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“The motivation of the students of a secondary school in the province of  
Treviso while learning German as a second foreign language”

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## INTRODUCTION

The study we are going to show was carried out in a secondary school in the province of Treviso. The aim was to investigate the students' motivation when learning German as a second foreign language and their opinions about teaching methods and materials used. The starting point were the questionnaires made by Caon (2012) and Lazzari (2016), the first was about French and the latter about Spanish; they stimulated my interest in understanding which are the pupils' opinions about the German language. It is important to underline that their questionnaires were used for this investigation, with some changes and integration. I only studied English as a foreign language when I was in the secondary school and I started learning German when I was the high school. My curiosity was to understand which are the very young pupils' reasons to start studying this language, since they have to choose the second foreign language when they are 11 years old. The opinions about other foreign languages are not very clear as the ones about English which is considered to be the most important language to study. It is useful for working, travelling, as lingua franca (ELF) etc., but what about other languages? Does the wide use of the English language obscure the importance of the others?

This investigation wants to give value to the students' opinions about German in order to understand which type of motivation they have and, consequently, which are the most efficient methodologies and materials to produce a long-term linguistic understanding.

Before showing the data and results, it seems important to us to show some of the most important theories about foreign language education. The theoretical aspects we will describe coincide with the parts of the

questionnaire: As already said, motivation is the base concept that activates and supports the pupils' interest for the language, we will then describe the figure of the teacher, methodologies, metacognition and learning material. All these factors should develop strategies to support the linguistic understanding through motivation.

The first chapter will display the above-mentioned theories that will be later compared with the students' opinions.

The second chapter will make a brief description of the institutional situation of the second foreign language near English in Italy and its educational value. The second foreign language learning has been strongly supported by specialists in linguistic education and by the European Union since 1970<sup>s</sup>. Nevertheless, the second foreign language's history in the institutional context has been hard and unbalanced: there have been periods in which it was considered as being fundamental, but also years during which English was seen as the only important foreign language to study.

The third chapter will show the study which was carried out with the pupils of the second and the third year of the secondary school "Ippolito Nievo" in Ponte di Piave (TV) who study German as second foreign language. First we will describe the tools and methodologies used to carry out the research and then, the fourth chapter will show the detailed data using pie charts.

Finally, comments about all the aspects and conclusions will be made.

## AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank the secondary school “Ippolito Nievo” of Ponte di Piave that gave me the opportunity to carry out my research. I thank the head master, Mrs Bruna Borin, who accepted to give me some time to do my study and above all the German teacher, Mrs Loredana Lunardelli, who kindly welcomed me into her German lessons and helped me to communicate with the students, she allowed me to get in touch with the reality of the school system and to observe her teaching methods. Moreover, she gave me the opportunity to ask her students, through questionnaires, to evaluate her teaching methodologies, this demonstrated openness and interest in the field of teaching.

I thank all the students who happily accepted my presence in the class and who filled in the questionnaire that was full of requests that could seem boring and useless to them.

I would also like to thank my supervisor, Professor Serragiotto, who patiently followed all the steps of my work and gave me precious advice and my assistant supervisor, Professor Balboni, who transmitted me his passion and was a model during these years of studying.

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PART I  
THEORY

## CHAPTER I

### The principles of language teaching

The objective of this first chapter is to describe the most important aspects of teaching languages. Motivation and metacognition are psychological aspects that are inside every student, they influence the understanding of a language in a significant way and they lead to its permanent internalization. The understanding of a foreign language is conditioned by psychological and real aspects like the personality and behavior of the teacher and the methodologies and materials they use. These theoretical aspects will be further analyzed:

#### 1.1. Motivation

Motivation is a key concept when learning a second language and it was first investigated at the end of 1950<sup>s</sup> by Gardner and Lambert. Since then the science of language education has continued to move forward and to move together with psychological sciences (neurolinguistics; psycholinguistics; psychopedagogy and relational psychology). There are international theories and investigations about motivation and many definitions are given to the term, some of them are reported here to give a general picture about the topic, before paying specific attention to the investigations developed by the scholars who worked at the University Ca' Foscari in Venice, these researches are certainly nearer us and Balboni (2010) defined them *Venetian School* because of their coherence and cohesion. The key figures in the Venetian context are Titone, Freddi and Balboni: since 1970, three different motivational

models that consider motivation as the element that sets the basis of linguistic understanding have been developed.

### 1.1.1. Definitions

Balboni claims that motivation is “l’energia che attiva il cervello e la mente” (Balboni, 2006).

Dörnyei affirms that motivation “provides the primary impetus to initiate L2 learning and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process” (Dörnyei, 2005).

Schumann sees motivation “as the basis for sustained deep learning (SLD)” (Schumann, 2004).

By reading these short definitions, one can understand the huge importance of motivation in the learning process, it is one of the most crucial factors influencing the success or failure of a student in any subject.

### 1.1.2. Titone’s ego dynamic model

The ego-dynamic model of Renzo Titone was proposed in 1973 and it was then developed in many further publications (1981,1986,1993). According to the Italian scholar, “lo sviluppo del linguaggio è strettamente connesso con la dinamica e la struttura della personalità del parlante” (Titone, 1986). The motivation to learn a foreign language is a product of three connected factors:

1. The individuals’ ego, which is the project they have, what they would like to be in the future. This factor is the one that most reminds us of the concept of ideal self which represents the starting point for Titone,

2. The strategies which the individual decides to use to realize the project they have,

3. The tactic adopted to put those strategies into practice; if the tactic produces positive outcomes, the ego plan will be reinforced and the ego-strategic-tactic process will be continually energized. The result is that the individual's endeavor will be motivated.

This model is defined as “un sistema stratificato e gerarchico di strutture dinamiche. Tale molteplicità unificata implica il coinvolgimento simultaneo e sovrappoentesi di livelli operativi molto diversi” (Titone, 1981).

To explain what is affirmed above, it is useful for us to connect the theory to the field of language learning: each person decides if a second or foreign language can be part of their project for the future, if the answer is affirmative, they look for strategies to learn the language in the best way, finally, they apply the strategies to the learning context. As already said, if the strategies are useful, motivation is activated and understanding is easier and faster.

The one described above was the first motivational model of the *Venetian School* which takes students' personalities and necessities into consideration.

### 1.1.3. The teaching unit model by Giovanni Freddi

The goal of Giovanni Freddi in the field of motivation was focused on the methodologies of teaching a foreign language. He elaborated a teaching unit model that follows the Gestalt theory, which locates different moments of understanding: globality, analysis and synthesis.

Freddi agrees with Titone's thoughts who sees motivation as the starting point of learning and as an emotional part of the student's personality and behaviour. Freddi defines motivation as "più di una semplice curiosità o anche un semplice interesse, il quale può risultare di natura contemplativa. Essa è infatti un interesse che si traduce in tensione, in disponibilità all'apprendimento" (Freddi, 1993).

Freddi states that personal experiences and preconceptions about the foreign language and the population who speaks it can influence motivation, and the teacher has to use stimulating methods to reinforce it. First of all, people decide to learn a foreign language because they want to communicate with other people from different cultures and discover other ways of living and thinking. This means that teachers have to promote curiosity and interest about cultural differences to stimulate motivation among students (cf. Freddi, 1993). What was said before coincides with the *epistemic curiosity* described by De Beni and Moè (2010); they affirm that the environment and the features of external incentives are more important than the student's personal behaviour and objectives. Finally, the methods elaborated by Freddi concentrate on stimulating previous knowledge with the objective of reinforcing the student's curiosity. These methods can be applied to all foreign languages, also to the ones that don't have a functional value.

#### 1.1.4. The tripolar model by Paolo E. Balboni

Starting from 1994, Balboni spoke about a motivational theory which is inspired by the experimental discoveries by Schumann (1997); they demonstrate that cognitive processes only work in the presence of

positive emotions. The concepts of the model will be shown separately below:

a. Necessity

Balboni claims that this aspect is hard for students to accept, above all for (pre) teenagers. It is an emotional barrier that prevents learning ability, it is harder if the necessity of studying a foreign language is external, for example if students are forced by parents.

On the contrary, it would be good for them to develop a sense of duty that comes from accepting the teacher figure who builds a relationship based on dialogue, respect and confidence. This way, motivation originates from a significant relationship with the teacher. When it happens, even some boring activities can be carried out because students understand that the teacher's only objective is to sustain them, not only in their linguistic achievements but also in their personal sphere (cf. Caon, 2012).

b. Needs

This concept refers to students' rational behaviour. First of all, it could be difficult because students have to feel that they need to learn. Pupils at secondary schools could evaluate English as a functional language because of its international value, but this motivation to learn cannot be used for the second compulsory foreign language. Secondly, Balboni (2006) affirms that if motivation comes from the need to learn a foreign language, it stops when the scholar starts to think they have achieved their goal, they usually don't recognize that the level they have reached is not the one socially requested.

### c. Pleasure

Pleasure is the intrinsic part that allows a significant and durable understanding of the language because it originates from students' inner resources. Schumann's studies (1997) about the neurobiology of emotions demonstrated that the brain can evaluate (stimulus appraisal) what it wants to learn according to five factors: the *novelty* of the stimulus; the *attractiveness* of the material proposed; the *functionality* that the student perceives; the *feasibility* of the tasks and the conservation of the *social and psychological security* of the person who learns. According to Balboni, pleasure has different levels: there is pleasure in the variety of materials and methodologies the teacher chooses to use, in the choice of topics which are important for the student, in the perception of learning as personal challenge and as a progressive conquest.

Without doubt, the most significant positive emotions are the ones that come from the realisation of the progresses made in the acquisition, and the possibility of internalizing the knowledge to convert it to personal competence (cf. Balboni, 2006).

### 1.2. The teacher

According to Balboni (2014), Lorenzetti (2011) and Vettorel (2007), it can be said that the idea of the teacher as a spiritual and moral guide who had total power over the student now has (or should have) disappeared (cf. Balboni, 2014). Today, the teacher is a professional figure, a person who has a lot of experience in teaching languages, they are teaching facilitators, this concept originates from Von Humboldt's thought, he claimed that languages cannot be taught, teachers can only

create the conditions to make students learn them. Teachers are not the sources of the language anymore, they are just there to help students to get in touch with a foreign language and culture. Since they know the language, their task is to make the learning process easier, they have to teach students good learning strategies. This happens because nowadays teaching is seen as facilitation and not as something to be afraid of (cf. Balboni, 2014.)

Lorenzetti (2008) described very well the competences that a foreign language teacher has to possess:

a. Knowledge

Teachers have to have educational knowledge about theoretical and practical aspects. They have to know how to manage an entire class, they have to be flexible in the organisation, evaluation and documentation of the work they do, they also have to increase their psycho-pedagogical knowledge.

They need to know the subject they teach perfectly, not only its contents are required, but also its problems and the limits it could have.

Finally, teachers also have to possess organisational competences because it is important to manage space and time in the most convenient way (cf. Lorenzetti, 2008).

b. Can do

The teacher has to know how to efficiently apply the instruments, “tramite una continua stimolazione degli allievi, monitorando i risultati, (...) padroneggiare (...) gli approcci didattici e la metadidattica” (Lorenzetti, 2008), they have to use motivating strategies and try to include the whole class in the activities. Moreover, it is necessary for

the teacher to reflect on the personal methodologies they use in order to personalize and to improve their techniques. It is important for them to keep themselves well informed above all about today's technology, not only internet, but they should also consider other methodologies like video conferencing, distance learning, web pedagogy etc.

A good learning method can be the tandem learning, this can be defined as a form of open learning, whereby two people with different native languages work together. By learning in couple, they have the opportunity to improve their language skills and to learn more about one other's character and culture. Tandem learning can be not only face-to-face, there is also the e-tandem that consists in e-mail exchanges and focuses on written production. Another way is teletandem which is carried out through videoconferencing, this way, students can see each other and they have the opportunity to improve their oral skills. Tandem learning has a lot of advantages and presents two factors which are important when learning a foreign language, these are sociability and individualization.

It is important, though, that teachers help students to organize their tandem learning, so that they can fix the aims they want to achieve and work in the most convenient way (cf. Porceddu, 2008).

#### c. Know how

This ability develops in the psychological dimension of the teacher's personality and is shown in the way they deal with interpersonal relationships. Some of the important qualities teachers should have are: friendliness, awareness, receptiveness and virtues. Lorenzetti (2008) made a list of actions that teachers have to make and that can be summarized as follows:

- discussion, sharing, creation of educational-social and affective common goals;
- communication, not only with students but also with the entire educational community;
- concentration on the individual who is speaking, teachers have to listen actively and correctly, they have to clarify and simplify the listening process;
- interpretation of verbal and extra verbal communication;
- removal of preconceptions;
- realization of group work;
- organization of extracurricular activities (cf. Lorenzetti, 2008).

Caon (2012) uses the same points in his investigation to describe the features of the teacher: the cognitive aspect, the methodological aspect and the emotional and relational one. It seems interesting to concentrate on the “know how” aspect because much has been written about the psychology of the student but, without doubt, the teacher’s emotions can influence the learning process. There are many investigations that put the teacher in the middle and see them as a crucial point in the learning process. These researches relate the teacher to the motivational aspect. “Teaching”, like the other jobs, is not something that you do, but something that you are, like being a student. This means that the job represents, among other things, the person’s identity. Good teachers don’t only have a lot of knowledge about the subjects they teach, they also have to possess the sensibility to create an efficient teaching environment. If they just impose and underline authority and discipline, they don’t do the most important part of their job and they just tell the students what is right and what is wrong. On the contrary, good teachers expose themselves, they do not limit themselves to explaining theories

and other people's books, they adopt personal strategies to transmit knowledge, it means they care about the student's learning.

In conclusion, to sum up and simplify what is said above, only a highly motivated teacher can train motivated students and, consequently, give them important learning skills (cf. Ricci Garotti, 2009). There are researches that classify and identify teacher's attitudes and personal features, for example Anderson distinguishes two different principal kinds of behaviour: the *dominant* one which is centred on the teacher (it is formal, commanding and enforceable), and the *integrative* one, which focuses on students (it is communicative and democratic) (cf. Coppola, 2000).

