teaching methodology usually distinguish between the indirect and direct use of corpora (MCENERY, HARDIE 2012; ZANCA 2018). We speak of indirect use when teachers and scholars get materials from corpora such as texts and exercises to be used in the classroom. In this regard, we can think of the possibilities concerning the creation of multiple-choice tests getting data from the VALICO texts as proposed by Corino and Marengo (2009). Alternatively, we can obtain useful information for writing language textbooks and for producing warning sections about rules and common errors in the dictionaries. Instead, when students use corpora for learning and studying aspects of a language or to check the correctness of their speaking and writing, we speak of the direct use of corpora. This is an open rather than predetermined use which can be set up by each student according to their personal and contingent language learning or language use needs. However, the direct use of the corpora by learners implies that the students are taught how to use the corpora and that they are taught the technical aspects in order to allow them to be able to explore the resources adequately. It is also required by the learners that there is a medium level of proficiency when correctly interpreting the data obtained from the research through the corpora, allowing for the appropriate reuse of the results. However, corpora can also be used in the classroom by the teachers to extract language patterns from concordance lists or frequency lists in order to observe, confirm or deduce rules, to make hypotheses on the behaviour of words, and to draw conclusions from the observed facts of the language. In this way, the teacher can assume the role of a “learning facilitator” transforming the language lessons in the laboratory and making it so then the language learning is more motivating (CORINO 2014: 236).

The advantages of the use of corpora in language teaching and the learning of the lexicon of a foreign language are not negligible. Nevertheless, this use is not devoid of limits of which language teachers and students must be aware of in order to start and continue to use the corpora optimally. It should be taken into consideration that the material obtained by querying the corpora from the web can include errors that certainly do not benefit students. They need to be warned of this possibility. Instead, if the corpora have a more controlled origin, the teachers should provide the students with a guide to allow them to perform effective functions in their language learning. Teachers should try to train their students in the use of corpora so then they can learn to use them independently, aware of the power of the tool but also aware of their possible limits. In short, corpora are not enough by themselves to learn the lexicon of a language, but they are certainly useful tools for a communicative didactic approach because they offer a teaching methodology that is able to encourage the learning of the lexicon directly in the socio-pragmatic contexts in which it appears, creates, recreates and changes.

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Self-determination, self-efficacy, and attribution in FL online learning: An exploratory survey with university students during the pandemic emergency

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Abstract

Investigating foreign language motivation is a primary concern within the field of online learning. As the COVID-19 outbreak has determined the shift from face-to-face to distance learning, the past year has seen the rapid spread of internet technologies in the academic sector. This study aims to investigate the effects that these rapid changes are having on FL motivation, especially as regards autonomous and controlled motivation, demotivation, self-efficacy, and attributions for success or failure in Foreign Language (FL) online courses. To shine new light on these issues, this study presents the data collected through an exploratory survey with 76 University students in Italy attending FL courses as part of their curriculum of studies. Results indicate that students' participation in the FL academic activities is determined by both controlled and autonomous motives. Only a minority of them experienced demotivation in online learning. As regards self-efficacy, students learning FLs online seem to experience a high sense of self-reliance, consistently with previous studies in this field. In line with this self-efficacious attitude to learning online, respondents appear to attribute their success or failure in the FL online courses mostly to dispositional factors.

Keywords

FL motivation – FL online learning – Self-efficacy – Self-determination – Attribution

1. Online language learning

Any article focussing on online learning starts with a consideration of terminology. E-learning, distance learning, and online learning are all terms used, often synonymously, to refer to the phenomenon of learning online (for a review of these terms see Whittaker 2013: 11-12). In this article, the term *FL online learning* will be used to refer to Foreign Language (FL) learning which takes place fully online, without the face-to-face component, and exclusively within the context of formal academic courses. This fully online approach determines new significant challenges, especially in terms of course development and evaluation, and teaching and learning roles.

Online tuition offered by universities in the pre-COVID era ranged from Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and virtual reality laboratories to those courses initiated and prepared by individual academics (Kim 2016; Kustandi et al. 2020). Since lockdowns were imposed, universities as well as other educational institutions, have resorted to online learning, reckoned to be the panacea of the period, no longer an option but a necessity (Dhawan 2020). According to Zwain (2019), the advances in information technology have made it possible to continue the learning process during the lockdown following the COVID-19 outbreak.

The technology referred to by Zwain (2019) is known as *Learning Management System* (LMS). Throughout this paper, the term Learning Management System will refer to a learning software that “utilizes information technology equipped with internet and multimedia telecommunications facilities (graphics, audio, video) in delivering material and interaction

between instructors and learners” (Tubagus et al. 2020). LMSs can include resources and learning materials, as well as opportunities for participants’ interaction such as chats and forums. As Hockly (2015) suggests, in LMSs the *asynchronous* mode of learning (involving learners and teachers working separately at different times) is often complemented by *synchronous* classes (teachers and learners working together at the same time using the internet) for example, via a videoconferencing tool.

In this regard, Freddi (2021) reflects on the adjustments made to foreign language teaching during the health crisis in Italy, resulting in a combination of asynchronous and synchronous tools. In her case study, Freddi (2021) mentions Moodle as an LMS and Zoom as a videoconferencing component to which the University of Pavia resorted to continue the academic activities. Commenting on lesson planning and delivery, Freddi observes: “Kiro¹ is a dynamic e-learning platform that offers features such as sharing documents and links to websites, posting news to participants, assigning and correcting homework, and more generally managing the whole course” (Freddi 2021: 284). Freddi also identifies some videoconferencing tools complementing the language course, i.e., Skype for Business, Google Meet, and Zoom (Freddi 2021: 283).

