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—
Ca' Foscari
Dorsoduro 3246
30123 Venezia

**Focus on form
in the L2 class:
Potentials and limits of a
plurilingual approach at
primary school**

Relatrice

Ch. Prof. Carmel Mary Coonan

Correlatore

Ch. Prof. René Julio Lenarduzzi

Laureanda

Federica Paggiola
Matricola 815402

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ABSTRACT

Italiano:

La presente ricerca si propone di verificare l'efficacia di un progetto didattico avente due obiettivi fondamentali (oltre all'apprendimento dell'italiano come L2): suscitare negli alunni un atteggiamento di apertura, curiosità e rispetto nei confronti delle lingue (presenti nel repertorio linguistico della classe e non), e potenziare le loro abilità metalinguistiche attraverso l'osservazione attiva e il confronto di più lingue, in relazione a fenomeni linguistici specifici. I destinatari di questo progetto erano un gruppo di alunni della scuola elementare (di età compresa tra i 7 e i 10 anni) coinvolti in laboratori di italiano come lingua seconda, le cui L1 erano arabo, albanese e cinese.

Per raggiungere tali obiettivi è stata progettata ed implementata un'unità didattica della durata complessiva di 30 ore. Durante ogni unità di apprendimento sono state previste attività di focus on form plurilingui.

L'analisi e discussione dei dati raccolti durante i laboratori permetterà di formulare alcune riflessioni relative all'insegnamento di lingue seconde e alle potenzialità di quest'ambito didattico dal punto di vista cognitivo e socio-culturale.

English:

Our research aims at verifying the effectiveness of a teaching project that had two main objectives (besides learning Italian as an L2): stimulate an open, curious and respectful attitude towards languages on the part of the pupils (languages that were present in the group's language repertoire and languages that were not), and develop their metalinguistic abilities through active observation and comparison of different languages in relation to specific language phenomena. The protagonists of this project were a group of primary school pupils (aged between 7 and 10 and whose L1s was Arabic, Albanian and Chinese) taking part in workshops of Italian as a Second Language.

In order to reach these objectives, specific learning units were planned and implemented. They lasted overall 30 hours and each learning unit included plurilingual focus-on-form activities.

The analysis and discussion of the data that were gathered during the workshops will allow for the formulation of some reflections about L2 teaching and its potential from a cognitive and a socio-cultural point of view.

Español:

La presente investigación tiene como propósito el de averiguar la eficacia de un proyecto didáctico con dos objetivos principales (amén del aprendizaje del italiano como L2): despertar en los alumnos una actitud abierta, curiosa y respetuosa hacia las lenguas (tanto las que estaban presentes en el repertorio verbal de las clase como las que no estaban), y potenciar sus habilidades metalingüísticas a través de la observación activa y la comparación de distintos idiomas, con respecto a fenómenos lingüísticos específicos. Los destinatarios de este proyecto eran un grupo alumnos de la escuela primaria (de 7 a 10 años) que participaron en laboratorios de italiano como lengua segunda, cuyas L1 eran árabe, albanés y chino.

Para lograr estos objetivos se ha proyectado e implementado una unidad didáctica cuya duración total fue de 30 horas. Cada unidad de aprendizaje incluía actividades plurilingües de atención a la forma.

El análisis y la discusión de los datos recogidos durante los laboratorios permitirá formular algunas reflexiones con respecto a la enseñanza de lenguas segundas y a las potencialidades relativas a este ámbito desde un punto de vista cognitivo y socio-cultural.

INTRODUCTION

Our research has aimed at contributing to the development of new methodologies that are specifically elaborated for situations of L2 teaching.

In fact, the increased geographical mobility that currently interests many European countries has created the need for further developments in this field of research, in order to turn the learning environment of the L2 workshop into an added value for the children's education. To this "social" motivation, we have combined our personal interest in focus on form activities and plurilingual approaches.

The research project consisted in the elaboration and implementation of a teaching unit for primary school L2 speakers of Italian, the learning units of which always included specifically planned plurilingual focus on form activities. The teaching project had the double purpose of enhancing the pupils' open and curious attitude towards languages (socio-cultural, affective dimension) and helping them develop their metalinguistic aptitude (cognitive, metalinguistic dimension).

Moreover, different quantitative and qualitative research instruments were created and used to assess the effectiveness of the teaching project in reaching its goals.

The analysis of the data that were gathered over the course of the research has revealed that the original aims of the teaching project were successfully achieved, and that both the main dimensions of the unit were effectively harmonised and developed. The positive outcome of the experience was also proved by the enthusiastic reactions and active participation of most of the learners who took part in it.

Finally, a general evaluation of the project gave rise to some suggestions for its improvement and for further research possibilities within this field.

PARTE PRIMERA:

PREMISAS TEÓRICAS

CAPÍTULO 1

LA ENSEÑANZA DE LENGUAS SEGUNDAS

En este capítulo se tratará explicar algunas nociones teóricas de naturaleza sociolingüística y relacionadas con la enseñanza de las lenguas segundas que se consideran necesarias para entender por completo las implicaciones de nuestro estudio.

1.1 Algunas nociones teóricas

En el ámbito de la enseñanza de las lenguas se han elaborado los conceptos, fundamentales para nuestra investigación, de Primera Lengua (L1), Lengua Segunda (L2) y Lengua Extranjera (LE), que identifican situaciones de aprendizaje lingüístico diferentes.

La sigla L1 indica la primera lengua que cada persona adquiere¹ naturalmente en su infancia. Como precisa Luise (2006:42), éste es el idioma que se utiliza para el desarrollo de las primeras relaciones sociales y del pensamiento. Generalmente, es la lengua que se habla preferentemente en la familia, razón por la cual se le llama también “lengua materna”. A pesar de eso, la primera lengua de un hablante no coincide necesariamente con la lengua oficial del país en el cual vive, como en el caso de las comunidades de inmigrantes.

En cambio, se define Lengua Segunda un idioma que se aprende, después de la L1, en un contexto en el cual la lengua en cuestión se habla habitualmente. Este tipo de aprendizaje puede desarrollarse tanto en ámbito escolar como de manera espontánea, aunque en este último caso se hablará más bien de adquisición.

La noción de L2 se contrapone a la de Lengua Extranjera. Si ambas, desde un punto de vista temporal, siguen a la adquisición de la lengua materna, existe entre ellas una diferencia fundamental en cuanto al contexto de aprendizaje: de hecho, la LE no se utiliza, en el país donde reside el hablante, fuera de la clase de lengua, lugar principal en

¹ En el texto se respeta la distinción, propuesta por Krashen (1983), entre los conceptos de “adquisición” (*acquisition*) y “aprendizaje” (*learning*). El primero es un proceso natural, innato en todo ser humano, que genera una competencia comunicativa permanente porque colocada en la memoria a largo plazo. El segundo término, en cambio, define un proceso voluntario pero destinado a producir conocimientos temporales en la memoria a corto plazo.

el cual se aprende. Unos ejemplos pueden resultar útiles para la comprensión de esta contraposición: como se lee en el Diccionario de términos clave de Español como Lengua Extranjera (ELE) del Centro Virtual Cervantes²,

cuando la Lengua Meta (LM) se aprende en un país donde no es ni oficial ni autóctona, se considera una LE; p. ej., el español en Brasil. Cuando la LM se aprende en un país donde coexiste como oficial y/o autóctona con otra(s) lengua(s), se considera una L2; p. ej., el guaraní para aquellos niños paraguayos cuya L1 es el español, o bien el español para aquellos niños paraguayos cuya L1 es el guaraní.