Moreover, Caon (2012) mentions many investigations that bring a positive atmosphere to the classroom thanks to the teacher's emotional dimension in the pedagogic field and it has been demonstrated that psychological aspects influence the learning process in a significant way.

Dealing with emotions, Balboni (2013) suggests applying Schumann's emotional factors to the teachers:

- a. Novelty consists in proposing activities, projects in the school and outside the school, technologies and materials that modify the daily routine with the aim of avoiding the boredom and including long-term changes. Unfortunately, the Italian school suffers from continuous negative reforms that generate teacher's anxiety and frustration, this fact has not to be forgotten.
- b. The attractiveness of the materials, instruments and learning context is a factor that produces positive emotions. Balboni recognizes the fact that teachers are not responsible for this kind of choices (government and local authorities have this task) but

he suggests encouraging teachers to work together with students and families to improve what they already have.

- c. The feasibility of the tasks: teachers who love their job consider learning a foreign language as something that requires effort and concentration but at the same time they think that it can lead to a tangible realization. Without doubt, they always have to take into account pupils' different cognitive styles, personalities and metacognitive strategies, that play an important role in foreign language learning. Each class is different because it has different combinations of factors: not each student has the objective of becoming a language specialist.
- d. Functionality consists in teaching methods inside the class but also in the administrative aspects (interviews with families, school board meetings, study trips and excursions, choice of learning materials etc.). Teachers should have good relationships not only with students but also with their families and with colleagues in all subjects, that way they can be considered as high-quality teachers.
- e. Social and psychological security: Balboni underlines the differences between English teachers and other language teachers: English teachers are seen as fundamental and the others as marginal. Many investigations have found out that certain differences cause frustration and demotivation (cf. Balboni, 2013).

Finally, it can be said that the figure of the teacher is characterized by a large number of personal and contextual different factors that, added to other aspects, originate realities that are different from one school to

another. It is necessary to realize new projects and to invent new things. Teachers have to explore and try new technologies, organize language exchanges, theatre shows in foreign languages are also good. To realize all the above-mentioned activities, they have to be motivated, only this way they can do their job well (cf. Balboni, 2013). Moreover, if teachers aren't ready to be changed by the educational relationship with the students and if they think that this kind of relationship can only change the students, they are going to fail in their task (cf. Luise, 2006).

### 1.3. Methodologies

Methodology can be defined as the concrete realization (in terms of materials, relationships in the class, techniques, activities etc.) of a specific learning orientation (cf. Balboni, 2002).

The one used here is a humanistic-emotional approach, so to continue the one proposed by the *Venetian School*. This kind of approach sees the student first as a person who is characterized by emotions, behaviours and experiences that put them in a specific relation with the world. The attention is focused in promoting teaching methods based on:

- reducing situations that generate anxiety, they don't allow a stable understanding of the language;
- supporting the individual's self-realization, so that they can take advantage of their potentialities to realize their objectives;
- enhancing social relationships inside the classroom, it brings dialogue, respect and positive interdependence;
- involving the student in the teaching process by using all learning methodologies (cf. Louise, 2006).

What has been described above allows an enduring linguistic understanding that involves students from all aspects. Starting from this humanistic-emotional approach, two methodologies will be further analysed (playful language teaching and cooperative language teaching).

### 1.3.1. Playful language teaching

The fact of using games to teach a foreign language is often seen as a waste of time. Teachers think that games are something to use during recess or during free moments in the lesson. Games are usually seen as something to do between two activities, they are used as an energy boost and to recover motivation. They are not seen as learning methods, but as something to do before the traditional school lessons that require diligence and effort (cf. Caon e Rutka, 2004).

A distinction has to be made between playing as a free and recreational activity and teaching games which have, without doubt, a precise objective that is established by the teacher and regards language learning (to learn new syntactic structures, lexicon, cognitive strategies etc.). Playful teaching is usually related to children because it is used with them to develop knowledge about the world. Nevertheless, how a playful dimension can be useful in the process of language learning of teenagers and adults as well, with all levels of proficiency, has been widely studied (Caon and Rutka, 2004, Luise, 2006).

The huge advantage of this method is the one of creating a motivation which is based on pleasure, in fact, adults take part in playful activities during their lives because they give off positive emotions (cf. Luise, 2006).

Without doubt, if teachers choose to use playful methods with teenagers and adults, they have to explain the aims of the above-mentioned activities and to propose activities that correspond to the students' linguistic and cognitive levels.

In this kind of language teaching, communication is used for authentic and significant purposes as each game has a precise goal that coincides with the linguistic one. This gives the opportunity to the students to create the conditions to apply the *rule of forgetting* by Krashen which is the situation in which the students' attention goes from the linguistic structure to the rules of the game, this way, they forget the fact that they are learning and the consequence is reduced anxiety, the result will be efficient and stable. Moreover, practical projects in the playful dimension (as problem solving) lead to a high learning of the language because according to the principle "dimmi e io dimentico, mostrami e io ricordo, fammi fare e io imparo" (Balboni, 2006) practical experience activates long-term memory since the greater is the reflection, the greater is the understanding.

Playful language teaching is characterized by a huge diversity because it can stimulate different kinds of intelligence, it requires a different class, group organization, depending on the game. Another advantage is having the possibility to adapt the game to different levels at the same time so that each student can work according to their needs. Playful language teaching allows the interaction between similar people because the game is a stimulating challenge which includes anxiety and high competition, in this context students "si mettono in gioco, non di fronte all'insegnante-giudice, ma di fronte a una attività divertente" (Luise, 2006). In this positive atmosphere, they can work in groups

supporting each other, they collaborate and respect each other in a cooperative way which will be analysed in the following paragraph.

### 1.3.2. Cooperative language teaching

Cooperative language teaching is considered to be a social method because it gives a huge importance to the relationship between individuals. Differences between students are not taken into consideration, even if they have different nationalities and cultures or levels of proficiency, they all become protagonists of their learning process (cf. Louise, 2006).

As can be understood, like playful teaching, the method of cooperative teaching puts the student in the middle of the learning process, this demonstrates the humanistic-emotional approach of both procedures. Speaking about cooperation, it is important to underline its difference from the traditional collaborative activities. In the collaborative teaching, each student has a different role and the common goal can be achieved only with the integration of each individual activity, this kind of teaching has some difficulties because the majority of the work the student does alone and they only come together as a group for the last part, so students only work together for a short time. There is not a system of interdependence among them, the consequence of this is that the student's work is unbalanced because some students work a lot and well, whereas others work little.

Cooperative Learning builds an educational contest which is highly cooperative because students work in groups and they have good possibilities to successfully deal with difficult, challenging and problem

solving tasks that require high cognitive processes (cf. Luise, 2006), that way, they can achieve the final goal together.

This learning process has many advantages because it is characterized by the integration of different kinds of intelligence, different cognitive and learning styles, different motivations and personalities. Each student learns from the other, they learn not only to resolve a specific linguistic problem (to understand a text and put it into the past tense, syntactic analysis, summary etc.), they also learn the existence of various strategies to resolve it, they realize that their strategy is just one of the many possible ones, this concept moves the attention from language teaching to linguistic education (cf. Balboni, 2014).

Cooperative learning “mette al centro la capacità del gruppo, anziché del singolo, di elaborare ipotesi che, confortate o integrate o corrette dal docente, costruiscono la conoscenza” (Balboni, 2014). The social aspect of the language is underlined because in this context language is used to communicate meanings, to resolve linguistic problems, to collaborate in comprehension activities etc.

This teaching methodology brings a positive interdependence among students since not only the most experienced ones can help the others, each pupil shows their own study methods and their learning capabilities.

Without doubt, Vygotsky and his theory of the *zone of proximal development* have to be quoted, that is:

“The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978).

The support of more capable students activates the zone of proximal development of less capable ones, so that social interaction becomes learning facilitation, in a cognitive dimension.

#### 1.4. Metacognition

The term *metacognition* can be explained as the psychological activities that coordinate the cognitive function, that is the operative behaviors to plan, control and evaluate one's own working procedures. More in general, their aim is the learning's self-management (cf. Mariani, 2010).

They are strategic competences and are strictly related to the cognitive part that elaborates information, they include ideas about cognitive functions in general, convictions about personal skills, awareness of the existence of cognitive problems and of the fact of being able to resolve them (cf. De Beni, Moè, 2000).

Caon (2012) establishes that students should learn these competences within the end of the secondary school to:

- acquire more confidence concerning their abilities and identify positive and negative aspects about their learning method and their cognitive style;
- develop an efficient learning method, indeed, if they choose the right strategy, they know how to proceed, in order to save time and energy;
- create a sense of independence and self-esteem that reinforces motivation and allows the student to keep their anxiety level under control;

- develop transversal skills that can be applied to all learning styles;
- increase strategic abilities as *learn to learn* and *learn to teach*, to reinforce linguistic, metalinguistic, metacognitive and social skills (cf. Caon, 2012).

At the beginning, metacognitive theory was analyzed in the field of memory. Mnemonic skills, previous knowledges, use of strategies and metamemory were studied together, that way, it was demonstrated that metacognition and performance are strictly related to each other.

Regarding the relationship between metacognitive and cognitive aspects, the greater the metacognitive level is, the greater the performance is. The reason is that the task is done with greater competence and long-term effort (cf. De Beni, Moè, 2000).

Without doubt, this kind of competence has huge potentialities, it has to be developed by the teacher through activities with the right linguistic and cognitive level, so that students realize that learning is a continuing process, the awareness of their cognitive style and the use of the right strategies can lead to the optimization of linguistic acquisition.

### 1.5. Learning material

The most important quality that learning material has to have is the one of being motivating, so, referring to the *Venetian School*, Schumann's psycholinguistic factors about pleasure can be applied. The concept of *novelty* is strictly related to the idea of variety of the activities, exercises and of the materials themselves, since the traditional book is not enough

for the communicative and emotional approach. If new challenges are continually proposed, new cognitive styles and different abilities are stimulated, the consequence is that students become interested, curious and they want to go on and discover more and more. *Appearance* is also important because it is the first impact to the student, it sustains the motivation level because the beauty of the stimulus creates intrinsic pleasure. Contrary to what one can intuitively think, Caon (2012) claims that illustrations and images can give the idea of being a text for children and demotivate students, for this reason, people who design learning materials should study very carefully not only contents but also appearance. The feature of *functionality* consists in satisfying students' needs, the teacher has to help students to recognize these linguistic-communicative necessities and, consequently, motivation is activated. Without doubt, during (pre) adolescence, that starts in the secondary school, students distance themselves from adults (teachers as well), that's the reason why learning material (and the teacher) has to explicate the goal of the task, so that students become aware of the entire acquisition process and understand the utility of the proposed activities. Moreover, learning material should not activate the affective filter and has to be perceived as feasible and secure in the psychological and social field.

Concerning *feasibility*, Balboni (2006) underlines the fact that many books don't have clear and easy explications, on the contrary, they create frustration and disorientation because of the complexity of the instructions that, in many cases, completely forget the age and cognitive level of the students.

Finally, another important factor is the *social and psychological security*, exercises do not have to damage the student's social image

and self-esteem, since pupils are always looking for the group's acceptance.

In conclusion, among all materials, the ones that can be found through technologies deserve to be mentioned, they are more and more useful to foreign language teaching because they are something more than a simple support, they allow to do learning activities that can't be done without their help (cf. Balboni, 2006).

Technologies offer a huge quantity of material that has the advantage of being motivating because it is perceived as a challenge by the student, moreover, students use technologies in their daily life, internet gives them the possibility to keep in touch with many people in real time and low-cost. In conclusion, another important quality of technologies is the one of involving all five senses through images, videos, recordings etc., this feature reinforces motivation and memorization.

## CHAPTER II

### The institutional context

For the present study, it seems important to us to give a picture of the Italian government's rules about linguistic education because they set the basis of education. The processes that led to the teaching of two foreign languages in Italian schools were very long and hard. Balboni talks about "endless reforms" (cf. Balboni, 2009) while explaining the difficult Italian history from the unification to the entry in the EU.

A multilingual and multicultural European project started in the 1960<sup>s</sup>/1970<sup>s</sup> and is still ongoing in Italy, it is supported by experts in linguistic education and members of associations of foreign language teachers as LEND, ANILS, GISCEL (for Italian). The reasons that led to the project will be described below.

#### 2.1. Historical and political events

As already said, the European Union and the Council of Europe's aim is to support the European citizens in their language education, in a society that promotes multilingualism, multiculturalism, mobility, cooperation and interchange between the member states. For this reason, the history of the Italian linguistic education is influenced by the European directives.

In Italy, the revolution in the field of internal and external politics took place in the 1970<sup>s</sup>. The starting point was the beginning of the Modern Language Project in 1967, this project was promoted by the Council of Europe that realized the first threshold levels for the English language.

As a matter of fact, the Italian secondary school was established in 1962 and it included the compulsory foreign language that had to be studied for a total of 3 hours per week.

In 1979, the new programmes for the Italian secondary school were created and it was the most important revolution in the communicative field. These programmes totally abolished Latin and underlined the importance of linguistic education by promoting the study of different aspects of the language: the communicative aspect, the historic and socio-cultural one.

As Lorenzetti (2008) claims: “I nuovi programmi del 1979 rappresentano il primo tentativo di traghettare la scuola dei contenuti verso la scuola degli obiettivi e delle competenze”.

To better explain the affirmation above, the foreign language teaching privileged the cultural aspect and it started to use audio-visual technologies.

The new methodologies concentrated on the oral aspect and pronunciation that were seen before as separated objectives, on the contrary, they started to be considered as important aspects in linguistic education. The new programmes aimed to teach students how to be autonomous in oral and written communication.

Moreover, the students started to be made to reflect on language structures instead of just learning grammar off by heart: they had to analyse the grammar structures they found in each kind of text they were given and they had to use them while speaking and writing.

As regards the teachers' training, the Ministry of Education activated in 1977-78 the “Progetto Speciale Lingue Straniere” (foreign languages' special project): every year, tens of Italian teachers were sent to the USA, France and Germany to attend foreign language teaching and training

courses. When they returned to Italy, they could teach annual courses of 100 hours. This project trained a considerable number of foreign language teachers for ten years (cf. Balboni, 2009).