In the same vein, Luporini (2020) notes that LMSs were already in use at universities before the pandemic emergency. However, the extent to which these resources had been deployed depended on the teacher’s specific needs or decisions. In her seminal article about an English Linguistics course at the University of Bologna during the health crisis in 2020, Luporini suggests that the LMS was combined with a synchronous meeting tool to compensate for the lack of interaction between the teacher and the students. Together, Freddi’s and Luporini’s studies indicate that academic courses in fully online mode have benefited from both an LMS as a repository of course materials and as a platform for asynchronous communication, and a videoconferencing component allowing for simultaneous connections.

With this context in mind, in this paper we present an exploratory study conducted with University students attending FL courses delivered fully online after the COVID-19 outbreak. We analysed FL motivation in online learning and investigated whether the pandemic emergency has negatively impacted students’ self-determination, self-efficacy, and attribution compared to previous studies before this emergency.

2. Motivation in FL online learning

Foreign language learning at university was no exception from the constraints and difficulty of reorganizing academic tuition in a fully online mode. According to Egbert (2020), teachers had little time to re-design lessons and activities to ensure efficient language learning and create a positive and engaging environment. Considering that the COVID-19 outbreak has determined an unexpected transformation of the teaching and learning process, investigating students’ motivation is a primary concern within FL research.

Motivation has long-held roots in Ryan and Deci’s Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci et al. 1991; Ryan, Deci 2000). SDT presents motivation as a multidimensional construct, encompassing self-regulation, self-determination, and autonomy. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), motivation operates on a continuum from a-motivation to extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. A-motivation and intrinsic motivation constitute the two opposite ends of the continuum: a-motivation is considered as lacking the intention to act; conversely, intrinsic motivation is represented by the inherent enjoyment and satisfaction of doing an activity, deriving from an internal locus of control. In the middle of the SDT continuum stands extrinsic

¹ Kiro is a customised version of the LMS Moodle.

motivation, which is characterised by various regulatory styles (external, introjected, identified, integrated) and loci of causality (from external to internal).

Central to SDT is the distinction between two forms of motivation: autonomous and controlled (Deci, Ryan 1985b; Deci, Ryan 2000). The former could be defined as engaging in an activity because it is perceived to be consistent with personal beliefs, goals, or emanating from the self. In other words, autonomous motivation is self-determined. In contrast, controlled motivation reflects engaging in actions to gain rewards, getting approval from others, or avoiding punishment. From the characteristics of these two types of motivation, it can be deduced that individuals who are control-motivated are less likely to be self-regulated and self-determined; the opposite holds for autonomously motivated individuals. Based on these assumptions, SDT seems to suggest that fostering autonomous motivation will lead to effective self-regulation.

There exists a considerable body of literature exploring the relationship between self-regulated and self-determined behaviours in FL online learning (Barnard et al. 2009; Beaven et al. 2017; Fathali, Okada 2016; Kim et al. 2014; Zheng et al. 2018). It would happen that since online learning is mainly influenced by self-determined behaviours and self-regulated actions (Mobarhan et al. 2014; Reinders 2014), the SDT continuum could be considered the best approach to investigate motivation in online language learning.

Within this context, students' beliefs about their capabilities to control a certain task play an important role in their actions and motivation. Bandura's (1977; 1997) self-efficacy theory and Weiner's (1976; 2000) attribution theory represent two perspectives that complement Ryan and Deci's SDT, contributing to an understanding of students' motivation and achievement in their studies. Self-efficacy refers to the beliefs that individuals have about their capabilities to complete a particular task; attributions refer to the explanation individuals give for their success or failure in a particular performance. The constructs of self-efficacy and attributions are arguably interrelated and connected; as an individual's self-efficacy can be influenced by his/her performance in a task, similarly one's attributions for an outcome can also be affected by the level of confidence in doing a particular task (for a detailed study on the interrelations between SDT and personality traits in foreign language learning see Sisti 2020).

Various studies have examined the relationship between the two constructs, self-efficacy and attributions, in the field of foreign/second language learning (Holschuh et al. 2001; Hsieh, Schallert 2008; Lyden et al. 2002; Stajkovic, Sommer 2000), contributing to developing an understanding of how attributions and self-efficacy might be relevant in a learning situation. The present study is set against this theoretical backdrop, which considers the interrelations between self-determination, the sense of self-efficacy, and attributions of one's success or failure to describe FL motivation. However, a full discussion of the impact of LMSs (e.g., students' interaction with LMSs and their ability to use LMSs) on students' motivation lies beyond the scope of this study.

3. The study

The present exploratory study is based on a small-scale research project conducted with 76 University students enrolled in FL online courses during the COVID-19 outbreak in Italy. The study is part of a broader project whose overall aims are beyond the scope of the present contribution. For the aims of this contribution, suffice it to say that students responded to a self-completion questionnaire consisting of 5 items, which were published online. Data collection took place between May and September 2020.