Los ejemplos aquí citados se encuentran en la definición del término “Lengua Meta” (LM), traducción del inglés *target language* que denota las lenguas objeto de aprendizaje. Por lo tanto, bajo esta denominación se reúnen tanto las Lengua Segundas como las Extranjeras, mientras que la L1 queda excluida.

Finalmente, hay una última tipología lingüística que merece ser mencionada en el curso de nuestro estudio. Es la noción de Lengua Étnica, que Balboni (2002:59) define como “la lingua della comunità di origine di una persona quando essa non è la sua lingua materna, ma è comunque presente nell’ambiente degli immigrati”³. Es el caso, por ejemplo, de los hijos de inmigrantes, que ya desde sus primeros años de vida adquieren el idioma hablado en el país donde residen, pero están acostumbrados a oír la lengua materna de sus padres en casa o en las reuniones de sus connacionales.

Otro concepto al cual nos referiremos en nuestras reflexiones es el de “repertorio verbal”, que pertenece al ámbito de la sociolingüística. Antes de intentar definir este término, parece útil preguntarse brevemente qué es la sociolingüística y de qué se ocupa. Como explica Santipolo (2002:6), es una disciplina que “studia le relazioni e i rapporti che intercorrono tra la lingua e il contesto situazionale, ossia la società in senso lato, in cui essa viene parlata, ponendo l’accento sul fenomeno lingua”⁴. En otras palabras, la sociolingüística examina el valor y las funciones que distintas lenguas reciben por parte de los hablantes dentro de un determinado contexto social y lingüístico, como sugiere el término mismo. Además, esta disciplina estudia la variación

² El diccionario se puede consultar a través del enlace <http://cvc.cervantes.es/ensenanza/biblioteca_ele/diccio_ele/default.htm>. Última consulta: 05.04.2012.

³ “(...) la lengua de la comunidad de origen de una persona cuando ésta no es su lengua materna, aunque está presente en el ambiente de los inmigrantes”. (La traducción es nuestra)

⁴ “(...) estudia las relaciones y los vínculos que existen entre la lengua y el contexto situacional, o sea la sociedad en sentido lato, en el cual se habla, poniendo el acento en el fenómeno lengua”. (La traducción es nuestra)

que ocurre en la lengua como consecuencia de algunas variables, como en el caso de los distintos usos lingüísticos típicos de diferentes zonas geográficas (variación diatópica), épocas históricas (variación diacrónica), medios de comunicación empleados (variación diamésica), contextos de uso (variación diafásica) y grupos sociales (variación diastrática).

Dentro de este marco teórico, el concepto de repertorio verbal (o lingüístico) hace referencia al conjunto de los sistemas de comunicación que están a disposición de una persona o de los miembros de una comunidad de hablantes (en inglés, *speech community*), según se adopte una perspectiva individual o bien social. Este repertorio incluye tanto lenguas diferentes como las distintas variedades de un mismo idioma, de acuerdo con la composición específica de la comunidad lingüística.

Como es natural en todos los sistemas que prevén relaciones de naturaleza social, incluso en los repertorios lingüísticos hay una tendencia a identificar variedades o lenguas asociadas a connotaciones positivas, y otras que, en cambio, se perciben como “bajas”, generalmente a causa de factores extralingüísticos relacionados con el prestigio y la condición socio-económica de sus hablantes más representativos.

La última noción teórica que presentamos es la de bilingüismo, para la cual existen muchas definiciones diferentes. La que nos parece más eficaz y adecuada a nuestra investigación es la propuesta por Titone (citada en Luise, 2006:44), según la cual el bilingüismo “consiste nella capacità da parte di un individuo di esprimersi in una seconda lingua aderendo fedelmente ai concetti e alle strutture che a tale lingua sono propri, anziché parafrasando dalla lingua nativa”⁵. Luise (*ivi*, 45) distingue entre tipologías diferentes de bilingüismo, que puede ser equilibrado o asimétrico (según los niveles de competencia en las dos lenguas), simultáneo o diferido (según el orden de adquisición de los idiomas), aditivo o sustractivo (dependiendo del mantenimiento o de la debilitación de la primera lengua, como consecuencia de la adquisición de la segunda).

Una vez aclarados estos conceptos científicos, veamos cómo las nociones teóricas presentadas en este párrafo son necesarias para definir la condición de los individuos que participaron en nuestro proyecto de investigación. De hecho, eran niños inmigrados o hijos de inmigrados cuya L1 no coincidía con la lengua oficial de su nuevo país.

⁵ “(...) consiste en la capacidad por parte de un individuo de expresarse en una segunda lengua conformándose fielmente a los conceptos y la estructuras propios de esa lengua, en vez de parafrasear su lengua materna”. (La traducción es nuestra)

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Consecuentemente, sus lenguas maternas – que, en los casos de mayor asimilación lingüística y cultural, casi correspondían a lenguas étnicas – representaban los estratos más bajos del repertorio verbal de la sociedad en la cual vivían. Por eso, para lograr sorbevivir y aspirar a la realización personal en el nuevo ambiente, estaban llamados a aprender un código más prestigioso, el italiano, que para ellos representaba una L2, en cuanto lengua hablada dentro y fuera del ambiente escolar. Nuestro proyecto de enseñanza, con el intento de facilitar el aprendizaje de esta segunda lengua, se propuso también promover el desarrollo de un bilingüismo que fuese equilibrado y aditivo, aunque diferido, en el respeto de las primeras lenguas de los alumnos.

1.2 La enseñanza de Lenguas Segundas

En los párrafos siguientes se intentará presentar las características principales de la enseñanza de Lenguas Segundas, distinguiéndola, por sus rasgos y objetivos, de la enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras.

1.2.1 Lengua Segunda y Lengua Extranjera: implicaciones didácticas

Balboni (2002:28) identifica en el acto didáctico tres variables: la disciplina, el docente y el alumno. Veamos entonces en qué difieren la enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras y la de Lenguas Segundas con respecto a estas tres dimensiones.

Por lo que atañe la disciplina, en el párrafo 1.1 ya se ha trazado la diferencia que existe entre LE y L2, ambas Lenguas Meta de un proceso de aprendizaje que se desarrolla en situaciones diferentes: de hecho, mientras que la primera se utiliza sólo en el contexto de estudio, la segunda se habla comúnmente en el país donde tiene lugar el aprendizaje, tanto dentro como fuera de la clase, lo cual incide en la cantidad y en la calidad del input a disposición del alumno.