In 1984, the European Community asked the member states to improve foreign language education and training because they understood that the compulsory years for studying a foreign language were not sufficient.

The European directives were very well summarized by Lorenzetti (2008):

- to guarantee many hours of foreign language teaching;
- to guarantee continuity in the foreign language teaching in each school's level;
- to improve students' practical knowledge in the foreign language they learn;
- to improve teachers' linguistic knowledges;
- to promote linguistic and cultural interchanges between young people.

In the following year, the new programmes for the primary school were created: they followed the directives used in 1979 for the secondary school with the introduction of a foreign language to educate children to multiculturalism and communicative competence. The choice of the foreign language was free and it was related to the socio-cultural context, without doubt, families were invited to take into consideration the importance of the English language.

In 1986, the programmes of the Commission Brocca were introduced in the high school: they had the same structures of the New Programmes

for the secondary school and their objective was the student's linguistic autonomy at the end of their studies.

The European Union was born in 1992 with the Maastricht treaty, it declared that its fundamental quality was the linguistic and cultural difference and it included in the article 126 (now 149) the directives for linguistic education that guaranteed each European citizen an education in two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue one. The EU's foundations are multilingualism and multiculturalism:

“the bilingual personality is viewed as superior to the monolingual one; the latter is self-referential, self-centered, while EU is a multi-centered empire and needs culturally open-minded citizens. (...) In other words, bilingualism is not to be considered as an exceptional situation but as the normal way of being in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Balboni, 2004).

The document called *white paper* describes the European Union as a society of knowledge, in which education and training are considered as fundamental tools to reach progress and to increase employment. The consequence will be the increase of international mobility and technological, scientific and technical progress.

After the experience of the foreign languages' special project, in 1998 training courses were proposed to the teachers in Italy, the aim was to update our country to the European standards. The project was called “Progetto Lingue 2000”, it was realized in collaboration with Rai Educational and it worked for three years.

Moreover, the secondary schools started to insert a second foreign language that was often English, since the first foreign language was French.

In the first years of the new millennium, there were many important meetings (Lisbon 2000, Stockholm 2001, Barcelona 2002) that

declared the importance of carrying out a renovation in the educational and training systems and the entire European population should have the possibility to join them; the main objective was the project of a continual training called Lifelong Learning (LLL).

The above-mentioned ideas converted into ambitious strategies: the member states had time till 2010 to develop the most efficient educational systems in the world.

In Italy, unfortunately, due to the minister Moratti's reform between 2003 and 2004, foreign language teaching moved back: the only foreign language in the primary school was English, as consequence, the other foreign language's teachers became generic teachers and all the educational efforts made till that moment were destroyed.

In the secondary school, English continued to be studied for three hours per week and the second foreign language for two hours but the students could choose to study two more hours of English instead of studying a second foreign language and foreign students could choose to join Italian classes. The above-described situation completely canceled the educational importance of the second foreign language.

The situation did not improve with the reform of the minister Gelmini in 2009 that removed the obligation to study a second foreign language in the secondary school. Balboni claimed that this reform showed a complete inattention to education since one of the most important EU's principles was completely ignored, moreover, the second foreign language gradually disappeared in the high school (cf. Balboni, 2013). The students were not sure that they could go on studying the second foreign language they have studied in the secondary school because it depended on the school's teaching staff (Caon, 2012).

Anyway, in spite of the difficult situation of the Italian school system, the most important papers that describe the linguistic objectives that the teachers should reach are the *European Language Portfolio* and the *Ministry of Education's directives* of 2007, they declare that the students should have reached the level A2 in both foreign languages at the end of the secondary school.

It is important to underline the concept of *interculturalism* which is different from the *multiculturalism* of the USA. The first is the objective of Europe, that aims for respect and interchange between countries, the second simply means tolerance in a time of transition that will lead to the removal of all cultural differences.

The intercultural idea of Europe is the one to follow in the field of linguistic education.

## 2.2. The educational value of the second foreign language

As already said, the study of a second foreign language is not to be considered as luxury, on the contrary, it has to be seen as a right and a need which are recognized by our Constitution (cf. Balboni, 2013). Starting from 1970<sup>s</sup>, foreign language teaching's experts as Titone, Freddi and the first association ANILS (national association foreign language teachers) declared to agree with the integration of a second foreign language in the secondary school.

The reasons why the EU and people who work in the field of foreign language teaching insist on the addition of a second foreign language will be described as follows:

a. To avoid monolingualism

The first foreign language is English, it is a language which is functional and necessary and it is considered as lingua franca (ELF) for communication, travelling, online surfing etc.

Until the 1970<sup>s</sup> the first foreign language in the school was French which was considered as a refined cultural language and official means of international communication.

The scholars of the Venetian School claim that the second foreign language should develop pleasure and curiosity and students should study it because they really want to explore new cultures and ways of life. These elements and needs are inside each human being (in the child, in the adolescent and in the adult). The aim is a multilingual and multicultural Europe in which there is cooperation between the member states, without being obliged to use just English. The scholars want to valorize the linguistic diversity and they affirm that if we use only English, we underestimate the possibility to explore the world. As a matter of fact, self-promotion is one of the aims of linguistic education, that is the possibility for people to proceed with their life's project having knowledge of the world and other people. If they learn how to learn a foreign language, they can become more and more autonomous and the second foreign language becomes the language of being, in contraposition to English which is the language of doing.

b. The scientific value of multilingualism

The first scientific study that demonstrated the positive consequences of bilingualism was made in Canada in 1962 by Peal and Lambert. In

the 1980<sup>s</sup>/1990<sup>s</sup>, the interest for the neurobiological and psycholinguistic component of the learning process started to increase. There are two forms of bilingualism: the *subtractive* and the *additive*: The first excludes the mother tongue language, while the second is more efficient and balanced because it allows the students to develop two languages together and it creates a real bilingual personality which is rich and harmonious (cf. Lorenzetti, 2006).

One of the most famous experts on bilingual education is Jim Cummins, he developed the interdependence principle. According to this principle, languages have superficial differences but they have the same basis of cognitive processes and deep reflection. When a person deeply understands the processes, they improve the ability of general elaboration of languages, this shows that a language's understanding positively reflects on all linguistic processes.

Moreover, it is demonstrated that a bilingual brain can better deal with situations which require the resolution of problems and it is more elastic in moving from the global cognitive process to the analytical one.

To conclude, foreign language learning is easier for bilingual people because their cognitive development is bigger and they can reflect on the language that they are studying more deeply.

### c. Interlingualism

As already said, the new programmes of 1979 explained for the first time that linguistic education is made of all the languages studied by a person and should follow a common way.

Referring to Cummins' interdependence principle, when pupils start the secondary school, they already have a linguistic experience which

should not be ignored. Teachers should use common strategies and methodologies to take advantage of the cognitive development that pupils have reached in the primary school. Lots of the problems of foreign language learning can be shared (procedures to summarize, text analysis, grammar terminology etc.).

To summarize what we have said above, we can affirm that the teaching of two foreign languages is necessarily coordinated and, as much as possible, integrated.

#### d. Transfer of learning

If there is integration and collaboration in the field of linguistic education, students are in the middle of the learning process. For this reason, they should be aware of the process of development of their abilities and of the cognitive strategies that control and improve linguistic understanding. If it happens, the above-mentioned strategies can be consciously transferred to other linguistic contexts, to the formal learning of another language or to the spontaneous understanding.

#### e. Intercultural comparison

The concept of language and culture as related aspects is very recent in the Italian school (and it still doesn't exist in the North American and English science of education).

Without doubt, the intercultural comparison should lead to a cultural decentralization and the stranger has not to be seen as an enemy as it happened in the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The new generations should grow both as Italian and European citizens and they should

develop values of tolerance and respect, besides, they should not only accept but also question the cultural models of our identity (cf. Balboni, 2007).

Balboni, Caon and Luise affirm that when the intercultural communication is related to basic cultural values (space-time, respect etc.) and extra-verbal communication, it could lead to many communicative problems, more than grammatical errors.

For this reason, since complex societies and cultural models quickly change and influence each other, it is necessary to use an intercultural model and to teach how to observe a culture.

PART II  
PRACTICE

## CHAPTER III

### The research

The present study was carried out thanks to the presence of two fundamental elements: on one side, the help, kindness and availability of the German teacher, Loredana Lunardelli, who contributed to the project; on the other side, the model of the questionnaire “Aimes-tu le français?” created by Caon (2012) that was also used by another student to investigate pupils’ feelings about Spanish as second foreign language in the secondary school (Lazzari, 2016). When necessary, the original questionnaire was modified and also some integrations were made to it.

#### 3.1. Aim of the study

The aim of the research was to collect data about the feelings of the students who study German as second foreign language in the secondary school.

Nowadays, language teaching is focused on the student’s emotions, cognitive styles, need, personalities and previous knowledge. For this reason, it is important to listen to the students and to understand their feelings, their proposals, their preferences and their requests to help them to learn the foreign language in the best way.

The questionnaire is anonymous and is a research method that gives them the possibility to tell what they think without fear of being criticized by the teacher. By filling a questionnaire, they feel that they are in the middle of the learning process, so they are stimulated to

suggest to the teacher using the methodologies they prefer and, why not, they feel free to criticize the teaching methods that they don't like. Motivation is the most important factor and the starting point of the research, because it sets the basis of the linguistic understanding. It is fundamental to figure out, first of all, the behaviour of the student in their process of studying a second foreign language which is different from English, that nowadays is considered as essential in all life's fields. Moreover, it is important to underline that this specific secondary school was chosen because it allows students to choose among two second foreign languages: German and French. The aim was to understand why they chose to study German.

It is interesting to comprehend, first of all, if the motivation is intrinsic (comes from inside them) or extrinsic (for instance if they were forced by parents).

Other fields which will be studied are: the teacher, metacognition and learning materials. It will be interesting to know how they influence the learning process and how they could motivate the students and facilitate their understanding.

Finally, it was asked to the teacher to answer some questions of an interview. There is only one German teacher in the school where the research was carried out, so the answers are not to be considered as general thoughts of all teachers but just as a support to the questionnaires filled by the students. The aim of the interview to the teacher was to have her opinion about the feelings of her students concerning the language and also to know which are the methodologies and materials she prefers.

### 3.2. Sample

The sample of the study was the whole number of the students who studied German as second foreign language at the secondary school “Ippolito Nievo” in the second and third class of the school year 2017/2018. The first class was not taken into consideration for a basic reason: the questionnaires were given to the pupils in November and the idea was that the students of the first class couldn't have a specific opinion about the topic, because they had just started to learn German. The interview was made to the only one German teacher of the school, Mrs. Loredana Lunardelli, the school didn't provide a native speaker teacher.

This research was qualitative and not quantitative, it means that the total number of students wasn't important, it was important to find as many aspects and information as possible in the single person because the aim was to focus on the continuity of the aspects found out (cf. Duccio, 1993). For this reason, while filling the questionnaires, students were continually asked to be as clear as possible and to give as many information as possible.

### 3.3. Methodology of the research

The present study is qualitative, it means that its aim is to investigate a complex reality that is the feelings of the students about German as second foreign language. As Duccio claims, the concept of *quality* refers to something that is subjective, for instance emotions and sensations that are inside every person (cf. Duccio, 1993).

The objective of a qualitative research is to study some processes through a method that takes into consideration and gives importance to the single subject and what they really think.

This kind of research perfectly coincides with the aim of this dissertation because we wanted to give word to the students so that they could freely give their opinion about the German language. Serragiotto (2012) affirms: “la percezione è quanto di meno quantitativo ci sia”, indeed, as already said in 3.1., the aim was to study the quality of foreign language teaching and not its quantity.

The main difference from a quantitative study is the fact that the qualitative one investigates all the aspects of the analysed context; the result, in the end, is a clear view of the reality.

Moreover, as Caon (2012) underlines, Balboni affirms that is more important to ask people what they do to learn instead of asking them what they know. This is the reason why the students were questioned about their previous experiences, suggestions they want to make, opinions about their studying methods and so on.

### 3.4. Tools for the research

The study was carried out using a questionnaire, that seemed to be the most efficient tool because it was easy to fill and because it could be created and modified according to the information we wanted to collect. We are aware of the limits of the questionnaire, as a matter of fact, the researcher’s view about the reality could influence the way they organize the questions so that they can lead the informants’ answers to what they want to read.

For the reason above, we decided to use different kinds of questions: there were not only closed questions (si/no) and multiple choices, but also opens questions that asked the students to justify the closed answers or that stimulated them to write their personal opinion.

The questionnaire had five sections and each one investigated a specific theme:

- A. Motivation
- B. The teacher
- C. Methodologies
- D. Metacognition
- E. Learning material.

There were 19 questions which asked above all open answers, because our aim was to have as much opinions as possible, even if this choice caused a longer and more difficult analysis of data.

The questionnaires were anonymous because we wanted to give complete freedom to the students to tell what they really think. They just had to write their class and gender to allow us to have more information about the learning context of each pupil.

There were few differences from the questionnaire made by Caon (2012), we followed the one made by Lazzari (2016) who added three multiple choice questions in part C about methodologies and one in part E about materials, the aim was to know which other tools, apart from the text book, the students would like to use.

Regarding question 8b, it was situated in part B (the teacher) even if it belongs to part D (metacognition), the aim was to facilitate the students because the situation of the question was more similar to the part of the teacher, even if it belongs to the field of metacognition.

The questionnaire was very clear and gave the students the possibility to tell their opinion through open questions, they had the right space in the paper to write them (there were more lines than the version we will give here). The division in parts gave the picture of the clear structure and even if the numbers were not repeated in each section, the questions were divided in letters (8, 8a., 8b.) to make the questionnaire seem shorter.

Before starting the study, we sent an official request to the headmaster of the school who allowed us to proceed with our work, we made arrangements with the German teacher who kindly welcomed us during her lessons.