Eligibility criteria to participate in the survey required individuals to be BA or MA degree students attending FL courses in distance mode during the COVID-19 outbreak. The

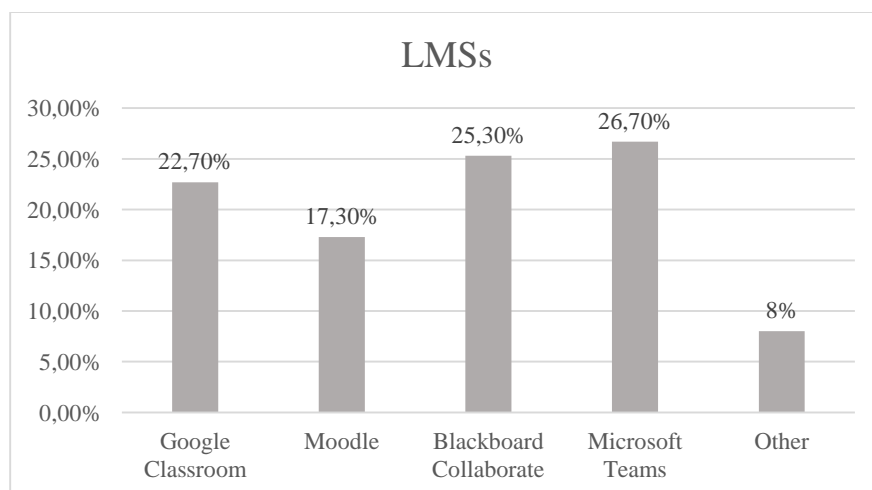
informants were attending universities all over Italy (44,7% North-Western Italy; 21,1% North-Eastern Italy; 18,4% Central Italy; 15,8% Southern Italy or the Islands). Just over two-thirds of the sample (69,7%) belonged to the 18-25 age group; 30,3% belonged to the over 25 age group. The gender of the informants was not asked in the survey. Of the initial cohort of 76 students, 62 were studying English and 14 Languages Other Than English (LOTE).

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the informants in terms of the foreign languages studied as part of their academic curriculum and the age range to which the informants belong. As seen, the primary inclusion criterion for the informants was to be attending an FL course in distance mode on the university LMS. To identify the LMSs used in FL online learning, respondents were also asked to indicate which learning platform had been adopted by their university for foreign language courses (Graph 1).

All the LMSs mentioned by the respondents include a suite of integrated tools that enable online delivery of instructional content, allow student interaction and collaboration, as well as tracking and reporting of student participation. In addition to the LMSs, participants referred the use of some synchronous meeting tools (32% Google Meet; 43% Zoom; 25% Skype) to compensate for the absence of face-to-face interaction².

Language	Number of respondents	Percentage
English	-43 in the 18-25 age range -19 in the over 25 age range	81,6%
Languages Other Than English (LOTE)	-10 in the 18-25 age range -4 in the over 25 age range	18,4%
Total	76	100%

Table 1 Foreign languages studied as part of the academic curriculum.



Graph 1 LMSs used in FL online learning by the informants

² This study is unable to encompass the entire range of activities carried out during FL courses (a significant analysis and discussion on the subject was presented by La Grassa 2021 referring in particular to Italian as L2). The reader should bear in mind that the present study is based on a preliminary analysis of students' motivation during the health crisis in Italy in online learning without considering the numerous facets of this context. This is an important issue for future research.

The assumption that FL motivation is negatively affected by distance learning and lack of face-to-face communication among the teachers and the students in the specific setting of the pandemic emergency, is the background against which this present research is set. In other words, it is hypothesised that after the disruption of the academic activities, FL students could be less autonomously motivated and less self-determined than shown in previous studies. To investigate this hypothesis in-depth, the following Research Questions (RQs) were formulated:

RQ1 Are students more influenced by autonomous or controlled motivation in FL distance learning? Do they feel demotivated?

RQ2 Do they believe in their capacity to produce specific performance attainments or does their sense of self-efficacy decrease in an LMS?

RQ3 Do students attribute their success in FL learning to internal or external causes in this setting?

As seen, data were collected through a self-completion questionnaire³, consisting of 5 items: items 1 to 3 address RQ1, item 4 focuses on RQ2, and item 5 concentrates on RQ3. Once collected, the data were elaborated through descriptive statistical analysis, using percentages. Bar graphs were used to quantify and visualise the data in a graphic form; in addition, tables were used to report data in detail.