En cuanto a la figura del docente, en el caso de la enseñanza de lenguas segundas se habla de una figura profesional específica llamada facilitador lingüístico y cultural. Éste último se distingue del mediador lingüístico y cultural, hablante nativo de la L1 del estudiante de lengua segunda, que se ocupa de la acogida e integración inicial del alumno en el nuevo ambiente. El facilitador, en cambio, es un hablante nativo de la L2 que crea laboratorios lingüísticos con el objeto de promover el aprendizaje de la lengua segunda. Como observa Lambert (1990:2), existe una diferencia fundamental con respecto a la formación de los docentes de L2 y LE: mientras que los primeros son técnicos de la enseñanza de las lenguas, los segundos son humanistas, cuyos

conocimientos son el fruto de una preparación principalmente literaria. Las reflexiones de Lambert se refieren a la realidad estadounidense, aunque la situación italiana es muy parecida, dado que la mayoría de los cursos universitarios que permiten el acceso a la enseñanza prevén un estudio profundizado de la literatura, mientras que los trayectos para la formación de facilitadores lingüísticos y culturales se ocupan de esta dimensión de forma más marginal.

Finalmente, el alumno es el tercer componente del acto didáctico, y el más importante en una perspectiva humanístico-afectiva. Según la descripción de Luise (2006:38), dos aspectos principales caracterizan al estudiante de L2 (en Italia):

- a. non ha l'italiano come lingua materna;
- b. ha esperienza e si riconosce (se non lui, in quanto molto giovane, la sua famiglia d'origine) in una cultura diversa da quella italiana, o in più culture, tra le quali ci può essere anche quella italiana.⁶

Dichos rasgos definen también al potencial estudiante de lengua extranjera, pero con implicaciones diferentes a causa de la ajenidad de la lengua meta y de su cultura con respecto al contexto socio-cultural en el que se desarrollan el aprendizaje y la vida del alumno.

Lambert (1990:2) identifica principalmente dos ámbitos de diferenciación entre enseñanza de LE y L2 con relación a la figura del alumno: los propósitos de la acción didáctica y su impacto en los receptores.

De hecho, mientras que el objetivo de la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras es el de “dotar de refinamiento y clase internacional al carácter realista y eminentemente práctico” de los estudiantes (mediante la transmisión de conocimientos literarios y la creación de una competencia comunicativa suficiente para experiencias en el extranjero más o menos prolongadas), en el caso de la enseñanza de lenguas segundas hay que ayudar a los estudiantes a “establecer nuevos contactos sociales por el procedimiento de reemplazar o sustituir el estilo de vida anterior por una alternativa nueva”.

Esta oposición es aun más evidente si se considera el impacto que los dos tipos de enseñanza ejercen en los receptores. Aprender una lengua extranjera permite adquirir

⁶ “a. el italiano no es su lengua materna;

b. tiene experiencia y se reconoce (si no él, por ser muy joven, su familia de origen) en una cultura diferente de la italiana, o en más de una cultura, entre las cuales puede estar también la italiana”.

(La traducción es nuestra)

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un valor añadido, un enriquecimiento personal que potencialmente favorecerá algún mejoramiento en la condición del hablante. En cambio, el aprendizaje de una lengua segunda es indispensable para la supervivencia en el nuevo país: como explica Lambert (*ibidem*), el dominio de la lengua representa “una necesidad para sobrevivir, competir y posiblemente incluso triunfar en el nuevo país. Se pide a los jóvenes que se reprogramen en lo referente a las relaciones básicas lengua-pensamiento, reemplazando[las] por otras nuevas”. En este segundo caso, la acción didáctica tiene entonces un impacto mucho más profundo en el alumno, como consecuencia de motivaciones mucho más fuertes.

A la luz de estas consideraciones, resulta evidente que el aprendizaje de LEs incide en la cultura personal del individuo, mientras que el dominio de L2s determina la calidad de la vida de la persona en el nuevo ambiente. Esta diferencia fundamental conlleva repercusiones en la naturaleza de las intervenciones didácticas más adecuadas para cada uno de los dos ámbitos. En el párrafo siguiente se tratará de definir los rasgos de la enseñanza de lenguas segundas.

1.2.2 Características de la enseñanza de Lenguas Segundas

En el sistema escolar italiano, la enseñanza del idioma nacional como lengua segunda para los alumnos inmigrantes o hijos de inmigrantes se realiza generalmente a través de la organización de laboratorios lingüísticos. Estos laboratorios, que pueden tener lugar durante o después del horario escolar, de costumbre se caracterizan por tres rasgos peculiares: ellos son

- pluri-edad: los miembros de cada grupo pueden tener edades distintas, sobre todo si proceden de clases diferentes de la escuela;
- pluri-lengua: el repertorio verbal del laboratorio comprende todas las lenguas maternas de los alumnos, que difieren según el país de origen de cada estudiante;
- pluri-competencia: los alumnos manifiestan niveles diferentes de competencia en la lengua italiana, de acuerdo con varios factores, como la duración de su estancia en Italia, el grado de integración en la comunidad local, la motivación personal y la aptitud a aprender la lengua.

En particular, este último rasgo se relaciona con el concepto de interlengua (IL), que Luise (2006:92) define como “varietà di apprendimento della lingua seconda, (...)”

continuum di varietà linguistiche che si pongono nello spazio tra lingua materna dell'apprendente e lingua seconda d'arrivo"⁷. Existen distintas fases en el desarrollo de la interlengua (prebásica, básica y posbásica, según una de las clasificaciones posibles), que se pueden identificar mediante el análisis de los errores contenidos en la producción del hablante, pero generalmente todas están presentes simultáneamente en el laboratorio de L2. Por este motivo, a veces, los facilitadores lingüísticos y culturales responsables de los cursos organizan dos laboratorios distintos: el primero tiene el objetivo de favorecer la adquisición por parte de los alumnos de competencias comunicativas básicas (el que en Italia recibe la denominación de Italbase), mientras que, en un segundo momento, se intenta potenciar la capacidad de estudiar utilizando la L2 como medio lingüístico (Italstudio).

Dada la complejidad del contexto de aprendizaje de las lenguas segundas, es necesario que el currículo⁸ elaborado para estas clases respete una serie de rasgos fundamentales para garantizar el éxito de los alumnos en el proceso de aprendizaje: Caon (2008:151) indica como características fundamentales del currículo el hecho de ser "integrado" y polivalente (en italiano, "a maglie larghe"). El primer adjetivo resume la necesidad de integrar en el curso de lengua las distintas motivaciones, necesidades, habilidades y conocimientos previos de los miembros del grupo clase. Con el segundo rasgo, en cambio, se invita al docente a incluir en su planificación del curso y de cada clase contenidos, actividades y metodologías de distinta naturaleza, para que cada estudiante pueda encontrar en el input que recibe lo que mejor responde a sus necesidades. De esta forma, cada alumno podrá identificar lo que Krashen (1983) define su "i+1", o sea la zona de su interlengua que potencialmente se podrá desarrollar, dadas las competencias ya adquiridas anteriormente.

Otro rasgo esencial de este tipo de currículo es la flexibilidad, en cuanto capacidad de hacer frente a los problemas de distinta naturaleza o a las peticiones de los alumnos que se pueden presentar durante el curso.

⁷ "(...) variedad de aprendizaje de la lengua segunda, (...) continuum de variedades lingüísticas que se colocan en el espacio entre la lengua materna del aprendiz y la segunda lengua que está aprendiendo". (La traducción es nuestra)

⁸ El Diccionario de términos clave de ELE explica que el currículo se ocupa de la "fijación de unos fines y objetivos, la selección de unos contenidos, la opción por una metodología y el establecimiento de unos criterios de evaluación" para la planificación de los cursos de lengua.