At the beginning of the lesson, students were given a clear explanation about the aim of the research and it was underlined the fact that the questionnaire would have been read only by the researcher and not by their teacher, as to encourage them to be completely sincere.

The questionnaires were handed out on paper form and it was clearly explained to the students how to proceed as to avoid many blank answers. They were given as much time as they needed because they were asked to be as clear as possible in the open questions.

Regarding the first classes, they were not asked to fill the questionnaire because they had just started to learn German and they couldn't have clear opinions about this new language.

Finally, the interview we made to the teacher was taken from the study *Aimes-tu le français?* (2012) and it was made in person while the students were having a break, the teacher was recorded and then it was made a transcription that will be reported in the next chapter. The interview had four questions that were focused on some of the questionnaire's themes: Motivation, the teaching materials' role and the

methodologies used. The interview's style was similar to the one of the questionnaire: it was easy and no specific terms were used, as to immediately lead to a clear answer.

### 3.5. The questionnaire

#### Part A: motivation

1. Tu studi tedesco perché:

- Lo hai scelto tu
- Lo ha scelto la tua famiglia

2. Pensi che il tedesco possa esserti utile in futuro?

- Sì
- Poco
- No

Perché \_\_\_\_\_

3. Sei mai stato in Germania?

- Sì
- No
- Se sì, ti è piaciuto? Che cosa ti è piaciuto?

\_\_\_\_\_

- Se no, hai voglia di andarci? Perché?

4. Avresti preferito un'altra lingua?

- No, mi va bene il tedesco

○ Avrei preferito il/lo \_\_\_\_\_,

perché \_\_\_\_\_

5. La lingua tedesca ti piace (se non ti piace, vai al punto 6);

puoi scegliere anche più di una risposta

(se un po' ti piace e un po' no, rispondi alla domanda 5 e alla domanda 6):

a. La lingua tedesca ti piace perché:

\_\_\_\_\_

b. Il fatto che la lingua tedesca ti piace è legato al modo in cui viene insegnata:

○ Sì

○ Poco

○ No

Perché \_\_\_\_\_

6. La lingua tedesca non ti piace.

a. Perché \_\_\_\_\_

b. Il fatto che la lingua tedesca non ti piace è legato al modo in cui viene insegnata:

○ Sì

○ Poco

○ No

Perché \_\_\_\_\_

Motivation is considered as the basis for linguistic understanding. Without motivation, the *input* doesn't transform itself into *intake* (cf. Schumann, 1997). This is the reason why motivation is the first analysed field, it is the primary condition to learn a foreign language.

Questions 1. and 3. investigate the period before starting to learn German. Question 1. asks if the students decided themselves to learn this language or if it was their family to decide it. Question 3. asks if they have ever been to Germany because the experience abroad could have influenced their choice.

Their current situation is analysed in question 4. that asks them if they would prefer to study another language and in questions 5a. And 6a. that ask if they like German.

In question 2. They are asked to give their opinion about the utility of German in the future. Finally, questions 5b. and 6b. introduce the part about the teacher, indeed, as Caon (2012) claims, the figure of the teacher is usually related to the students' feeling about the language.

#### Part B: the teacher

7. Quali sono le caratteristiche che, secondo te, dovrebbe avere un buon docente di lingua tedesca (prova a pensare a che attività dovrebbe fare, che atteggiamento dovrebbe avere con gli studenti ecc.).

Per me un buon professore di tedesco dovrebbe:

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8. Secondo te, impareresti più facilmente la lingua tedesca con: (puoi scegliere anche più di una risposta. Fai una croce sopra la/le risposta/e che hai scelto)

- Un docente madrelingua che parla solo tedesco in classe
- Un docente madrelingua che parla italiano e tedesco in classe
- Un docente italiano che parla solo tedesco in classe
- Un docente italiano che parla italiano e tedesco in classe

Spiega perché

---

8b. Che consiglio daresti a un nuovo professore di tedesco per insegnare bene nella tua classe?

The main objective of this part is to understand students' opinions about the teacher's figure. Question 7. is an open question, the aim is to give space to the students to write as more opinions as possible about which methodologies teachers should use and what behaviour they should have to be good German teachers.

The starting point of question 8. is the fact that nowadays a communicative approach in the foreign language is preferred, on the contrary, in the past, explanations were given in the students' mother tongue; this traditional approach underestimated communication. This question asks the students which language they prefer the teacher speaks during the lesson.

Finally, question 8b. is about the suggestions the students would like to make to a teacher to be appreciated and respected in their class.

Part C: methodologies

9. Scrivi un momento in cui ricordi di aver studiato tedesco volentieri o divertendoti e spiega perché:

---

perché

---

10. Scrivi un momento in cui hai studiato tedesco con difficoltà o annoiandoti e spiega perché:

---

perché

---

11. Preferisci lavorare:

- Da solo
- In gruppo
- Altro \_\_\_\_\_

12. Ti sembra di apprendere meglio il tedesco:

- Leggendo
- Scrivendo
- Ascoltando
- Parlando
- Altro \_\_\_\_\_

13. Preferisci attività: (massimo 3)

- Orali

- Di ascolto
- Di scrittura
- Di vocaboli
- Di grammatica
- Di pronuncia
- Inerenti alla cultura tedesca
- Altro \_\_\_\_\_

Concerning the field of methodologies, questions 9. and 10. Ask the students to remember a positive and a negative experience they had while learning the foreign language. These questions are related to Schumann's theory about pleasure (1997): if the stimulus is characterized by novelty, attractiveness, functionality, feasibility and social and psychological security, students study pleasantly and there will be, consequently, a long-term linguistic understanding. The aim of question 9. is to understand which are the strengths and the weaknesses of the methodologies used to learn German.

The further multiple-choice questions investigate which are the students' preferences about teaching methods (working in group or on their own), the skills they would like to improve and the kind of activities they consider to be the most useful.

Part D: metacognition

8a. Un nuovo studente appena arrivato nella tua scuola sta per iniziare a studiare tedesco. Dagli/dalle un consiglio per imparare più facilmente:

14. Cosa potrebbe fare l'insegnante per rendere più piacevole lo studio del tedesco?

15. Cosa potresti fare tu per rendere più piacevole lo studio del tedesco?

Metacognitive strategies can be defined as *learn to learn*, it is important to know our cognitive style, our personality, our kind of intelligence and also to be aware of the best strategies we can use to learn a foreign language. These factors are usually underestimated even if they are fundamental to support the long-term motivation to learn and to become autonomous in foreign language learning.

For the reasons above, the questions of this part are very useful for us to understand which are the suggestions the students would give to a new classmate to learn the language easier (8b.), what they would suggest to the teacher to make the study of German more pleasant (14.) and finally, what they could do by their own to learn German in the most pleasant way (15.).

Part E: learning material

16. Il libro di testo di tedesco ti piace?

(se ti piace un po' sì e un po' no, scrivi perché sì e perché no)

- Sì
- No
- Un po' sì e un po' no

Perché? Che cosa (non) ti piace?

17. Che cosa metteresti tu in un libro di tedesco? Scegli una cosa che dovrebbe esserci nel tuo testo ideale

(immagini; regole di grammatica; foto; esercizi ripetitivi; giochi ecc.) e spiega il perché

perché

18. Preferiresti imparare il tedesco:

- Con registratore
- Con il proiettore
- Al PC
- Alla lavagna
- Con la TV
- Con giochi
- Con cartelloni frutto di lavori di gruppo, ricerche

As Schumann (1997) underlines, the learning material plays an important role in the field of motivation. Starting from this point, question 16. asks the students if they like their text book or not and to give the reason/s for that, the open question 17. asks them to write

which are, in their opinion, the features that a good text book should have.

Finally, the multiple-choice 18. wants to investigate which are the other methodologies, apart from the book, they would like to use to learn the foreign language, among technologies, games, researches and group works.

As already mentioned, this question was added to the original questionnaire made by Caon (2012); in our opinion, it is very important to consider also the technological dimension to stimulate the students to learn the foreign language. We totally agree with the thought of Balboni who affirms that technologies are something more than a simple support, they allow to do learning activities that can't be done without their help (cf. Balboni, 2006).

Part F: free comments

19. Vuoi scrivere qualcos'altro sul Tedesco?

The last question is optional and asks the students to add some free comments. This kind of question can be useful for them if they feel that they haven't had the opportunity to give all their opinions, this could happen because the questionnaire can usually be a restricted research method.

Question 19. allows us to collect the students' personal thoughts about German and, even if it could be difficult to analyse an open question like this, it is extraordinary helpful because it summarizes the investigation's aim.

### 3.6. The interview to the teacher

Nella sua esperienza, quale idea hanno gli studenti sull'utilità del tedesco e quale ruolo ha l'aspetto utilitaristico nella motivazione allo studio di una lingua diversa dall'inglese? Lei come interviene a questo proposito?

L'elemento culturale (feste locali, monumenti, cibi, tradizioni, ecc.) svolge davvero un ruolo motivante, come spesso si afferma? Come bisogna presentarlo agli studenti, a suo avviso, perché sia efficace?

Quali sono secondo lei le caratteristiche che i materiali didattici come libri di testo o siti internet devono avere per contribuire alla motivazione?

Quali sono a suo avviso le scelte metodologiche per creare, da un lato, e per sostenere, dall'altro, la motivazione allo studio del tedesco? Lei come interviene a questo proposito?

Caon (2012) underlines the fact that the teacher interview's aim is to describe the same reality of the questionnaire but from another point of view. The teacher was asked to give not only her opinions, but also to tell us what she does to reinforce the students' motivation.

The questions investigate three different fields: the first one asks her which is the students' idea about the utility of the German language, the second one is about the role of the cultural element and if it influences motivation, the third one is about the learning materials and the last one about the methodologies to create and to support the students' motivation.

## CHAPTER IV

### Analysis of data

As already said, the aim of the study was to understand the students' feelings about the German language when they study it as second compulsory foreign language in the secondary school. This chapter contents a description of the method of data analysis, the presentation of the results of both the questionnaire and the interview to the teacher and finally the discussion of them. Every single question will be separately analysed, in order to give a clear view of the students' answers.

#### 4.1. Method of data analysis

The quantitative data collected via questionnaire were put in an Excel worksheet and then elaborated using mean values and percentage.

Then, pie charts were drawn in order to let the reader visualize the results in a comprehensive graph. All the graphs display percentage data. As regards the open questions, the answers to them were divided into *labels* which were discussed and justified.

The entire interview to the teacher was transcribed and it was interpreted without the use of calculations and graphs, the aim was to confirm (or not) the results obtained with the questionnaires.

All the results will be presented in the further paragraph.

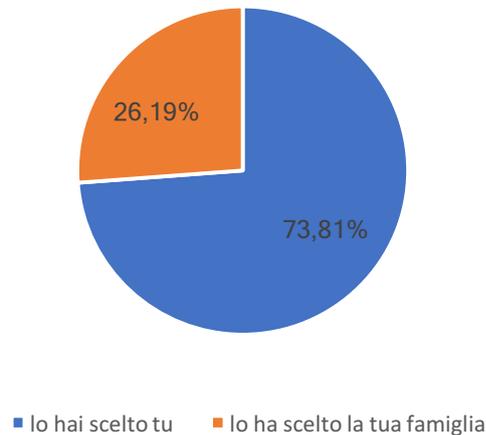
## 4.2. Questionnaire data

### Part A: motivation

#### 1. Tu studi tedesco perché:

- Lo hai scelto tu
- Lo ha scelto la tua famiglia

#### Tu studi il tedesco perché:



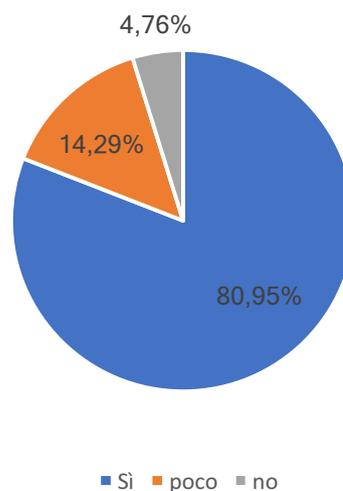
As we can see in the chart, the majority of the students affirm that they have personally chosen to study German as second foreign language and the family seems to have had no role in the choice. This answer underlines a students' high motivation to study German, at least at the beginning of the secondary school. Since the students are (pre) teenagers, it seems impossible that they have so much freedom in their choice so our hypothesis is that the family agreed with them when they chose the second compulsory foreign language and they positively influenced their children in their choice. Finally, it is worth to underline that the school where the investigation was made was chosen not only

because it gives the possibility to choose among two second foreign languages, but also because it listens to the students' requests. There are many secondary schools where students can't choose the second foreign language according to their preferences because the school chooses it on the basis of the teachers' availability.

2. Pensi che il tedesco possa esserti utile in futuro?

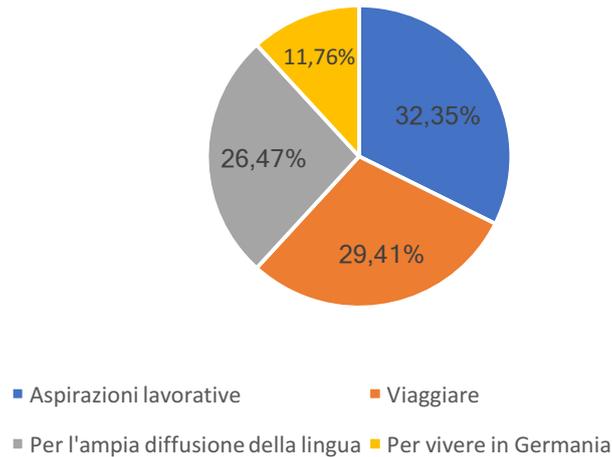
- Sì
- Poco
- No

Pensi che il tedesco possa esserti utile in futuro?



Regarding the utility of the German language, it seems that the majority of the students have no doubt that German can be useful for their future. The reasons why they think that it is useful will be shown in the chart below. Since not many students consider German as useless, some of their answers will be reported to understand their reasons.