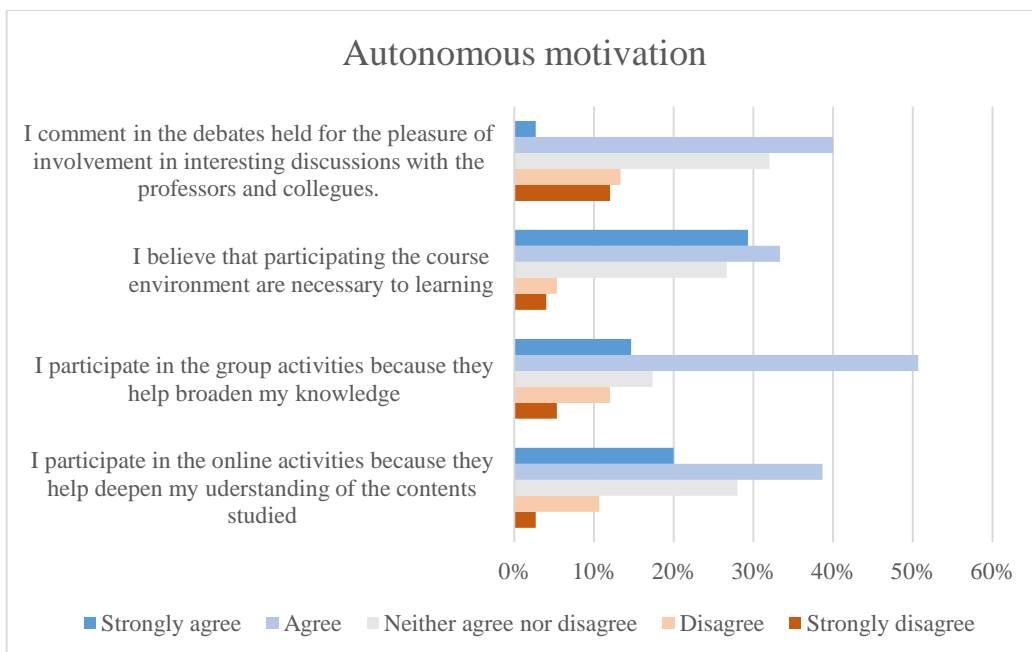
4. Results

This paragraph will give an account of the data collected, examining each research question according to the items of the questionnaire. First, a comprehensive look at the data regarding each item of the questionnaire will be offered in a graph format. Second, a detailed analysis of the data will be presented in a table format: it aims to transform raw data in percentages, considering two variables, i.e., age-range and the language studied. A further discussion will be provided in paragraph 5.

RQ1 Are students more influenced by autonomous or controlled motivation in FL distance learning? Do they feel demotivated?

Items 1, 2, and 3 of the questionnaire address this research question. Item 1 is *Autonomous motivation: please tick only one option for each statement using the scale provided*. This question is a five-point Likert scale intending to measure the level of students' agreement to the statements provided. 75 out of 76 respondents replied to this question. The overall results are shown in Graph 2; a more detailed view is offered in Table 2.

³ It was not possible to organise a focus group as initially planned since only one of the informants agreed to participate. Further data collection is therefore required to consolidate the findings of the current preliminary study.



Graph 2 Autonomous motivation

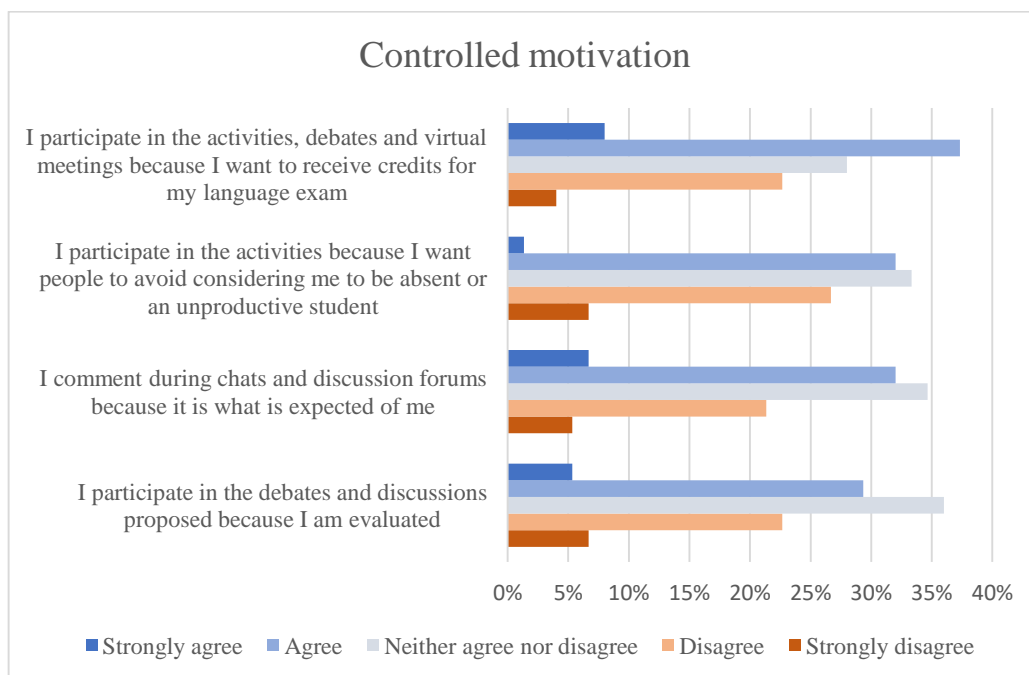
18-25 age range Language: English Tot: 43 students						18-25 age range Language: LOTE Tot: 10 students					
Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	20%	45%	25%	10%	0%	1	20%	40%	30%	10%	0%
2	12,50%	57,50%	15%	10%	5%	2	20%	50%	20%	10%	0%
3	25%	45%	20%	7,50%	2,50%	3	40%	20%	30%	10%	0%
4	4,88%	43,90%	31,71%	12,20%	7,32%	4	0%	70%	10%	10%	10%
Over 25 age range Language: English Tot: 19 students						Over 25 age range Language: LOTE Tot: 4 students					
Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	15,79%	26,32%	36,84%	10,53%	10,53%	1	50%	25%	25%	0%	0%
2	10,53%	42,11%	21,05%	15,79%	10,53%	2	50%	25%	25%	0%	0%
3	35%	20%	35%	0%	10%	3	50%	0%	25%	25%	0%
4	0%	10,53%	47,37%	26,32%	15,79%	4	0%	66,67%	33,33%	0%	0%

Table 2 Autonomous motivation⁴

Item 2 is *Controlled motivation*: please tick only one option for each statement using the scale provided. Like Item 1, this is a five-point Likert scale question requiring the respondents to express their level of agreement or disagreement with statements regarding

⁴ The description of each statement of Item 1 in the questionnaire is reported below:
 1. I participate in the online activities because they help deepen my understanding of the contents studied.
 2. I participate in the group activities because they help broaden my knowledge.
 3. I believe that participating in and tending the course environment are necessary to learning.
 4. I comment in the debates held for the pleasure of involvement in interesting discussions with professors and colleagues.

controlled motivation. 75 out of 76 respondents answered this question. The results are shown in Graph 3 below; a more detailed view is offered in Table 3.