A partir de nuestra breve descripción, la clase de L2 se presenta como la que Caon (2008:XII) define una Classe ad Abilità Differenziate (CAD), en la cual las diferentes habilidades de los alumnos tienen que ser reconocidas y aprovechadas de manera ventajosa para todo el grupo, a través de actividades diferenciadas y de la colaboración positiva entre sus miembros. Al hacerlo, habrá que tener en consideración la delicada situación psicológica de los estudiantes, potencialmente perturbada por el trauma causado por la experiencia migratoria o por la frustración debida a la comparación constante de los resultados propios con los de los compañeros de clase cuya L1 es el italiano.

1.2.3 Identidad lingüística y cultural del estudiante de Lengua Segunda

La persona que estudia una lengua segunda tiene que enfrentar el problema de cómo poner en relación entre ellas la L2 y la lengua materna. La situación ideal para el desarrollo sereno de la personalidad del hablante, sobre todo en el caso de niños, es la condición del plurilingüismo, cuya promoción se incentiva también en el Marco Común de Referencia para las Lenguas.

Para que eso sea posible, es necesario que las escuelas actúen concretamente a favor de la valorización de la identidad lingüística y cultural de los alumnos que pertenecen a minorías lingüísticas. Luise (2006:63) ofrece algunas motivaciones que confirman la centralidad de las instituciones educativas en la promoción del plurilingüismo de sus estudiantes: explica, por ejemplo, que justamente la escuela es el principal lugar de socialización para los jóvenes inmigrantes, donde ellos pueden “sperimentare in prima persona se l’identità linguistica e culturale che li caratterizza è un valore da difendere o meno⁹”, de acuerdo con las medidas adoptadas por la escuela en defensa de las distintas lenguas y culturas presentes en su interior. Además, las instituciones escolares tienen un papel central en la transmisión de la idea de que “tutte le lingue vengono considerate una risorsa cognitiva e culturale, superando le differenze di prestigio attribuite per esempio alle lingue europee e a quelle extraeuropee”¹⁰. De esta manera, será posible

⁹ “(...) experimentar en primera persona si la identidad lingüística y cultural que los caracteriza es un valor que tienen que defender o no.” (La traducción es nuestra)

¹⁰ “(...) todas las lenguas se consideran un recurso cognitivo y cultural, superando las diferencias de prestigio atribuidas por ejemplo a las lenguas europeas o a las extraeuropeas”. (La traducción es nuestra)

poner el alumno verdaderamente en el centro del proceso adquisitivo, respetando por completo su identidad.

Para realizar este propósito, la escuela tiene que “agire con interventi che si rifanno ai principi dell’educazione interculturale su tutti gli studenti della classe o della scuola per promuovere un clima multiculturale di interesse e valorizzazione delle diversità”¹¹ (*ivi*, 64), intervenciones concretas que favorezcan verdaderamente la tutela y el respeto de la pluralidad lingüística y cultural, como las metodologías presentadas en el capítulo 3, en las cuales se ha inspirado nuestro proyecto didáctico.

¹¹ “(...) actuar con intervenciones que se refieren a los principios de la educación intercultural que se dirijan a todos los estudiantes de la clase o de la escuela para promover un clima multicultural de interés y valorización de la diversidad”. (La traducción es nuestra)

CAPÍTULO 2

UN MODELO PARA LA ENSEÑANZA DE LA GRAMÁTICA

En el presente capítulo se presentará un modelo para la enseñanza de la gramática alternativo a los tradicionales, porque se basa en la idea de “atención a la forma”, con el cual se intenta lograr un punto de encuentro entre focalización en la forma y en los contenidos.

2.1 Algunas nociones teóricas

Antes de definir los principales conceptos teóricos que intervienen en el debate sobre la enseñanza de la gramática, es necesario precisar qué significado se atribuye al término “gramática” en nuestra discusión. Entre las varias acepciones posibles, Lo Duca (2004: 19) propone una noción extendida de gramática, que comprende “il sistema delle regole, l’insieme dei meccanismi che regolano il funzionamento”¹² de una lengua. A esta definición parece referirse, por ejemplo, Balboni (2008:65-7), en su amplia presentación de las gramáticas que componen la competencia comunicativa en una lengua (gramática fonológica, morfosintáctica, textual, sociolingüística, etc.). A pesar de eso, el significado más común que se atribuye al término gramática está relacionado con la morfosintaxis, pero no hay que olvidar que las técnicas y los mecanismos empleados para estimular la observación de fenómenos morfosintácticos se pueden utilizar también para explorar las regularidades de ámbitos lingüísticos de distinta naturaleza.

Una vez aclarada la idea de gramática que se adopta en este trabajo, pasamos a presentar un concepto, el de “conciencia lingüística”, que es importante tomar en consideración a la hora de examinar los distintos modelos de enseñanza gramatical posibles, para establecer cuál es el más conveniente. Como se explica en el Diccionario de términos clave de ELE,

con el término de conciencia lingüística (CL) se traduce la expresión inglesa *language awareness (LA)*, que, según la ALA (*Association for Language Awareness*), consiste en «el conocimiento explícito acerca de la lengua y la percepción y sensibilidad conscientes al

¹² “(...) el sistema de las reglas, el conjunto de los mecanismos que regulan el funcionamiento (...)”. (La traducción es nuestra)

Focus on form in the L2 class

aprender la lengua, al enseñarla y al usarla». (...)Permite percibir aspectos de la lengua que de otro modo pasarían inadvertidos; implica, pues, el acceso al conocimiento que uno tiene sobre el propio conocimiento de la lengua.

La conciencia lingüística es, entonces, una actitud especial ante las lenguas conocidas y que se están aprendiendo, que se caracteriza por ser activa, conciente y madura. Ella representa un objetivo muy importante de la enseñanza de las lenguas, tanto extranjeras como segundas y primeras. Se puede lograr prestando atención a todos los aspectos de la competencia lingüística, incluso la dimensión formal/gramatical, muy descuidada e incluso estigmatizada en las últimas décadas como consecuencia del cambio comunicativo-pragmático experimentado a finales de los años sesenta en el ámbito de la lingüística y, consecuentemente, en la enseñanza de las lenguas. Esta revolución fue caracterizada por un cambio radical en los objetivos didácticos, a través de la centralización de la capacidad de comunicar eficazmente y la penalización de los conocimientos gramaticales (Doval Reixa-Soliño Pazó, 1998:1).

Uno modelo de enseñanza gramatical que se ocupa de combinar preocupación por la forma y por el contenido es la llamada “atención a la forma” (en inglés, *focus on form*), que Long y Robinson (en Doughty-Williams, 1998:23) definen como “an occasional shift of attention to linguistic code features – by the teacher and/or one or more students – triggered by perceived problems with comprehension or production”¹³.