Perché:



Observing the graph, it seems that the students have a clear idea about the utility of German in employment. As for question 1., since they are very young, it seems impossible to us that they can already think about their future job. For this reason, we can imagine that they are influenced by their parents or by adults in general. As a matter of fact, it is known by everyone that German is a very important language in our region because of exportation (above all wine) and tourism. A considerable number of students also think that German is useful to travel, above all to ask for information and to chat with people. Since the answers were collected under *labels*, some of them will be shown below and they are divided into positive and negative. There isn't a graph for the reasons of the few students who think that German isn't useful because most of them just say that English is more important.

Si:

a. Per aspirazioni lavorative:

“In Italia si lavora molto con la Germania”

“Mi piacerebbe fare un lavoro in cui parlo tedesco”

“Nel mondo del lavoro il tedesco è molto usato”

“La Germania ha una buona situazione economica”

“Se devo andare in Germania per lavoro, capisco quello che mi dicono”

“La Germania è il paese con più lavoro in questo momento”

b. Per viaggiare:

“Posso andare in stati dove si parla e saperlo bene!”

“Quando vado nei paesi che parlano tedesco, almeno lo so!”

“Posso farmi amici tedeschi al mare”

“Per chiedere indicazioni o informazioni e comunicare nei paesi che parlano tedesco”

c. Per l'ampia diffusione della lingua:

“È una lingua internazionale”

“È una delle lingue più parlate”

“È molto parlato nelle nostre zone”

“Sennò avrei dovuto fare francese che non si parla quasi più, al contrario del tedesco”

d. Per vivere in Germania:

“Se mai andrò a vivere in Germania mi servirà”

“Vorrei andare a vivere in Germania”

Poco/no:

“Non è così diffusa come l’inglese”

“Io sono inglese e parlo inglese a casa”

“La lingua più parlata è l’inglese”

“Non penso di continuare a studiare questa lingua dopo le medie”

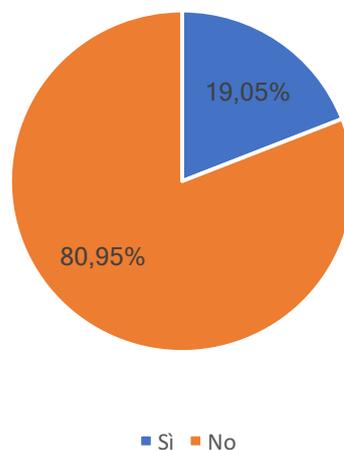
“Non ci sono persone tedesche nei posti che frequento io e quindi mi servirà poco”

“Forse per la scuola superiore”

3. Sei mai stato in Germania?

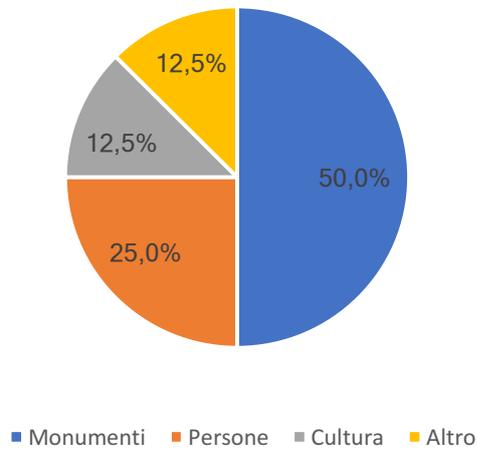
- Sì
- No

Sei mai stato in Germania?



Se sì, cosa ti è piaciuto?

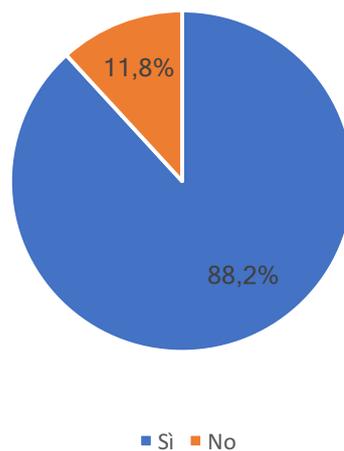
Se sì, cosa ti è piaciuto?



Very few students have been to Germany and the majority of them enjoyed the monuments, they named above all Berlin and its wall.

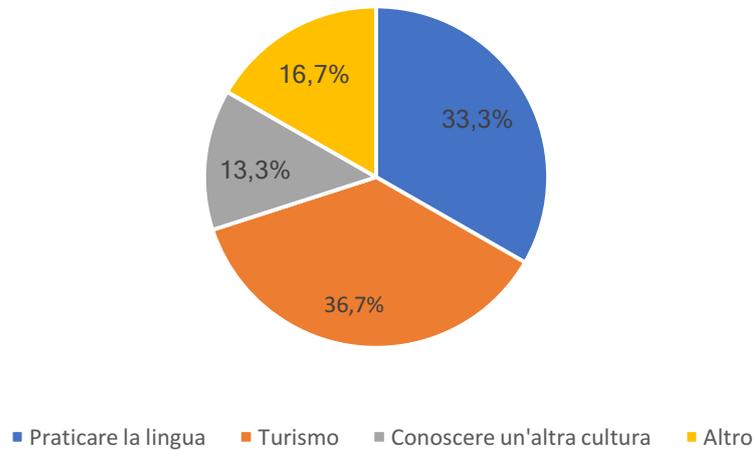
○ Se no, hai voglia di andarci?

Se no, hai voglia di andarci?



○ Perché?

### Perché sì?



Most of the pupils declare that they would like to go to Germany. The first reason is to visit the country and we consider it as an important cause since adults usually underestimate Germany. The second reason is to practise the language and this is surely an important aim for a person who decides to learn a foreign language. The contact with native speakers and the possibility to speak with them allows the learner to improve their skills faster. The answers underline the presence of high motivated students.

There is no graph for the answers of the students who wouldn't like to go to Germany because they are very few so they are reported below.

### Perché no?

“Non sono tanto brava in tedesco e non capisco niente”

“È un po' lontano”

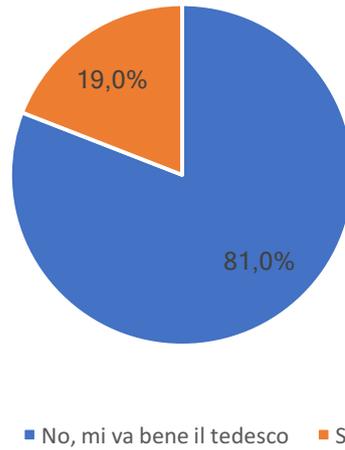
“Non so bene la lingua”

“Non mi piace come posto”

### 4. Avresti preferito un'altra lingua?

- No, mi va bene il tedesco
- Sì

Avresti preferito un'altra lingua?

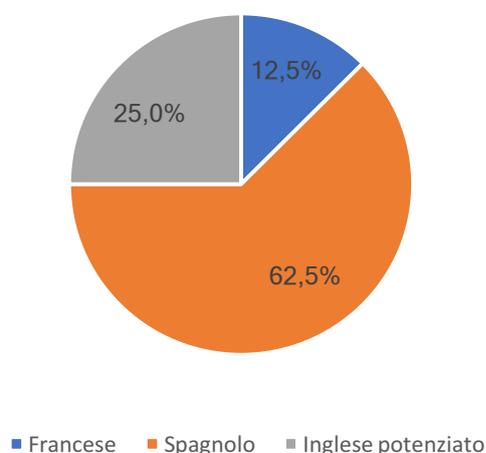


Fortunately, most of the students affirm that they are happy with their choice to study German as second foreign language.

The preferences of the students who would like to study another language are shown in the graph below.

- Avrei preferito il/lo \_\_\_\_\_,

### Avrei preferito



perché \_\_\_\_\_

Students name Spanish as first preference, then enhanced English and finally French. Since the students who would like to study another foreign language are very few, their reasons can be summarized as follows:

Spanish because is easier and it is similar to Italian, enhanced English because they feel they are better in this language and finally, just one person would prefer French because it is their grandfather's language.

5. La lingua tedesca ti piace (se non ti piace, vai al punto 6);

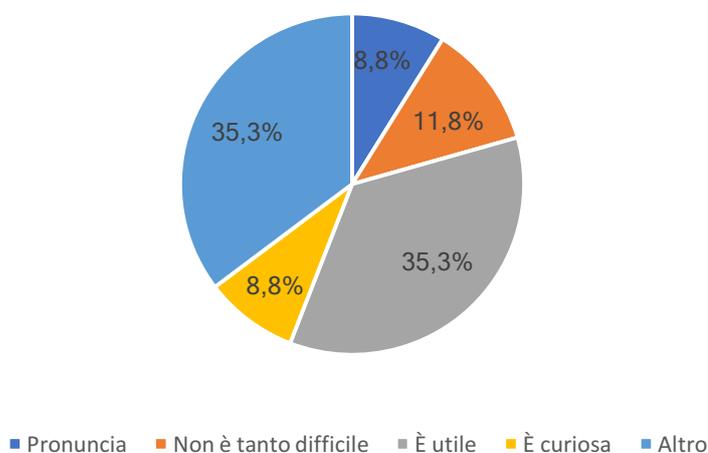
puoi scegliere anche più di una risposta

(se un po' ti piace e un po' no, rispondi alla domanda 5 e alla domanda 6):

c. La lingua tedesca ti piace perché:

\_\_\_\_\_

## La lingua tedesca ti piace perché



Students continually underline the fact that German is useful, this is interesting to us because it shows how the utility of a language can keep a high level of motivation. Many answers were put into the label “altro” because they were too general, anyway, we report some of them below to give a picture of the pupils’ opinions:

“perché è bella da imparare”

“perché mi piacciono le lingue”

“non c’è un motivo preciso”

“perché è la mia lingua preferita”

“perché mi da soddisfazione”

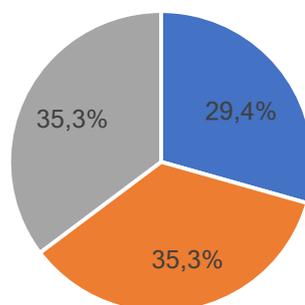
“perché assomiglia all’inglese”

d. Il fatto che la lingua tedesca ti piace è legato al modo in cui viene insegnata:

- Sì
- Poco
- No

Perché \_\_\_\_\_

Il fatto che la lingua tedesca ti piaccia è legato al modo in cui viene insegnata?



■ Sì ■ Poco ■ No

Students seem to agree with the fact that they like German not just because of the way it is taught. These answers surprised us because we expected the pupils in the secondary school to depend on the teacher. On the contrary, they affirm that they like the German language anyway, even if the teacher doesn't teach very well. Since it is very odd to us, we related these responses to the atmosphere of the classes where we made the investigation: there are many students who continually bother the teacher, consequently she has to tell them off and she hasn't got so much time to do a real German lesson.

Some of the pupils' statements are:

“No perché ci sono delle persone che fanno confusione in classe e quindi la prof non riesce a spiegare”

“No perché non capisco tanto e c'è confusione in classe”

“Poco perché alcuni compagni interrompono sempre la professoressa”

“No perché ci sono dei compagni che disturbano la prof”.

Even if the majority of the students don't relate their appreciation for German to the teacher, there are some of them who seem to consider her as very important. Some of their responses are reported below:

“Sì perché i professori insegnano molto bene il tedesco qui”

“Sì perché grazie all’aiuto dell’insegnante possiamo fare i dialoghi”

“Sì perché la prof insegna correttamente”

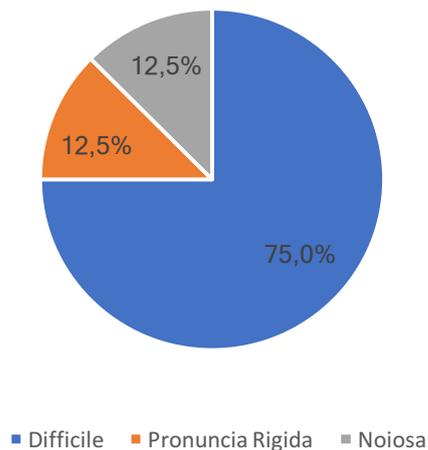
“Sì perché la mia prof insegna bene”

“Se la prof ti tranquillizza capisci meglio”.

6.La lingua tedesca non ti piace.

c. Perché \_\_\_\_\_

La lingua tedesca non ti piace perché



As we could expect, the principal reason because some of the students don’t like German is because it is hard to learn, we are not surprised, since this feature is known all over the world. Pronunciation is another German’s feature that students don’t appreciate and it can be related to the label “it is difficult”.

d. Il fatto che la lingua tedesca non ti piace è legato al modo in cui viene insegnata:

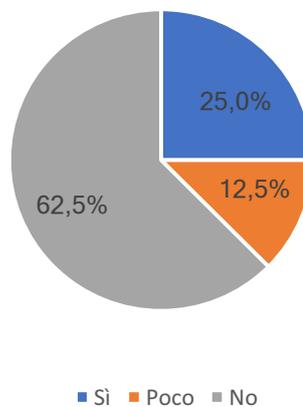
Sì

Poco

No

Perché \_\_\_\_\_

Il fatto che la lingua tedesca non ti piaccia è legato al modo in cui viene insegnata?



Observing the graph, we immediately notice a correspondence with the question before. In fact, also the students who don't like German affirm that it doesn't depend on the teacher, it means that they agree with their classmates. Most of them tell they don't like German just because it is difficult.

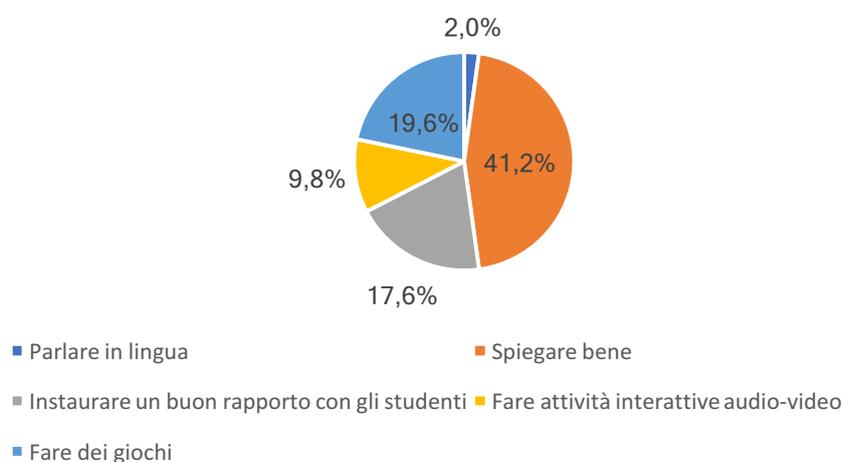
Part B: the teacher

7. Quali sono le caratteristiche che, secondo te, dovrebbe avere un buon docente di lingua tedesca (prova a pensare a che attività dovrebbe fare, che atteggiamento dovrebbe avere con gli studenti ecc.).