Graph 3 Controlled motivation

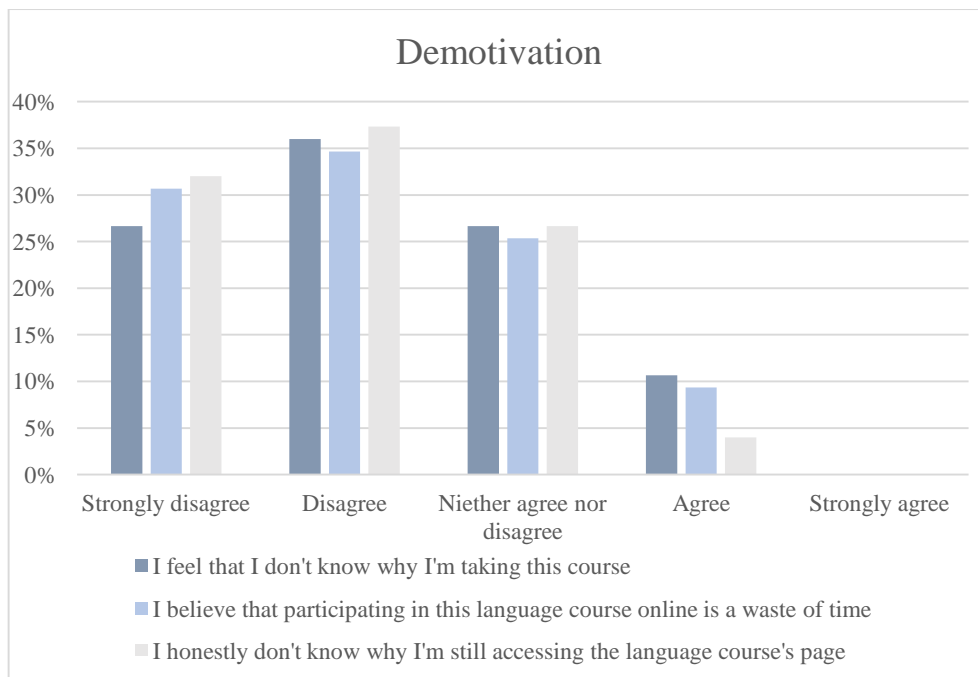
18-25 age range Language: English Tot: 43 students						18-25 age range Language: LOTE Tot: 10 students					
Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	9,52%	28,57%	61,90%	0%	0%	1	0%	55,56%	44,44%	0%	0%
2	7,14%	33,33%	59,52%	0%	0%	2	22,22%	44,44%	22,22%	11,11%	0%
3	2,38%	30,95%	66,67%	0%	0%	3	0%	55,56%	22,22%	22,22%	0%
4	12,29%	40,48%	45,24%	0%	0%	4	0%	66,67%	22,22%	11,11%	0%
Over 25 age range Language: English Tot: 19 students						Over 25 age range Language: LOTE Tot: 4 students					
Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	0%	27,78%	33,33%	22,22%	16,67%	1	0%	0%	75%	25%	0%
2	0%	27,78%	33,33%	27,78%	11,11%	2	0%	25%	75%	0%	0%
3	0%	22,22%	44,44%	22,22%	11,11%	3	0%	50%	25%	25%	0%
4	4,76%	14,29%	47,62%	19,05%	14,29%	4	0%	50%	25%	25%	0%

Table 3 Controlled motivation⁵

⁵ The description of each statement of Item 2 in the questionnaire is reported below:

1. I participate in the debates and discussions proposed because I am evaluated.
2. I comment during chats and discussion forums because it is what is expected of me.
3. I participate in the activities because I want to avoid people considering me to be absent or an unproductive student.
4. I participate in the activities, debates, and virtual meetings because I want to receive credits for my language exam.

Item 3 is *Demotivation*. Again, respondents are asked to express their level of agreement to three statements regarding demotivation in FL learning online. A total of 75 out of 76 respondents replied to this question. Results are shown in Graph 4; Table 4 presents an exhaustive view of the data according to the age range and the language studied by the informants.



Graph 4 Demotivation

18-25 age range Language: English Tot: 43 students						18-25 age range Language: LOTE Tot: 10 students					
Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	0%	20%	22,50%	32,50%	25%	1	0%	0%	40%	30%	30%
2	0%	15%	25%	35%	25%	2	0%	0%	20%	50%	30%
3	05	7,50%	25%	37,50%	30%	3	0%	0%	20%	50%	30%
Over 25 age range Language: English Tot: 19 students						Over 25 age range Language: LOTE Tot: 4 students					
Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	0%	0%	35,29%	58,82%	5,88%	1	0%	0%	25%	0%	75%
2	0%	5,56%	33,33%	27,78%	33,33%	2	0%	0%	25%	25%	50%
3	0%	0%	41,18%	35,29%	23,53%	3	0%	0%	25%	25%	50%