En la obra citada de Doughty y Williams, se ofrece un estudio muy profundizado de la atención a la forma (en el que se basa principalmente nuestra presentación del tema contenida en el párrafo 2.2), que puede realizarse según grados y modalidades diferentes dependiendo de las características del contexto de enseñanza. Por este motivo, es posible encontrar definiciones diferentes de esta práctica didáctica. Por ejemplo, una de ellas, elaborada por Ortega Olivares (1998:6), parece tomar en consideración la práctica del “input estructurado”, mediante la cual se intenta estimular la observación de rasgos formales especialmente relevantes, sobre los cuales reflexionar. De acuerdo con esta perspectiva, la atención a la forma consiste en

instruir de cierto modo al aprendiz para que aplique la atención a los aspectos (fonológicos, sintácticos, pragmáticos, etc.) de la lengua meta que se consideren pertinentes en cada caso,

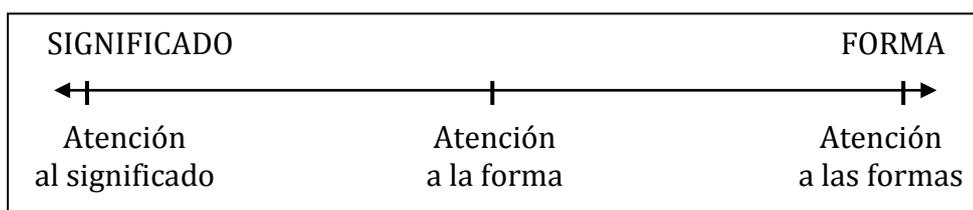
¹³ “(...) un desplazamiento ocasional de la atención a los rasgos del código lingüístico – por parte del profesor y/o uno o más alumnos – causado por problemas percibidos de comprensión o producción”. (La traducción es nuestra)

en especial aquellos que son la base de los errores producidos durante la interacción en un marco didáctico comunicativo.

El modelo de la atención a la forma se distingue de la llamada “atención a las formas” (en inglés, *focus on forms*), concepto que representa la enseñanza tradicional de la gramática, donde la preocupación fundamental del docente es la de presentar una serie de estructuras morfo-sintácticas completamente separadas del significado, y que constituyen el nudo central del curso de lengua.

La otra extremidad del continuum forma-contenido, en la mitad del cual se coloca la atención, a la forma está representada por la “atención al significado” (*focus on meaning*). Según esta postura, el objetivo principal del aprendizaje lingüístico es desarrollar la capacidad de comunicar eficazmente, dejando que la adquisición de los conocimientos gramaticales ocurra espontáneamente gracias a la exposición a la lengua, de acuerdo con la hipótesis del input comprensible formulada por Krashen (1983)¹⁴.

El esquema 1 propone una representación visual de las diferentes orientaciones de los tres modelos presentados con respecto a la relevancia de forma y significado.



1: Continuum significado-forma en la enseñanza de la gramática

A partir de estas tres distintas posturas con respecto a cuánto y cómo cuidar la dimensión formal de la lengua en clase, en el párrafo siguiente intentaremos presentar de manera más profundizada la atención a la forma, que consideramos la más eficaz y apropiada para estimular la conciencia lingüística de los aprendices, y que se ha aplicado en el curso de nuestro proyecto de enseñanza.

¹⁴ Krashen (1983), en el ámbito de su Teoría de adquisición de segundas lenguas, propuso cinco hipótesis. Una de estas hipótesis, afirma que se produce adquisición (y no el más lábil aprendizaje) cuando el aprendiz se concentra en el significado del input que recibe, y no en su forma. Por eso, es esencial que el input sea comprensible, para crear conocimientos estables en la memoria a largo plazo del hablante.

2.2 Atención a la forma

A continuación vamos a presentar las características principales de la llamada “atención a la forma” y las motivaciones a favor de su adopción en ámbito didáctico.

2.2.1 Motivaciones a favor de la enseñanza explícita de la gramática

Después de la introducción de enfoques exclusivamente centrados en el significado, la vuelta a prácticas didácticas interesadas también en el desarrollo de conocimientos de carácter gramatical ha sido motivada por una serie de observaciones.

En primer lugar, la experiencia investigativa de Swain en los contextos de inmersión lingüística de Canadá ha demostrado la necesidad de apoyar la adquisición basada en la comprensión del input mediante actividades focalizadas en la forma. La investigadora (en Doughty-Williams, 1998:65), de hecho, afirma que

immersion students are able to understand much of what they hear and read even at early grade levels. And, although they are well able to get their meaning across in their second language, even at intermediate and higher grade levels they often do so with nontargetlike morphology and syntax.¹⁵

Hay otros estudios, además del de Swain, que ponen en tela de juicio la eficacia de metodologías que tienen como único objetivo la potenciación de la dimensión socio-pragmática de la competencia comunicativa. Doughty (en Moreno García, 2004:5), por ejemplo, explica que “para la enseñanza de lenguas, el hecho de concentrarse exclusivamente en facilitar la negociación del significado no permite a los aprendices de L2 alcanzar niveles de nativo, incluso después de largos periodos de inmersión en la L2”. Además, como observan Doval Reixa y Soliño Pazó (1998:2), “en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras no se puede practicar un comunicativismo unilateral que no tenga en cuenta la conexión entre la función cognitiva y comunicativa de la lengua y minusvalorar la relevancia del sistema lingüístico en sí”.

Pero no hay sólo evidencias negativas entre los argumentos de quienes defienden la necesidad de dedicar espacio a la gramática en clase. Una de las motivaciones más interesantes al respecto es la que subraya la posibilidad de utilizar los conocimientos

¹⁵ “(...) los estudiantes de inmersión saben comprender mucho de lo que oyen y leen hasta en los niveles iniciales. Y, aunque son muy capaces de transmitir sus significados en la lengua segunda, hasta en los niveles intermedios y superiores a menudo lo hacen utilizando estructuras morfológicas y sintácticas que no pertenecen a la lengua meta”. (La traducción es nuestra)

gramaticales aprendidos explícitamente como monitor, según la hipótesis de Krashen (1983). De hecho, el investigador estadounidense afirma que los conocimientos aprendidos por el hablante, como las reglas gramaticales, permanecen a su disposición en la memoria para controlar la calidad de su output, tanto antes como después de producirlo, permitiéndole de esta manera autocorregir sus propios errores. Además, como observa Gutiérrez Araus (1994:2), “las estructuras aprendidas en la instrucción gramatical pasan a enriquecer las que se desarrollan por procesos internos y se facilita así el paso al automatismo”: es decir, los conocimientos gramaticales interiorizados a través de actividades específicas inicialmente producen aprendizaje, funcionando como monitor de la producción lingüística, pero también contribuyen a acelerar el proceso de adquisición, mediante la creación de automatismos.

Además, el cuidado de la forma lingüística es indispensable para el desarrollo de la capacidad por parte del aprendiz de producir lengua, como explica Coonan (2002:189), pasando revista a la literatura sobre el tema:

perché la competenza produttiva dello studente possa svilupparsi c'è bisogno che la sua attenzione venga orientata sulla forma della lingua, sulla sua dimensione morfosintattica. È solo notando gli aspetti formali del codice, infatti, che lo studente sarà in grado di costruirsi la sua competenza linguistica.¹⁶

Parece evidente, entonces, que el análisis de la forma de las lenguas conlleva una serie de ventajas para los aprendices. Una vez aceptada esta verdad, es necesario decidir cómo realizar esta empresa, porque las características de la acción didáctica determinarán la efectiva utilidad de la experiencia. En el párrafo 2.1, ya se ha presentado la oposición entre atención a la forma y atención a la formas. Martínez Gila (1999:9) sintetiza las diferencias que existen entre los dos modelos en el esquema que reproducimos abajo, en el cual la columna “Explicar gramática” corresponde a la atención a las formas, mientras que “Hablar sobre gramática” hace referencia a la atención a la forma.