Per me un buon professore di tedesco dovrebbe:

---

Quali sono le caratteristiche che secondo te deve avere un buon docente di lingua tedesca?



The first thing that can be noticed is the fact that the students mentioned activities and actions that a teacher should do and not features they should have.

The majority of the students affirm that a good teacher should explain well. Without doubt, this factor could be related to the complexity of the German language that should be explained better than other European languages. Also, the situation in the classes could have led the students to give this answer, in fact, a large number of them complain about the fact of being disturbed by some classmates that don't allow the teacher to explain.

The second important activity they mention is doing games. We think that it is important to underline this factor because it introduces the following answers that demonstrate a high students' desire to do games in the foreign language during the lesson.

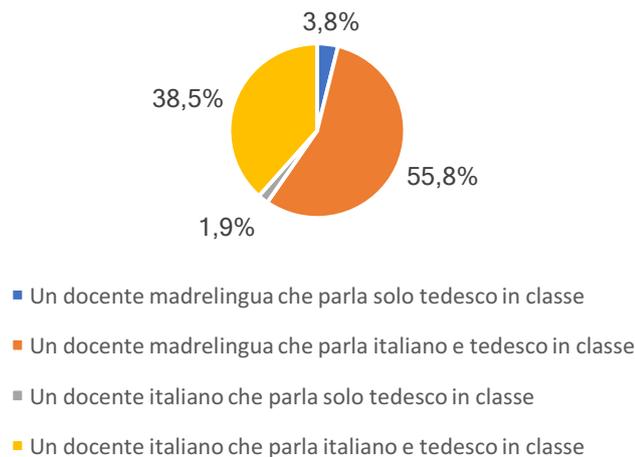
They also think that the teacher should build a good relationship with the students, this can be considered as the basis for the creation of a good climate in the classroom that allows a long-term understanding.

8. Secondo te, impareresti più facilmente la lingua tedesca con: (puoi scegliere anche più di una risposta. Fai una croce sopra la/le risposta/e che hai scelto)

- Un docente madrelingua che parla solo tedesco in classe
- Un docente madrelingua che parla italiano e tedesco in classe
- Un docente italiano che parla solo tedesco in classe
- Un docente italiano che parla italiano e tedesco in classe

Spiega perché

Secondo te impareresti più facilmente la lingua tedesca con



In this question emerges the students' preference for a native speaker teacher who speaks both languages during the lesson. It is interesting to notice how almost all the students (94,3% → 55,8% + 38,5%) prefer to use also Italian and not only German and the reasons are clearly explained in the open question and can be summarized as follows: "conosce meglio il tedesco e ha una pronuncia perfetta ma allo stesso tempo ci può spiegare in italiano". They would like to learn the correct pronunciation and they are aware of the fact that one can learn faster

with a native speaker, but at the same time they need explanation in Italian if they don't understand something.

8b. Che consiglio daresti a un nuovo professore di tedesco per insegnare bene nella tua classe?

Che consiglio daresti a un nuovo professore di tedesco per insegnare bene nella tua classe?



As in question 7., this one also should stimulate the students to suggest to the teacher doing some concrete actions. On the contrary, the answers are almost the same as the ones in question 7.; the percentage of the students that suggest to the teacher explaining better and building a good relationship with the students is almost the same.

There are students who suggest doing group works, games or audiovisual activities, however, most of them concentrate on the teacher's attitude.

## Part C: methodologies

9. Scrivi un momento in cui ricordi di aver studiato tedesco volentieri o divertendoti e spiega perché:

perché

Scrivi un momento in cui ricordi di aver studiato tedesco volentieri e divertendoti e spiega perché:



This question introduces the questionnaire's part about methodologies. It asks the students to write a situation in which they learned German gladly and to explain why. From the collected data, we immediately notice that the majority of them remember having studied gladly during the first year of the secondary school. The reasons they give can be divided into two parts: on one side, they affirm that they were more interested in the language because it was completely new, on the other side, many students say that they had another teacher who used to play a lot during the lesson, most of them remember having played bingo to learn the numbers and also having sang a lot of songs in German.

Many pupils also affirm to have studied gladly vocabulary and they mention some of the categories that they most enjoyed: numbers (because of the bingo game), school subjects, food, Christmas words and the animals.

Under the label “games”, most of the students mention the bingo they made in the first year.

Finally, to summarize, since the moment of the bingo seems to “win”, we can affirm that a high percentage of students prefer the method of playful language teaching. Being the informants (pre) teenagers, this result doesn't surprise us.

To validate what affirmed above, some of the students' statements will be reported below:

Il primo anno:

“Perché il tedesco sembrava facilissimo, cantavamo canzoni in lingua e facevamo giochi”

“Perché avevamo un'altra prof che ci faceva giocare”

“Perché la lingua era nuova”

“La lingua mi incuriosiva”

“Perché abbiamo imparato l'alfabeto cantandolo”

“Perché la prof ci faceva cantare e ballare delle canzoni tedesche”

Lessico:

“Mi è piaciuto studiare le materie”

“Imparare i numeri con la tombola”

“Imparare i numeri perché mi piace la matematica e contare”

“I cibi perché alcuni sono difficili da pronunciare e qualcuno diceva cose assurde”

“Quando abbiamo imparato il lessico natalizio in tedesco”

“I cibi perché è interessante sapere cosa si mangia in Germania”

“Quando abbiamo imparato gli animali perché è un argomento che mi interessa molto”

“Gli animali hanno dei nomi molto simpatici”

Giochi:

“Mi diverto giocando”

“Abbiamo giocato a tombola per imparare i numeri”

“I giochi mi fanno venir voglia di fare”

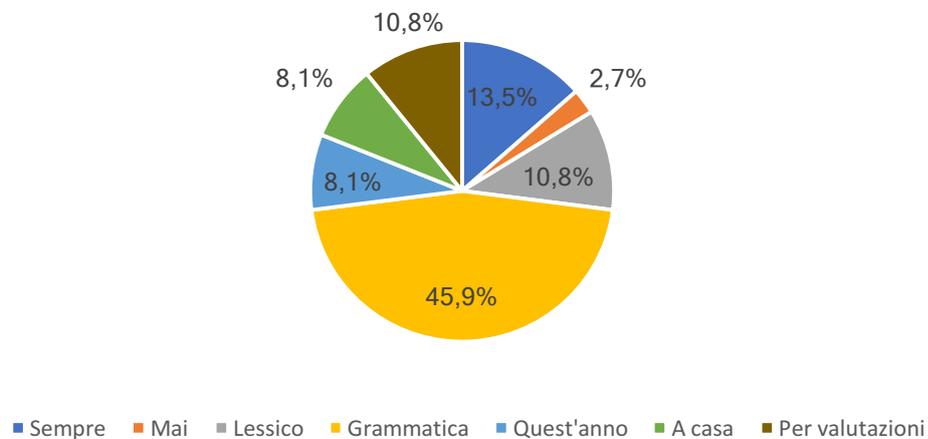
10. Scrivi un momento in cui hai studiato tedesco con difficoltà o annoiandoti e spiega perché:

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perché

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Scrivi un momento in cui hai studiato tedesco con difficoltà o annoiandoti e spiega perché:

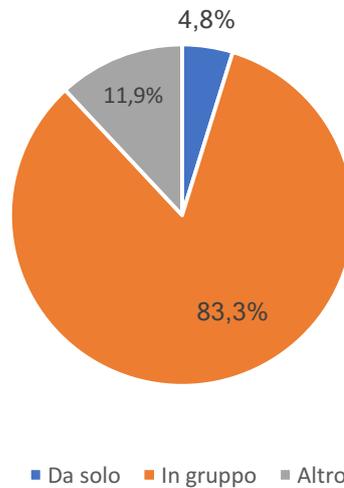


Grammar is the aspect that most causes problems for the students. There is not so much to comment about this answer since it was expected. Without doubt, German grammar is very difficult and causes many difficulties to the students who are used to deal with English and its “simple” grammar. The aspects they consider as very hard are: verbs, prepositions, cases and the fact that each noun has a different gender.

11. Preferisci lavorare:

- Da solo
- In gruppo
- Altro \_\_\_\_\_

Preferisci lavorare:

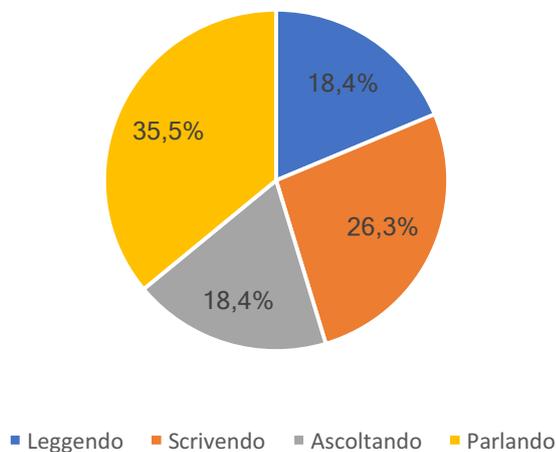


This question wants to investigate the field of cooperative language teaching that seems to be a useful teaching method because it allows an interchange of ideas between students that leads to an efficient understanding. As we expected, the graph reveals a high percentage of pupils who prefer to work in groups. Students who chose “other” specified that they prefer to work in couples, possibly with a capable student who can enrich their knowledge.

12. Ti sembra di apprendere meglio il tedesco:

- Leggendo
- Scrivendo
- Ascoltando
- Parlando
- Altro \_\_\_\_\_

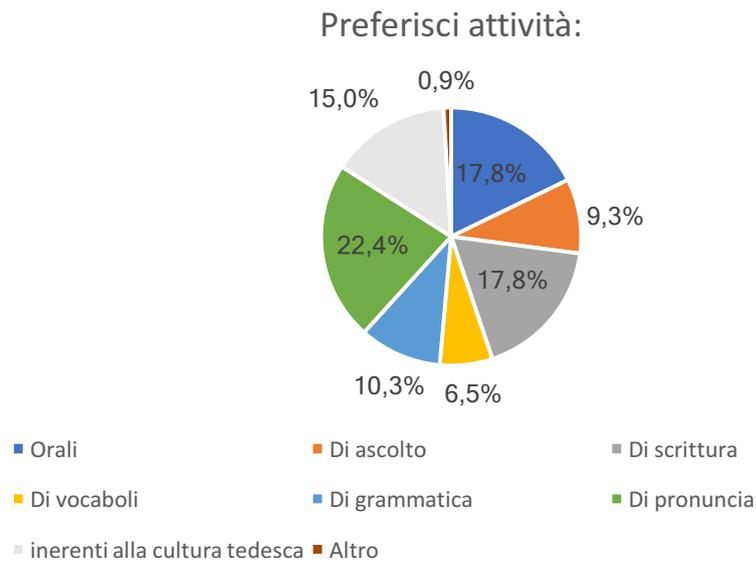
Ti sembra di apprendere meglio il tedesco:



As we can see in the chart, the answers to this question are well balanced even if there is a higher preference for speaking activities. The students also display their preference for writing activities so we can affirm that they rather improve production skills. We consider this factor as positive since it means that they want to be active in the learning process, this attitude can lead students to learn faster. Listening and reading are the skills that the students like less.

13. Preferisci attività: (massimo 3)

- Orali
- Di ascolto
- Di scrittura
- Di vocaboli
- Di grammatica
- Di pronuncia
- Inerenti alla cultura tedesca
- Altro \_\_\_\_\_



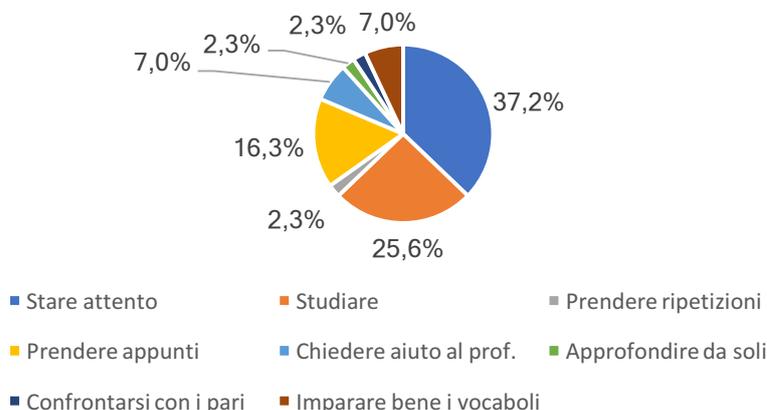
This question is the last one of the section about methodologies, it proposes to the students a list of activities to learn German and they should choose which ones (maximum three) they prefer. The students could choose the activities because they like them or because they think they are the most useful. It came out that the students prefer pronunciation activities, this answer confirms the fact that they would like to improve their oral skills. It confirms also the statements of question 8, where they claimed that they prefer a teacher who speaks also German in class because they are interested in knowing the correct pronunciation of the language.

As we could expect, grammar is certainly not their favourite activity even if they seem to prefer it than vocabulary, this is a contradiction to the answers of the questions above where they affirmed that they like learning new words.