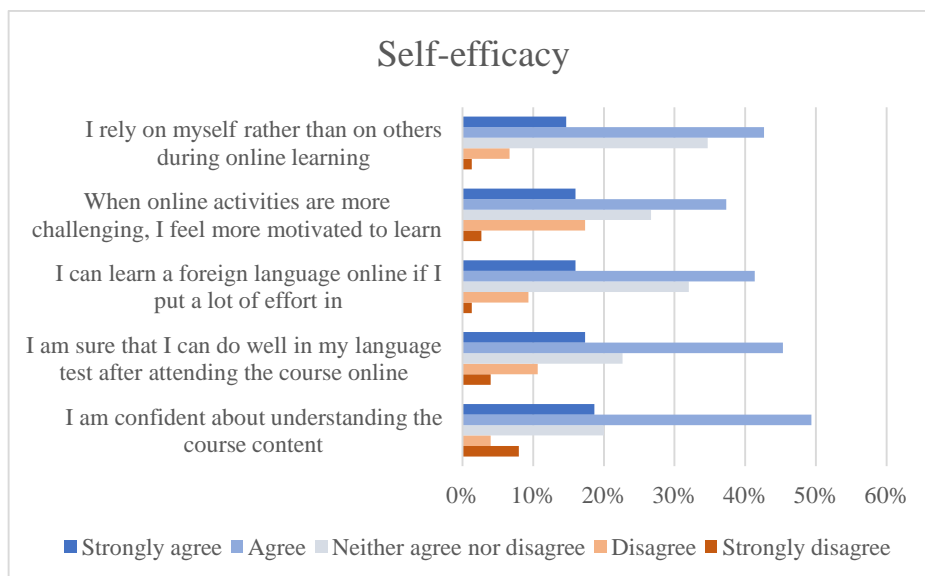
Table 4 Demotivation⁶

RQ2 Do they believe in their capacity to produce specific performance attainments or does their sense of self-efficacy decrease in an LMS?

⁶ The description of each statement of Item 3 in the questionnaire is reported below:

1. I feel that I really don't know why I am taking this course.
2. I believe that participating in this language course online is a waste of time.
3. I honestly don't know why I'm still accessing the language course's page.

Addressing this research question is Item 4 of the questionnaire. Item 4 is *Self-efficacy*: please tick only one option for each statement using the scale provided. This question is a five-point Likert scale that investigates how the sense of self-efficacy influences motivation in FL online learning. 75 out of 76 respondents replied to this question and the results are shown in Graph 5 below. Table 5 presents the data in detail.



Graph 5 Self-efficacy

18-25 age range Language: English Tot: 43 students						18-25 age range Language: LOTE Tot: 10 students					
Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	17,07%	60,98%	21,95%	0	0	1	30%	30%	30%	10%	0%
2	17,07%	51,22%	31,71%	0	0	2	10%	30%	50%	10%	0%
3	17,50%	37,50%	45%	0	0	3	10%	50%	20%	20%	0%
4	16,67%	35,71%	47,62%	0	0	4	10%	50%	30%	10%	0%
5	15%	50%	35%	0	0	5	10%	40%	40%	10%	0%
Over 25 age range Language: English Tot: 19 students						Over 25 age range Language: LOTE Tot: 4 students					
Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	10%	35%	30%	10%	15%	1	50%	25%	25%	0%	0%
2	20%	40%	25%	5%	10%	2	50%	25%	25%	0%	0%
3	10%	45%	30%	15%	0%	3	50%	25%	25%	0%	0%
4	15%	30%	35%	15%	5%	4	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%
5	10%	25%	40%	20%	5%	5	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%

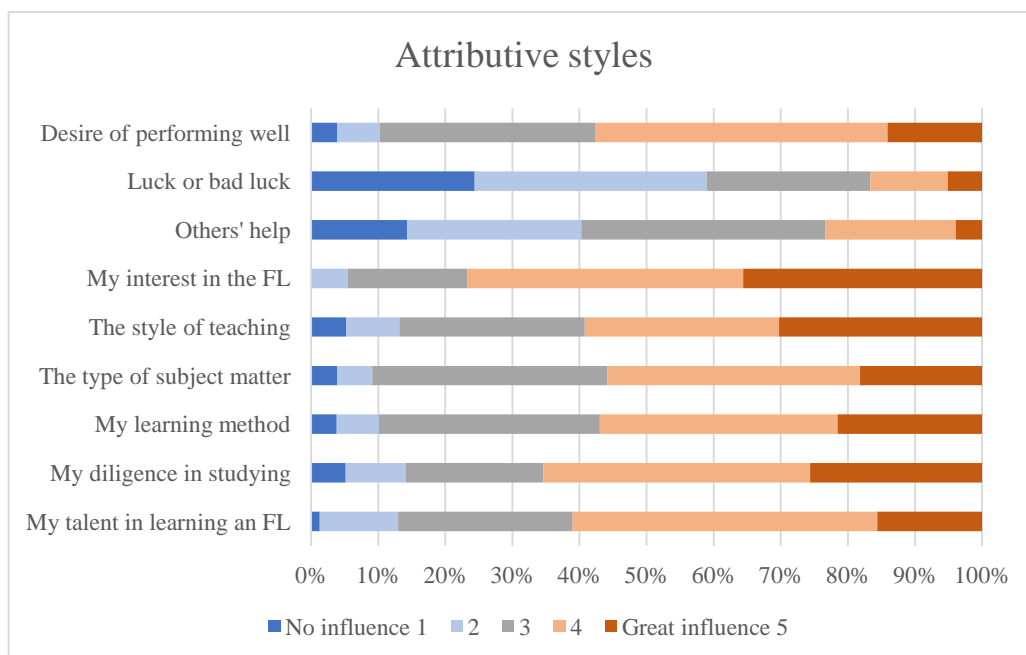
Table 5 Self-efficacy⁷

⁷ The description of each statement of Item 4 in the questionnaire is reported below:

1. I am confident about understanding the course content.
2. I am sure that I can do well in my language test after attending the online course.
3. I can learn a foreign language online if I put a lot of effort in.
4. When online activities are challenging, I feel more motivated to learn.