¹⁶ “(...) para que la competencia productiva del estudiante pueda desarrollarse, su atención tiene que ser orientada a la forma de la lengua, a su dimensión morfosintáctica. Es sólo notando los aspectos formales del código, de hecho, como el estudiante podrá construir su propia competencia lingüística”. (La traducción es nuestra)

EXPLICAR GRAMÁTICA:	HABLAR SOBRE GRAMÁTICA:
El profesor o el libro poseen toda la información y el alumno espera recibirla.	Se tiene en cuenta lo que el alumno ya sabe y su capacidad de inducción/reflexión. El profesor ayuda.
El discurso es unidireccional. No hay interacción.	El discurso creado es pluridireccional. Hay interacción.
Actitud receptiva del alumno.	Actitud productiva del alumno: toma decisiones.
No tiene en cuenta los procesos mentales del aprendiz.	Intenta facilitar los procesos mentales del aprendiz.
El lenguaje es considerado una suma de «entidades acumuladas»	Los aspectos gramaticales se derivan del discurso y la comunicación.

2: Atención a las formas, atención a la forma

Long (en Gómez del Estal Villarino, 1997:1) identifica los seis problemas principales que, en su opinión, afectan la atención a las formas, llevándonos a preferir la atención a la forma. Resumiéndolos, los seis problemas son:

1. la falta de análisis de las necesidades comunicativas y estilos de aprendizaje de los estudiantes;
2. la simplificación de la forma, concebida como sistema sin considerar su uso;
3. la falta de integración, en las prácticas didácticas, de los descubrimientos ocurridos en el ámbito de los estudios de adquisición de lenguas;
4. la centralidad del docente, y no del aprendiz;
5. la falta de atractividad de las clases, que debilita la motivación al aprendizaje;
6. la imposibilidad de demostrar su eficacia.

En conclusión, si es verdad que el análisis de la dimensión formal de la lengua en clase comporta mejoramientos en la competencia comunicativa de los estudiantes, también es importante adoptar los modelos de enseñanza de la gramática más eficaces. El que más nos parece adecuado para este fin es el de la atención a la forma, cuyo funcionamiento se presenta en el párrafo siguiente.

2.2.2 Características de un modelo basado en la atención a la forma

En primer lugar, cabe subrayar que la enseñanza de la gramática a través de la atención a la forma no quiere descuidar la dimensión comunicativa y relacionada con los

significados. Al contrario, Long y Robinson (en Doughty-Williams, 1998:35) refieren de un estudio, conducido por Hulstijn, en el cual la comparación de los resultados obtenidos en el aprendizaje de estructuras complejas por distintos grupos de adultos que habían sido dirigidos, respectivamente, a prestar atención a la forma, al contenido y a ambos contemporáneamente revela que “learning (of complex syntax) is better in subjects instructed to attend to meaning and forms than it is in groups instructed to attend to either forms or meaning alone”¹⁷.

Por estos motivos, es importante que las actividades propuestas para estimular la atención a la forma sean ricas de significado, en el cual tienen que concentrarse primariamente los aprendices, y contengan input comprensible para los estudiantes.

Antes de explicar cómo funciona el aprendizaje de la gramática a través de la atención a la forma, es necesario introducir una dicotomía que el docente de lengua debe tener en consideración a la hora de planificar su currículo: es la oposición entre atención a la forma preventiva o reactiva. Dicha oposición (presentada por Doughty y Williams, 1998:205) se basa en la presencia o ausencia de una selección previa por parte del profesor de las estructuras gramaticales objeto de reflexión en la clase. La versión reactiva, según la cual llegan a ser objeto de análisis sólo los elementos formales observados espontáneamente por los alumnos, es la que más se conforma con la idea original de atención a la forma. A pesar de eso, la composición heterogénea de las clases con respecto a los niveles de interlengua alcanzados por los aprendices y, a veces, incluso la presencia de distintas lenguas maternas dificultan la identificación de estructuras igualmente útiles para el desarrollo de la competencia de todos, así que, las autoras afirman, “en la mayoría de las aulas (...) es más factible una atención preventiva a la forma, que es la que se produce cuando el profesor determina de antemano cuál va a ser la forma atendida gracias a un estudio previo de los problemas que tienen sus estudiantes” (Gómez de Estal Villarino, 1998:1).

Después de haber elegido las estructuras formales a las que se quiere dirigir la atención de los alumnos, es necesario favorecer su reconocimiento (en inglés, *noticing*) mediante el llamado “input estructurado” (*input enhancement*). Existen varias técnicas

¹⁷ “(...) el aprendizaje (de estructuras sintácticas complejas) es mejor en los sujetos instruidos a prestar atención al significado y a las formas que en los grupos instruidos a prestar atención sólo a las formas o sólo al significado”. (La traducción es nuestra)

Focus on form in the L2 class

que permiten atribuir prominencia a los elementos formales seleccionados, aunque las principales son tres (Doughty-Williams, 1998:24-5):

- frecuencia y prominencia visual (subrayando o señalando visivamente las estructuras elegidas);
- interrupción de los alumnos durante las actividades para comentar el uso incorrecto de las estructuras lingüísticas;
- retroalimentación (en inglés, *feedback*) a través de reformulaciones correctivas (*recasts*).

A estas técnicas se añade la instrucción explícita, mediante la cual se invita a los aprendices a prestar atención a un determinado aspecto formal de la lengua.

El objetivo del docente a la hora de poner en práctica estas técnicas (tanto en la clase como en la preparación de los materiales) es el de estimular el proceso de reconocimiento por parte de los alumnos: como explica Swain (en Doughty-Williams, 1998:66), lo que se reconoce puede ser una estructura lingüística saliente, pero también la distancia entre la forma notada y la correspondiente en la L1 (*notice the gap*) o la falta de cierto conocimiento gramatical en la propia interlengua (*notice the hole*). El reconocimiento, cualquier sea su naturaleza, es indispensable para la adquisición de las estructuras gramaticales, y se realiza más fácilmente durante las actividades de producción lingüística.

Una vez notada una forma lingüística, el aprendizaje no es inmediato, y no siempre tiene lugar. Para que ocurra, los alumnos están llamados a reflexionar activamente sobre los fenómenos observados, haciendo hipótesis y testeándolas hasta obtener su propia generalización de la regla.

Durante la fase de reflexión, el hecho de tener que discutir con los compañeros hipótesis sobre los mecanismos de funcionamiento de las estructuras lingüísticas lleva a los alumnos a producir naturalmente episodios relacionados con la lengua (en inglés, *language related episodes, LREs*) utilizando el metalenguaje a su disposición. Estos episodios se definen como “any part of a dialogue in which students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or other- or self-correct”¹⁸ (Swain, *ivi*, 70). Esta fase del proceso de atención a la forma conlleva potenciales consecuencias positivas para la adquisición lingüística: lo explica Swain (*ivi*, 69), que

¹⁸ “(...) cualquier parte de un diálogo en la cual los estudiantes hablan de la lengua que están produciendo, expresan dudas acerca de su uso lingüístico, o corrigen a sí mismos o a otros”. (La traducción es nuestra)

afirma que “by encouraging metatalk among second and foreign language students, we may be helping students to make use of second language acquisition processes”¹⁹.