## Part D: metacognition

8a. Un nuovo studente appena arrivato nella tua scuola sta per iniziare a studiare tedesco. Dagli/dalle un consiglio per imparare più facilmente:

Un nuovo studente appena arrivato nella tua scuola sta per iniziare a studiare tedesco. Dagli/ dalle un consiglio per imparare più facilmente:

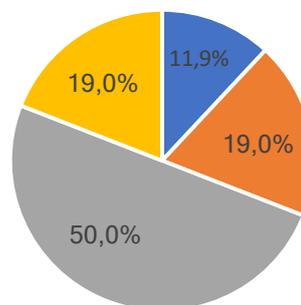


This question introduces the part about metacognition and it wants to investigate if the students have developed some personal studying methods by asking them to give some advice to a new student who wants to study German. They most suggest paying attention during the lesson (37,2%) and studying (25,6%). From this graph emerges a situation which is very different from the answers to the questions about students' preferences. In the answers they gave above, indeed, they underlined their preference for playful language teaching and for communicative teaching. On the contrary, in this question, they seem to prefer a traditional way of teaching which is focused on the teacher's explanations. We can't definitely say why they gave these answers but

we can suppose, again, that the reason could be the classroom's situation. Most of the questioned students seem to suffer from this situation in which they aren't able to pay attention because of some students who continually bother the teacher. By suggesting studying, most of the students underline that German is a difficult language that needs to be continually learned above all because of its grammar rules.

14. Cosa potrebbe fare l'insegnante per rendere più piacevole lo studio del tedesco?

Cosa potrebbe fare l'insegnante per rendere più piacevole lo studio del tedesco?

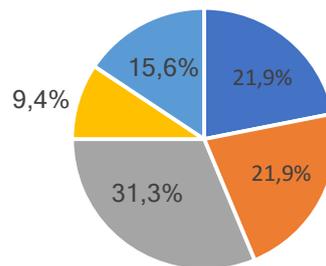


■ Attività audio-visive ■ Spiegare meglio ■ Giochi in tedesco ■ Lavori di gruppo

This question is similar to question 7. which asks the students to write the features that a good German teacher should have. Even if the questions are similar, the answers seem to be contradictory: the preferred feature (41,2%) in question 7. was to explain well; on the contrary, in question 14. most of the students (50%) affirm that the teacher should play games. Few students (19%) suggest explaining well. They suggest also doing group works (19%).

## 15. Cosa potresti fare tu per rendere più piacevole lo studio del tedesco?

Cosa potresti fare tu per rendere più piacevole lo studio del tedesco?



- Studiare volta per volta
- Canzoni e mezzi multimediali
- Lavorare in gruppo
- Stare attento
- Altro

Now students are asked to propose some activities they could do to make German Learning more interesting. Most of them seem to prefer group works and a lot of them suggest using multimedia tools and studying constantly. We can see the tendency to prefer a cooperative way of studying and also the students' desire to include technologies in their learning process.

Part E: learning material

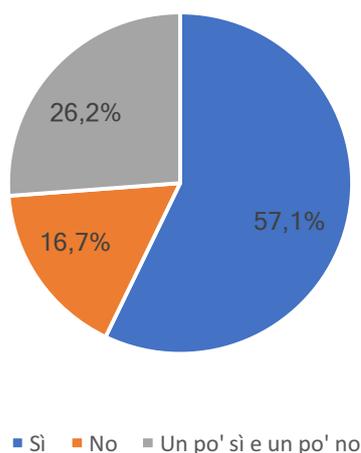
## 16. Il libro di testo di tedesco ti piace?

(se ti piace un po' sì e un po' no, scrivi perché sì e perché no)

- Sì
- No
- Un po' sì e un po' no

## Perché? Che cosa (non) ti piace?

Il libro di tedesco ti piace:



This question introduces the part about learning materials. Questions 16. and 17. in particular are about the German's book which is most of the time the only instrument that teachers use even if there are many others that they could find online and which are very useful and stimulating. Students are asked to tell if they like their German book or not and why. Most of them declare to like their book but many pupils affirm that it has not only positive aspects but also negative ones.

We didn't create a chart with the reasons they give because they are very general and they are the same for the positive and the negative answers, they could be summarized in: "com'è spiegato". As a matter of fact, the students are very brief in writing why they like or not their German book, if they claim that they don't like how the book is structured, they don't go on telling us precisely which are its features. The question below will clarify a bit what they would like to see in their

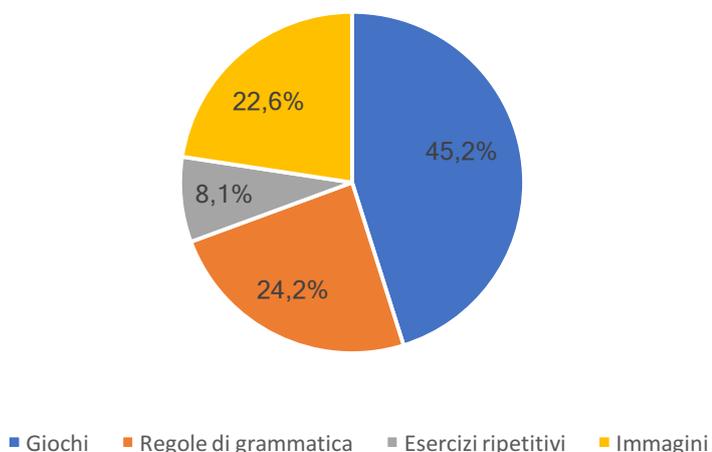
book, allowing us to understand which are lack of the book they are using right now.

17.Che cosa metteresti tu in un libro di tedesco? Scegli una cosa che dovrebbe esserci nel tuo testo ideale

(immagini; regole di grammatica; foto; esercizi ripetitivi; giochi ecc.) e spiega il perché

perché

Che cosa metteresti tu in un libro di tedesco?



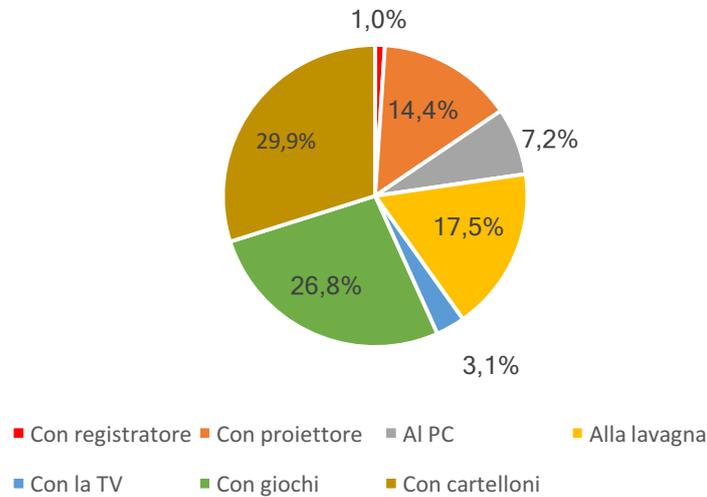
From the graph above, we notice that the pupils used the categories we gave them as suggestions in their answers. As already said, we can suppose that the book's features they suggest are the ones they don't have in the book they are using now. It is interesting to notice that the students reconfirm their preferences also in this part, indeed, in question 9. most of them affirmed that their favourite moment was the one in which they played the bingo game to learn the numbers, and in question

14. they suggested to the teacher playing games during the lesson to make German more interesting. They would like to have more games even in their text book. They would also like to find more grammar rules and this shows a preference for a deductive method rather than an inductive one. As regards the reasons they give, the pupils agree with each other and affirm that games are fun and motivating and they are useful to learn. Concerning grammar rules, they claim that their textbook doesn't have many and so it is difficult for them to study at home by their own. We have to underline that we are referring only to a specific textbook that is the one used by the questioned students, for this reason these results are not to be applied in general to all German's textbooks.

18. Preferiresti imparare il tedesco:

- Con registratore
- Con il proiettore
- Al PC
- Alla lavagna
- Con la TV
- Con giochi
- Con cartelloni frutto di lavori di gruppo, ricerche

### Preferiresti imparare il tedesco:



This is the last question of the part about learning materials which is the last part of the questionnaire. It is a very interesting and useful question because we can say that it summarizes the students' opinions which were showed throughout the questionnaire. The pupils show again their preference for playful language teaching and cooperative language teaching. Nevertheless, if we add together every single technology we see that the total percentages are very balanced, this means that students are interested in the use of technologies to learn German.

#### Part F: free comments

19. Vuoi scrivere qualcos'altro sul Tedesco?

This last question is optional and it was filled only by the students who had something to add, specify or comment. Most of the students want to underline their enthusiasm for German because they like this

language even if it is hard. Most of the statements begin with: “German is..”. All the answers will be reported below:

Il tedesco è...:

“una bella lingua”

“una lingua che mi piace”

“abbastanza facile per me perché ho dei parenti che lo parlano”

“una lingua meravigliosa”

“la mia lingua preferita”

“una lingua difficile”

“una lingua interessante ma a volte complicata”

“una lingua che mi piace ma andrebbe spiegata meglio”

“una bella lingua ma per impararla bene molto dipende dall’insegnante”

“un po’ noioso”

“una lingua difficile ma molto bella, però non mi piace la mia prof”

“difficile”

Remarks and suggestions:

“Secondo me almeno in seconda o in terza dovremmo fare un viaggio per sviluppare la nostra conoscenza”

“Io adoro il tedesco, l’importante è avere buona volontà”

“Studiatelo tutti bene perché è un’opportunità di lavoro!”

“Sarebbe bello andare in Germania a studiarlo!”

“Se ci fosse un’unica lingua per tutti sarebbe meglio”

“Troppe regole di grammatica”

### 4.3. The interview to the teacher

We are now going to analyse the teacher's answers to the interview we made to her. The interview will be divided into four parts, first we will transcribe her answers and then we will comment them.

Nella sua esperienza, quale idea hanno gli studenti sull'utilità del tedesco e quale ruolo ha l'aspetto utilitaristico nella motivazione allo studio di una lingua diversa dall'inglese? Lei come interviene a questo proposito?

*“Nella scuola secondaria di primo grado gli studenti devono per forza studiare due lingue, la prima è l'inglese e la seconda può essere scelta in alcune scuole e in altre no, qui a Ponte di Piave gli studenti hanno la possibilità di scegliere la seconda lingua tra francese e tedesco. Durante le prime lezioni solitamente faccio presentare intanto in italiano i ragazzini e chiedo loro come mai hanno deciso di scegliere tedesco invece che francese e una buona parte di loro mi risponde che hanno scelto tedesco perché la vedono più utile per un futuro lavorativo e quindi questo ha un peso abbastanza importante, soprattutto all'interno della nostra realtà, il Nordest, per le varie aziende situate nel territorio. Un'altra parte di loro invece, afferma di aver scelto di studiare questa lingua perché conosce qualcuno che l'ha studiata oppure di avere dei parenti o dei conoscenti che vivono in Germania o in Austria”.*

The teacher's statements seem to agree with the opinions given by the students in the first part of the questionnaire concerning motivation.

She claims that the pupils have clear opinions about the utility of German and this is the most important reason why they choose to study it as second foreign language. The fact that students are aware of the utility of German is very positive since, as Balboni (2012) claims, the second foreign language is usually seen in a very different way than English which is too often considered as the only useful foreign language to study.

L'elemento culturale (feste locali, monumenti, cibi, tradizioni, ecc.) svolge davvero un ruolo motivante, come spesso si afferma? Come bisogna presentarlo agli studenti, a suo avviso, perché sia efficace?

*“Svolge un ruolo motivante ma secondo me solo parziale, nel senso che i ragazzini hanno sì la conoscenza di una parte di quello che ha a che fare con la cultura dei paesi di lingua tedesca però la maggior parte di loro magari conosce l’Oktoberfest e qualche luogo come Vienna, Monaco ma poco più. Quello che possiamo fare noi a scuola è motivarli con lo studio di questi aspetti della cultura a partire soprattutto dal terzo anno quando hanno una conoscenza abbastanza buona della lingua; nei primi anni non si riesce ancora a dare indicazioni in merito, a parte qualche indicazione magari su come viene festeggiato il Natale e qualche festa particolare introducendo i vocaboli relativi. Non possiamo trattare l’elemento culturale troppo presto perché i ragazzini non hanno le conoscenze necessarie per capire un testo, altrimenti si dovrebbe trattare in italiano e ovviamente si preferisce farlo in lingua”.*

This statement also seems to confirm the students’ opinion who almost never mention the cultural element in their answers, on the contrary, they only focus their attention on linguistic elements.

Quali sono secondo lei le caratteristiche che i materiali didattici come libri di testo o siti internet devono avere per contribuire alla motivazione?

*“I libri di testo per le scuole secondarie di primo grado sono ben strutturati e sono per la maggior parte caratterizzati dalla presenza di un gran numero di immagini molto colorate, di dialoghi e spesso dei testi, filastrocche, canzoni, che poi loro hanno la possibilità di ascoltare anche in classe con l’insegnante. Tutto quello che viene trattato (hobby, famiglia, attività) permette loro di rispecchiarsi perché si tratta di situazioni che riguardano ragazzini della loro età”.*

In the teacher’s opinion, the book the students are using is very well structured and she doesn’t name any other feature it should have. This time, her opinion doesn’t coincide with the one of the students. In fact, the pupils are happy with their textbook but at the same time they complain about the lack of games and sometimes more grammar rules in it.

Quali sono a suo avviso le scelte metodologiche per creare, da un lato, e per sostenere, dall’altro, la motivazione allo studio del tedesco? Lei come interviene a questo proposito?

*“Per motivare i ragazzini allo studio non si può fare una lezione solo di tipo frontale ovviamente, che ormai non viene più utilizzata nemmeno alle superiori. Bisogna cercare da un lato di dare le nozioni principali di base quindi il lessico e la grammatica, però dall’altro incentivarli nello studio quindi rendere loro la lingua più piacevole attraverso l’utilizzo di qualche gioco, di qualche lavoro di gruppo che è una delle cose che li stimola di più, quindi lavorare tra di loro in*

*piccoli gruppetti perché altrimenti si crea un po' di confusione, oppure anche dei lavori da fare per casa con qualche piccola ricerca. L'ascolto, quando si riesce, di qualche canzone in tedesco, questo li motiva di più e fa ricordare loro anche i termini".*

The last interview's question is very general because it asks which are, in the teacher's opinion, the methodologies to use to create and to maintain motivation in the students. Despite we didn't give any suggestion to her as we did with the pupils, it is surprisingly how the answer perfectly coincides with their opinions. As a matter of fact, she affirms that nowadays it is impossible to do a traditional lesson in which the teacher is the only active part who talks and the students just have to listen to them. It is necessary to create a relaxed and playful atmosphere in the class, she claims that students are to be given the grammar rules and vocabulary but they should have the possibility to practise them in groups, with games, songs and researches, otherwise they get bored and they don't remember what they have learned.