RQ3 Do students attribute their success in FL learning to internal or external causes in the online learning setting?

Item 5 of the questionnaire is *Attribution theory: how much is your success in the course influenced by the factors mentioned below? (rate the factors from 1 to 5 where 1 has no influence and 5 great influence)*. This question shows a five-point semantic-differential scale investigating how attributive styles influence students' motivation to participate in online activities. The scale can be read as follows: 1 *no influence*, 2 *limited influence*, 3 *moderate influence*, 4 *important influence*, and 5 *great influence*. The whole sample of the respondents (76 students) replied to this question. Results are shown in Graph 6 and Table 6 below.



Graph 6 Attributive styles

18-25 age range Language: English Tot: 43 students						18-25 age range students Language: LOTE Tot: 10					
Statements	Great influence	Important influence	Moderate influence	Limited influence	No influence	Statements	Great influence	Important influence	Moderate influence	Limited influence	No influence
1	0%	51,43%	37,14%	11,43%	0%	1	0%	50%	40%	10%	0%
2	0%	64,52%	19,35%	6,45%	9,68%	2	50%	20%	20%	10%	0%
3	0%	50%	38,24%	5,88%	5,88%	3	33,33%	44,44%	22,22%	0%	0%
4	0%	57,14%	28,57%	5,71%	8,57%	4	20%	30%	40%	10%	0%
5	0%	48,39%	29,03%	19,90%	9,68%	5	55,56%	11,11%	22,22%	11,11%	0%
6	0%	72%	16%	12%	0%	6	22,22%	55,56%	11,11%	11,11%	0%
7	0%	28,21%	33,33%	25,64%	12,82%	7	12,50%	0%	50%	37,50%	0%

5.I rely on myself rather than on others during online learning.

8	0%	15,38%	23,08%	38,46%	23,08%	8	10%	10%	20%	30%	30%
9	0%	58,33%	36,11%	0%	5,56%	9	20%	50%	20%	10%	0%
Over 25 age range Language: English Tot: 19 students						Over 25 age range Language: LOTE Tot: 4 students					
Statements	Great influence	Important influence	Moderate influence	Limited influence	No influence	Statements	Great influence	Important influence	Moderate influence	Limited influence	No influence
1	0%	53,33%	13,33%	26,67%	6,67%	1	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%
2	0%	35,71%	42,86%	14,29%	7,14%	2	0%	25%	50%	25%	0%
3	0%	21,43%	64,29%	14,29%	0%	3	25%	0%	50%	25%	0%
4	0%	29,41%	64,71%	5,88%	0%	4	50%	0%	50%	0%	0%
5	0%	33,33%	58,33%	8,33%	0%	5	25%	25%	50%	0%	0%
6	0%	27,27%	72,73%	0%	0%	6	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%
7	0%	13,33%	46,67%	26,67%	13,33%	7	0%	25%	25%	25%	25%
8	0%	6,25%	37,50%	25%	31,25%	8	25%	25%	0%	25%	25%
9	0%	28,57%	42,86%	28,57%	0%	9	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%

Table 6 Attributive styles⁸

5. Discussion

In this section, we shall consider the results of the survey and the implications of these in the context of FL online learning. In the current study, findings are generally consistent with previous literature in the field of motivation in online learning. However, one unanticipated finding concerns the role of controlled motivation which was reported as equally significant as autonomous motivation. It is interesting to note that a minority of the respondents experienced demotivation in FL online learning as a result of multiple factors. Findings regarding self-efficacy further support the idea that online learning contributes to developing a positive attitude towards one's capabilities and control over FL learning. Besides, since literature about attributive styles and FL language learning online would seem scarce, this study shed some light on this issue, highlighting the importance of dispositional factors in FL online learning.

5.1 *Autonomous and controlled motivation*

The initial objective of the survey was to understand if students are more affected by autonomous or controlled motivation in FL online learning. As regards autonomous motivation,

⁸ The description of each statement of Item 5 in the questionnaire is reported below:

1. My talent in learning an FL.
2. My diligence in studying.
3. My learning method.
4. The type of subject matter.
5. The style of teaching.
6. My interest in the FL.
7. Others' help.
8. Luck or bad luck.
9. Desire of performing well.

the results of the questionnaire show that the respondents demonstrate to personally value the FL online course, hence they consciously motivate themselves to participate. In line with previous studies (Mobarhan et al. 2014; Reinders 2014), these results demonstrate that online learning is highly influenced by self-determined behaviour and self-regulated actions. These findings confirm the relationship between Self-determination theory indicators (perceived autonomy, perceived competence, and perceived relatedness) and the learners' attitudes towards technology-enhanced language learning, as in previous studies (Fathali, Okada, 2017; Beaven et al. 2017; Barnard et al. 2009). However, from Table 2 we can see that students of English in the over 25 age range were divided in the view that participating in the course is an enriching experience. These results, therefore, need to be interpreted with caution.