Swain continúa su reflexión observando que, para que el uso del metalenguaje sea eficaz en la promoción de los procesos adquisitivos, es necesario que este empleo se estimule a través de actividades de carácter comunicativo, en las cuales los aprendices estén produciendo significados.

El vínculo entre forma i significado se mantiene fuerte hasta el final de las prácticas de atención a la forma, que se concluyen con actividades comunicativas que requieren el uso de las estructuras analizadas, para favorecer la fijación en la memoria a largo plazo de las reglas activamente construidas en el curso de la clase.

¹⁹ “(...) promoviendo el uso del metalenguaje entre estudiantes de lenguas segundas y extranjeras, es posible que ayudemos a los aprendices a usar los procesos de adquisición de lenguas segundas”. (La traducción es nuestra)

CAPÍTULO 3

LOS ENFOQUES PLURALES Y EL DESPERTAR A LAS LENGUAS

En el presente capítulo se ofrece una presentación de los llamados “enfoques plurales” en el ámbito de la enseñanza de las lenguas. Se dedica especial atención al enfoque que se define “despertar a las lenguas” (*eveil aux langues*, en francés), en el cual nos hemos inspirado en la elaboración de nuestro proyecto didáctico.

3.1 Algunas nociones teóricas

En la sociedad actual, la copresencia de varias lenguas es un hecho habitual. Varios factores contribuyen a causar esta situación, como subrayan Noguerol y Vilà (2007:3) que indican tres condiciones fundamentales para la estimulación del contacto lingüístico: la integración cada vez más significativa entre los países europeos, la globalización, reforzada por el uso de las nuevas tecnologías, y el fenómeno de la emigración. Dada esta situación cada vez más generalizada, surge la necesidad de elaborar enfoques didácticos capaces de explotar esta riqueza lingüística y, al mismo tiempo, ayudar la población a aceptar y sacar provecho del nuevo estado socio-cultural.

La respuesta a esta nueva situación en el ámbito de la didáctica son los llamados “enfoques plurales de las lenguas y culturas” (*plural o pluralistic approaches*, en inglés), que se definen como “los enfoques didácticos que ponen en práctica actividades de enseñanza-aprendizaje que implican a la vez varias (= más de una) variedades lingüísticas y culturales” (Candelier et al., 2008:5). Éstos se oponen a los llamados “enfoques singulares” que, en cambio, tienen como objetivo exclusivo el aprendizaje de una sola lengua y el conocimiento de su cultura.

Existen cuatro enfoques plurales: el enfoque intercultural (orientado hacia la cultura, más que hacia el fenómeno lengua), la didáctica integrada, la intercomprensión y el despertar a las lenguas. Vamos ahora a presentar brevemente los tres enfoques de naturaleza principalmente lingüística.

La didáctica integrada se aplica a las lenguas objeto de aprendizaje en el ámbito escolar. Consiste en la adopción, por parte de los docentes que se ocupan de la enseñanza de asignaturas lingüísticas, de técnicas, metodologías e incluso terminologías afines, para facilitar a los estudiantes en los procesos de aprendizaje de las lenguas. De

esta manera, los aprendices pueden utilizar los conocimientos adquiridos, por ejemplo, durante las clases de L1 para soportar el aprendizaje de una primera lengua extranjera, y hacer lo mismo a la hora de aprender nuevas LEs.

La intercomprensión es un enfoque que se aplica a lenguas que pertenecen a la misma familia lingüística (por ejemplo, las lenguas romances o las lenguas germánicas). Su objetivo es el de explotar el parentesco lingüístico entre lenguas ya conocidas y otras que forman parte de la misma familia y son objeto de aprendizaje. El origen común de las lenguas a menudo se traduce en semejanzas desde un punto de vista morfosintáctico y léxico, que la intercomprensión aprovecha para potenciar las habilidades de comprensión de los aprendices. El alto nivel de comprensión de lenguas desconocidas favorece el proceso de aprendizaje, según la hipótesis del input comprensible²⁰ de Krashen (1983).

Finalmente, el despertar a las lenguas (*veil aux langues*, en francés, es la denominación más utilizada para este enfoque) se caracteriza por incluir en las actividades propuestas incluso lenguas que no son objeto de enseñanza. Como se explica en el Marco de referencia para los enfoques plurales de las lenguas y de las culturas (MAREP, Candelier et al., 2008:6),

eso no significa que el planteamiento se refiera solamente a estas lenguas. Incluye también la lengua de la escuela y cualquier otra lengua que se esté aprendiendo. Pero no se limita tampoco a estas lenguas “aprendidas”. Integra todo tipo de variedades lingüísticas, de la familia, del entorno... y de todo el mundo, sin ningún tipo de exclusión.

El elevado número de lenguas utilizadas, causa de la definición de enfoque plural extremo, tiene como finalidad la de favorecer la abertura a la diversidad lingüística por parte de los estudiantes, y su descubrimiento de las características del fenómeno lengua a través de la comparación de sistemas diferentes.

Los tres enfoques permiten poner en práctica una política de educación lingüística plurilingüe integrada, en la cual se privilegia la unitariedad de la competencia comunicativa del aprendiz frente a la pluralidad de las vías a través de las cuales se produce adquisición o aprendizaje lingüístico y cultural.

Además, estos enfoques facilitan el desarrollo de la competencia plurilingüe y pluricultural, que en el Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas (Council

²⁰ Véase la nota 13.

for Cultural Cooperation, 2001) se indica como solución ideal para los riesgos conllevados por la estrecha colaboración entre los países europeos que, como observa Masats (2001:1), comporta un alto riesgo de estandarización lingüística y cultural. A este propósito, en el Marco de Referencia (*ivi*, 4) se subraya que para estimular la creación de una competencia plurilingüe es necesario adoptar un enfoque en el cual

el individuo no guard[e las] lenguas y culturas en compartimentos mentales estrictamente separados, sino que desarroll[e] una competencia comunicativa a la que contribuyen todos los conocimientos y las experiencias lingüísticas y en la que las lenguas se relacionan entre sí e interactúan,

como ocurre en el caso de los enfoques plurales. Por este motivo, no es exagerado afirmar que la adopción, en las escuelas, de enfoques de este tipo representa una acción concreta y eficaz a fin de formar los nuevos ciudadanos europeos, que sepan adaptarse con éxito al contexto social actual.

3.2 El despertar a las lenguas

Este párrafo propone una descripción más profundizada del enfoque plural llamado *veil aux langues*, del cual se presentan los rasgos, los objetivos y algunos materiales típicos, estudiando su relación con el concepto de conciencia lingüística del que deriva.