#### 4.4. Discussion of results

After having presented the data in an analytical way, we are now going to discuss them and to make some conclusions about the investigation we have carried out. We are going to refer to the macroscopic results to give a general picture about the topic, giving space to each specific questionnaire's part.

##### a. Motivation

The first and most important part of the questionnaire gave extremely positive and important results. The students show enthusiasm and motivation to study German. We can say that as they were enthusiastic in the past, they still are in the present and about the future as well. They affirm that they were motivated before studying this new foreign language since most of them (73,81%) chose to study it on their own, 81% declare to be happy with the choice to study German and 80,95% think that this language will be useful in their future. Even if the majority of the pupils have never been to Germany, they would like to visit the country and to practise the language, this shows an active attitude towards German.

Students who like German (80,95%), affirm that it is not connected to the way it is taught but they like it all the same. This means that their motivation is *intrinsic* that is it doesn't depend on other people but it comes from inside themselves. This fact could be seen as positive but also as negative because it could mean that their teacher doesn't motivate them enough.

Fortunately, the percentage of students who don't like German is low (19,05%), most of them declare that it doesn't depend on the teacher but on the contrary, it depends on the fact that the language is very difficult. This time, this data can be seen in favour of the teacher.

Comparing the students' answers and the ones of the teacher, it comes out that they perfectly agree since Miss Lunardelli claims that the pupils tell her they want to study German because it can be useful for their future job.

#### b. The teacher

As regards the figure of the teacher, we see that the students would like them to explain well and to create a positive atmosphere in the class by using games and by building a good relationship with the pupils.

In the question about their preferences for a mother tongue teacher or an Italian one, most of the students (59,6%) would prefer a mother tongue one, however, the percentage of students who prefer an Italian teacher is significant (40,4%). Students agree on the fact that the teacher should speak both languages during the lesson, almost all pupils (94,3%) claim that German is useful to get used to the pronunciation and to improve comprehension skills, but the teacher should speak in Italian when they have to explain grammar rules, to be sure that the pupils understand.

### c. Methodologies

From the answers to this part's questions, it came out that the students seem to have clear ideas about their preferences in the ways they would like to learn German. Most of them show a clear preference for playful language teaching, since they have a very positive memory of the moments in which they have played during the lesson. A good percentage also likes learning vocabulary. As it was expected, most of the students don't like the moments in which they have to study grammar. The question about cooperative language teaching leaves no doubt about the desire of the majority of the students (95,2%) to learn with other classmates: 83,3 % prefers group works and 11,9% couple works.

As regards the kind of activities the students prefer, the majority of them rather do production activities (speaking and writing) and they underline the importance of learning and practising the correct pronunciation.

### d. Metacognition

As regards the field of metacognition, it seems that the students haven't developed precise and specific personal strategies to be motivated to learn German.

Their answers are very general as the majority of them (53,5%) would suggest to a new student paying more attention during the lesson and a good percentage (25,6%) suggests studying a lot and constantly.

As it happened in the previous questions, they ask the teacher once again to play games, explain well and do group works.

#### e. Learning material

In this part, we encountered opposing opinions: half of the students declare that they like their textbook and the other half that they don't like it or they like it a little. We can't deeply analyse this specific part because all the students give the same general reason to justify their answer, that is the way the book is explained.

However, they agree on the fact that the most important elements the books should have are games and images, they consider them as fundamental to keep a high level of motivation and to guarantee a long-term linguistic understanding. It means that the students are completely aware of Krashen's *rule of forgetting*, in other words, learning by forgetting to learn.

Regarding other materials apart from the book, most of the students show enthusiasm for group works and technologies, this fact confirms the opinion given by the teacher who claims that it is necessary to motivate students through games, songs, researches and so on.

#### 4.5. Summary and conclusions

As we already said at the beginning, this study was inspired by previous researches: the one carried out by Caon (2012) that was about French and the one carried out by Lazzari (2016) that was about Spanish. These studies investigated linguistic education considering different aspects: not only the theoretical part but also methodologies and experimentations.

Concluding our study, it is important to us to show which are the strengths and weaknesses of teaching German as a second foreign language in the secondary school.

We must not forget that there are many negative aspects in the field of foreign language teaching which cannot be related to the teacher's skills, these are for example the endless reforms; the lack of money for financing cultural projects; the lack of working technologies; few weekly hours to teach a foreign language etc.

Despite the above information, some problematic aspects of teaching a second foreign language came out in our research, they will be reported as follows because we think that they could be more and more useful to improve teaching a second foreign language:

- a. Almost all the students clearly showed their preference for playful language teaching, they would like to play games to learn vocabulary, syntactic structures and, why not, even grammar if possible. The problem is, that teachers see games as a waste of time and they are usually not aware of their positive consequences in linguistic understanding. They usually play games as a "reward" for the students and not as a real teaching method.

Since many scholars (Caon and Rutka, 2004; Luise, 2006) have demonstrated that playful language teaching is very useful, it is necessary for teachers to keep up to date with different teaching methods that are more useful and less boring than traditional lessons.

- b. Another weakness that appeared is the field of metacognition: the students don't have clear ideas about their learning methods, they should be more aware of them and of their cognitive styles and

they should be more active in the learning process. For this reason, it is important that the student learns their own learning method, it would be good to have some moments during the lesson in which they can reflect about metacognition. This way, they could share new methods and strategies with their classmates and everyone can try different study methods and discover which are the most suitable for them.

- c. Grammar is the part of the lesson which demotivates students the most since it is sometimes hard to understand and there are many rules to learn and memorize, this fact is difficult to accept above all among teenagers. It is necessary to transform it into linguistic reflection so that the student is able to interiorize the rules through the inductive method, they can first make hypothesis and then verify if they are true. This way, students feel that they are active in their learning process and, consequently, there will be a long-term linguistic understanding. It would be good for the teachers to read more about the methodologies that could be used, Balboni (2006) proposes to use games as crosswords, dice games etc. because they can lead to the linguistic reflection.

Now, we have only described the negative aspects that came out from our investigation. Fortunately, we also obtained very positive results: as we have already said, the biggest and most important part of the questionnaire was the one about motivation as it is considered to be the starting point to study a second foreign language. The answers to this part showed that students are highly motivated and that they are completely aware of the utility of German. This is a very important aspect and we hope that students will be more and more motivated in their future as well.

The other positive results that we encountered are about the student's and the teacher's ideas and thoughts that seem to perfectly agree with the ones of the scholars of the *Venetian School*. We discovered that the communicative aspect of the language is very important: students would like the teacher to speak not only Italian but also German as they want to learn the correct pronunciation and cultural elements; another aspect is the necessity to cooperate with the classmates and to do games, this excludes the traditional frontal lesson, finally, the students desire to include technologies in their learning material.

Unfortunately, it is usually impossible to realize what said above, there are many aspects which prevent the teacher doing something different from a normal lesson with the book. These aspects do not only depend on the fact of having classes with numerous students where it is very hard to organize something in just an hour, they are also external: we think that the biggest obstacle is the fact that the students only have two hours per week to study a second foreign language; moreover, they only have an Italian teacher and not a mother tongue one, it means they don't have the opportunity to grant their wish of practising the authentic oral communication.

Another obstacle we encountered is the lack of working technologies, it means that the teachers are obliged to use the traditional methods such as the book and photocopies.

To conclude our observation, we would like to underline that this dissertation was not only a simple investigation, but also an important personal experience. It gave the possibility to get in touch with the school system and with the students. It was an opportunity to grow up and to become aware of many aspects of the field of teaching: teachers don't have to forget the importance of their emotions, behaviours and

their role of being an example for their students, not only in the professional sphere but also in the personal one. Finally, it is important to underline that not only the students can learn from the teachers, it also works the other way round: since the teachers are learning facilitators, they have to remember that it is important to also consider human relationships that they have to build with their students, in order to grow up well together.

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## Appendix A. Questionnaire “magst du Deutsch?”

### “MAGST DU DEUTSCH?”

Caro studente, questo questionario è rivolto a te che hai scelto di studiare il tedesco come seconda lingua straniera presso la tua scuola. L’obiettivo è quello di raccogliere più testimonianze possibili in maniera tale da poter poi ricavare dei dati concreti e analizzarli. Il tutto è assolutamente anonimo quindi non ti devi preoccupare di esprimere liberamente e sinceramente la tua opinione. Ti prego di compilare ogni campo e ti ringrazio in anticipo per la tua preziosa collaborazione e per il tuo contributo ai fini della stesura della mia tesi di laurea!

Giulia (laureanda presso Università Cà Foscari, Venezia)

CLASSE: \_\_\_\_\_

SESSO:  M  F

### **NUCLEO 1: MOTIVAZIONE**

1. Tu studi tedesco perché:

- Lo hai scelto tu
- Lo ha scelto la tua famiglia

2. Pensi che il tedesco possa esserti utile in futuro?

- Sì
- Poco
- No

Perché \_\_\_\_\_

3. Sei mai stato in Germania?

- Sì
- No
- Se sì, ti è piaciuto? Che cosa ti è piaciuto?

\_\_\_\_\_

Se no, hai voglia di andarci? Perché?

4. Avresti preferito un'altra lingua?

- No, mi va bene il tedesco
- Avrei \_\_\_\_\_ preferito il/lo \_\_\_\_\_, perché \_\_\_\_\_

5. La lingua tedesca ti piace (se non ti piace, vai al punto 6); puoi scegliere anche più di una risposta (se un po' ti piace e un po' no, rispondi alla domanda 5 e alla domanda 6):

a. La lingua tedesca ti piace perché:

b. Il fatto che la lingua tedesca ti piace è legato al modo in cui viene insegnata:

- Sì
- Poco
- No

Perché \_\_\_\_\_

6. La lingua tedesca non ti piace.

e. Perché \_\_\_\_\_

f. Il fatto che la lingua tedesca non ti piace è legato al modo in cui viene insegnata:

- Sì
- Poco
- No

Perché \_\_\_\_\_

### **NUCLEO B: L'INSEGNANTE**

7. Quali sono le caratteristiche che, secondo te, dovrebbe avere un buon docente di lingua tedesca (prova a pensare a che attività dovrebbe fare, che atteggiamento dovrebbe avere con gli studenti ecc.).

Per me un buon professore di tedesco dovrebbe:

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Secondo te, impareresti più facilmente la lingua tedesca con:  
(puoi scegliere anche più di una risposta. Fai una croce sopra la/le  
risposta/e che hai scelto)

- Un docente madrelingua che parla solo tedesco in classe
  - Un docente madrelingua che parla italiano e tedesco in classe
  - Un docente italiano che parla solo tedesco in classe
  - Un docente italiano che parla italiano e tedesco in classe
- Spiega perché
- 

8b. Che consiglio daresti a un nuovo professore di tedesco per insegnare bene nella tua classe?

---

### **NUCLEO C: LA METODOLOGIA**

9. Scrivi un momento in cui ricordi di aver studiato tedesco volentieri o divertendoti e spiega perché:

---

perché

---

10. Scrivi un momento in cui hai studiato tedesco con difficoltà o annoiandoti e spiega perché:

---

perché

---

11. Preferisci lavorare:

- Da solo
- In gruppo
- Altro \_\_\_\_\_

12. Ti sembra di apprendere meglio il tedesco:

- Leggendo
- Scrivendo
- Ascoltando
- Parlando
- Altro \_\_\_\_\_

13. Preferisci attività: (massimo 3)

- Orali
- Di ascolto
- Di scrittura
- Di vocaboli
- Di grammatica
- Di pronuncia
- Inerenti alla cultura tedesca
- Altro \_\_\_\_\_

#### **NUCLEO D: LA METACOGNIZIONE**

8a. Un nuovo studente appena arrivato nella tua scuola sta per iniziare a studiare tedesco. Dagli/dalle un consiglio per imparare più facilmente:

---

14. Cosa potrebbe fare l'insegnante per rendere più piacevole lo studio del tedesco?

---

15. Cosa potresti fare tu per rendere più piacevole lo studio del tedesco?

---

## NUCLEO E: IL MATERIALE DIDATTICO

16. Il libro di testo di tedesco ti piace?

(se ti piace un po' sì e un po' no, scrivi perché sì e perché no)

- Sì
  - No
  - Un po' sì e un po' no
- Perché? Che cosa (non) ti piace?
- 

17. Che cosa metteresti tu in un libro di tedesco? Scegli una cosa che dovrebbe esserci nel tuo testo ideale

(immagini; regole di grammatica; foto; esercizi ripetitivi; giochi ecc.) e spiega il perché

---

perché

---

18. Preferiresti imparare il tedesco:

- Con registratore
- Con il proiettore
- Al PC
- Alla lavagna
- Con la TV
- Con giochi
- Con cartelloni frutto di lavori di gruppo, ricerche

## NUCLEO F: CONSIDERAZIONI LIBERE

19. Vuoi scrivere qualcos'altro sul tedesco?

---

## Appendix B. Teacher's interview

Nella sua esperienza, quale idea hanno gli studenti sull'utilità del tedesco e quale ruolo ha l'aspetto utilitaristico nella motivazione allo studio di una lingua diversa dall'inglese? Lei come interviene a questo proposito?

L'elemento culturale (feste locali, monumenti, cibi, tradizioni, ecc.) svolge davvero un ruolo motivante, come spesso si afferma? Come bisogna presentarlo agli studenti, a suo avviso, perché sia efficace?

Quali sono secondo lei le caratteristiche che i materiali didattici come libri di testo o siti internet devono avere per contribuire alla motivazione?

Quali sono a suo avviso le scelte metodologiche per creare, da un lato, e per sostenere, dall'altro, la motivazione allo studio del tedesco? Lei come interviene a questo proposito?