Contrary to what was demonstrated by previous studies (Barnard et al. 2009; Kim et al. 2014; Zheng et al. 2018), in this study students of English in the 18-25 age range indicate external factors equally significant for their engagement in FL e-learning. According to the Self-determination continuum (Ryan, Deci 2000), external regulation determines students' compliance with certain norms of behaviour and regulates students' actions based on gaining rewards or avoiding punishment. Since the participants in this study are university students, it seems obvious that their participation in the activities is also determined by external motivations, such as getting credits for their exam or because this is what is expected of them. However, these findings may be somewhat limited to younger students of English, whereas the other groups of informants express some disagreement on the controlled motivations for attending the language course (as can be seen from Table 3).

There are still many unanswered questions about the relationship between age, the FL studied, gender, and motivation to learn an FL online which the present study is unable to encompass due to its exploratory nature. Therefore, further studies, which take these variables into account, will need to be undertaken.

5.2 Demotivation

Even though most of the respondents in this study expressed disagreement with the statements regarding demotivation, a worryingly high percentage of them, especially those studying English and belonging to the 18-25 age range, showed uncertainty or agreement with the lack of intentionality and personal causation experienced in online learning. Interestingly, respondents studying a Language Other than English appear to be the most motivated to attend an FL course since most of them disagree with the statements regarding demotivation. However, it is important to bear in mind the possible bias in these findings due to the small number of informants belonging to the LOTE group.

Since the intricate nature of motivation, self-efficacy, self-determination, and self-regulation, demotivation might be considered as the result of more variables, as in Yantraprakorn et al.'s study (2018). In the light of the data discussed so far, it could be argued that a minority of the participants in this study perceived a lack of intentionality in engaging in online activities. In future investigations, it might be advisable to explore the correlation between the experience of use and the level of appreciation of an LMS, and their impact on student motivation to learn an FL online. A further study with more focus on this aspect is therefore suggested.

5.3 Self-efficacy

As seen in previous studies (Bai et al. 2014; Kim et al. 2015; Su et al. 2018), there is a strong relationship between self-determined behaviour and self-efficacy, especially in online learning. However, studies seem to have not fully explored the implications of the relationship between

self-efficacy and FL e-learning, and findings in this context have produced contrasting results (Alhamami 2019; Yantraprakorn et al. 2018; Zheng et al. 2009).

The findings of the present study demonstrate that students show a high level of self-efficacy, attributing their success or failure in the FL online course to their efforts and capabilities. These results seem to confirm that a high sense of self-efficacy motivates the students to persevere learning, as in Bandura's theory (1997). Consistently with Zheng et al.'s (2009) study, the online learning context seems to influence the development of a positive sense of self-efficacy in the students who rely mostly on their abilities, their control over the learning process, and their effort to succeed in FL learning.

One unanticipated finding was that informants belonging to the over 25 group and studying English would appear to be less self-efficacious compared with the other groups (as can be seen in Table 6). However, with small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might lead to a higher variability, which, in turn, might lead to bias.

5.4 *Attributive styles*

According to this study's findings, students learning an FL online appear to attribute their success or failure in FL online learning to dispositional stable and unstable factors; some of them also mention the influence of the teaching style (situational stable factor) on their performance in the FL course. Situational unstable factors, such as luck or bad luck and others' help, are reported as less influential. What is striking about the figures in Table 6 is the data regarding the group of informants studying Languages Other Than English. There is a clear trend among this group of describing some factors as having "great influence"; whereas the other groups of informants seem to be more cautious in expressing such a vigorous opinion.

As seen, studies on attributive styles in the FL e-learning context and their role on motivation would appear to be scarce. Despite the impossibility of comparing results with previous studies, this study arguably demonstrates that students' engagement in online activities is positively influenced by their evaluation of success which relies mostly on dispositional factors. This assumption is consistent with the characteristics of self-determined and self-regulated students which emerge from data on controlled and autonomous motivation, and on the role of self-efficacy in the e-learning context, as seen before.

In summary, to answer the three research questions outlined in paragraph 3, studying an FL online does not appear to negatively affect the motivation to persevere learning, even during this pandemic emergency. On the contrary, students seem to develop a high sense of self-efficacy, relying on their abilities and efforts to succeed in online language learning. In line with Self-determination theory, more self-regulated and self-determined attitudes towards learning stimulate also a more autonomous and self-efficacious behaviour, typically identified in online learning. To develop a full picture of the impact of FL online learning on student motivation, additional studies will be needed that focus on the characteristics of the online context (e.g., the type of FL activities and interaction) and their influence on students' desire to persevere learning.

6. Conclusions

In this study, we have faced issues regarding FL motivation in online learning. By using a self-completion questionnaire published online, we tested the hypotheses that FL motivation could be negatively affected by the distance mode of education during the pandemic emergency in 2020. The findings of this study can be seen as an attempt to understand how FL motivation in

an academic setting can be affected by a total e-learning experience. The analysis of the results led to the conclusion that students' motivation in FL learning online is highly self-regulated and self-determined despite the impact of the health crisis on students' wellbeing. More generally, these findings are consistent with research showing that the e-learning context provides a more autonomous learning experience characterized by integrated and identified motivation. Besides, findings provide additional information about students' sense of self-efficacy and attributive styles of success or failure in FL online learning. Results indicated that students seem highly efficacious, believing in their capabilities to succeed in online learning and attributing their success in the language course mostly to constitutional stable factors.

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