3.2.1 Conciencia lingüística y despertar a las lenguas

En 1972, el Bullock Committee condujo una encuesta, en el Reino Unido, a fin de averiguar el nivel de alfabetización en las escuelas del país. Los resultados de la encuesta fueron presentados en el Informe Bullock, publicado en 1975 bajo el título de “A language for life” (Una lengua para la vida). Los datos recogidos por la comisión revelaron un alto y preocupante nivel de analfabetismo entre los alumnos británicos, demostración de la incapacidad de las instituciones escolares de lograr sus objetivos principales.

Fue precisamente este informe lo que desencadenó la reflexión que llevó a Eric Hawkins (1984) a formular su concepto de “conciencia lingüística” (en inglés *language awareness*, del cual ya se ha hablado brevemente en este texto en 2.1). Según Hawkins, el problema principal del sistema escolar británico, causa del fracaso didáctico registrado por el Informe Bullock, consistía en la total falta de coordinación entre los docentes. Por eso, mediante la elaboración de un enfoque basado en la conciencia lingüística, Hawkins manifestó la necesidad de que las escuelas adoptaran una política lingüística compartida

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por parte de todos los docentes. Esta política tenía que ser respetada incluso por los profesores que no se ocupaban directamente de disciplinas lingüísticas, dado que la lengua es el medio a través del cual se transmite todo tipo de información y contenido, como indica el concepto de LAC, Lenguaje a través del currículum, traducido del inglés *Language across the curriculum*.

En su obra (1984:4), Hawkins introdujo el nuevo enfoque, cuyos rasgos originales presentamos en seguida: el “*awareness of language approach*” elaborado en 1984

- estaba dirigido a aprendices de 10 a 14 años;
- tenía como objetivo el de facilitar el tránsito de las modalidades de aprendizaje lingüístico de la escuela primaria a las de la escuela secundaria, sobre todo en vista de la introducción de una lengua extranjera en el currículo;
- tenía como otro fin el de superar las divisiones que existían entre los distintos aspectos de la educación lingüística de los alumnos, acostumbrados a encontrar metodologías, técnicas didácticas y hasta terminologías diferentes en los varios ámbitos de su experiencia lingüística;
- aspiraba inducir a los aprendices a hacerse y hacer preguntas sobre el fenómeno lengua;
- a través de estudios contrastivos, propuestos a los alumnos de forma adecuada a sus capacidades, quería ayudar a los aprendices a descubrir las regularidades lingüísticas, para potenciar su aptitud para el aprendizaje de nuevas lenguas.

Resulta evidente que la adopción de un enfoque de este tipo ofrecía la posibilidad de ayudar a los alumnos a desarrollar una competencia lingüística más completa y compleja, consciente de que la diversidad entre las lenguas remite a estructuras afines, resultado de un contacto con las lenguas que el mismo Hawkins define “richer, more interesting, simply more fun”²¹ (*ivi*, 6).

A partir de este concepto de conciencia lingüística, recientemente se ha desarrollado el enfoque conocido como “despertar a las lenguas”, que mantiene algunos de los objetivos identificados por Hawkins y los adapta al contexto socio-cultural contemporáneo. De hecho, si el origen del enfoque británico se debió a la necesidad de encontrar soluciones eficaces para alfabetizar la población, el despertar a las lenguas se

²¹ “[...] más rico, más interesante, simplemente más divertido”. (La traducción es nuestra)

propone ofrecer recursos útiles para encarar el creciente plurilingüismo de nuestra sociedad, respetando la diversidad y la dignidad de todos los idiomas.

La distinta génesis no es la única diferencia entre *language awareness* y despertar a las lenguas: como se lee en el MAREP (Candelier et al., 2008:6),

se considera que el *éveil aux langues* constituye, hoy en día, más bien un subconjunto de la perspectiva *Language Awareness*, que propone también trabajos de orientación más psicolingüística que pedagógica, que no tienen en cuenta necesariamente la propuesta de que quien aprende tenga que afrontar varias lenguas.

De hecho, para subrayar la diferencia entre los dos enfoques, el término inglés que se utiliza para indicar el despertar a las lenguas es *awakening to languages*, traducción del original francés.

Michel Candelier (2011:12), uno de los principales autores de este enfoque, propone la siguiente definición: “an awakening to languages is when part of the activities concerns languages that the school does not intend to teach (which may or may not be the mother tongues of certain pupils)”²². A partir de esta definición, se deduce que las actividades de *éveil aux langues* se caracterizan por la voluntad de proponer a los aprendices muestras de una gran cantidad de idiomas, no con el fin de que los aprendan todos, sino para facilitar la comprensión de los rasgos intrínsecos del fenómeno lengua. De hecho, los distintos idiomas son objeto de actividades de comparación, que implican la observación activa y la colaboración de los aprendices, para favorecer el desarrollo de una competencia lingüística más consciente y rica.

Los ejemplos más significativos de actividades y experiencias conformes al enfoque del despertar a las lenguas se han realizado en el ámbito de dos proyectos: los llamados EVLANG y Ja-Ling. El primero se desarrolló entre 1997 y 2001 en cinco países europeos (Austria, España, Italia, Francia y Suiza). A partir del año 2000, en cambio, se ha desarrollado el segundo, que prevé la participación de más de veinte países europeos (como explica Masats, 2001:2) y recibe el nombre completo de “Janua Linguarum – *The gateway of languages*”, que remite al título de la obra de Copérnico “Janua linguarum

²² “El despertar a las lenguas es cuando parte de las actividades atañe lenguas que la escuela no quiere enseñar (que pueden ser o no ser las lenguas maternas de algunos alumnos)”. (La traducción es nuestra) Esta definición se encuentra en una presentación de Power Point creada por Candelier en ocasión de un taller sobre los enfoques plurales que tuvo lugar en el mes de febrero de 2001. La presentación se puede consultar abriendo el enlace < <http://carap.ecml.at/CARAP/PowerPointpresentations/tabid/2667/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>>. Última consulta: 04.04.2012.

reserata”. Ambos proyectos han sido promovidos por la Unión Europea, en el ámbito de los programas Socrates Lengua (EVLANG) y Socrates Comenius (Ja-Ling)²³.

3.2.2 Objetivos

Por lo que atañe los objetivos del despertar a las lenguas, podemos identificar dos dimensiones principales: la dimensión socio-cultural y la cognitiva.

Al primer ámbito pertenecen objetivos relacionados con la creación de una competencia plurilingüe y pluricultural. De Pietro (1995:33), por ejemplo, afirma que “la tolérance linguistique, comme la tolérance raciale, ne vient pas naturellement. Il faut l'éduquer”²⁴. Así, el contacto y la comparación de muchos idiomas permiten acostumbrar a los alumnos a la pluralidad lingüística de la sociedad actual. Además, de esta manera se favorece la descentralización del punto de vista de los aprendices, a menudo acostumbrados, desde pequeños, al uso casi exclusivo de una sola lengua: el descubrimiento de que existen otras, y muchas, tan eficaces como su L1 a la hora de favorecer la comunicación representa una etapa fundamental para el crecimiento del alumno, porque le permite construirse una visión más realística de cómo es la realidad y entender que no todo el mundo rueda a su alrededor.

Pero este proceso de relativización, quizás un poco traumático en un primer momento, puede estimular también la curiosidad de los alumnos frente al universo lingüístico recién descubierto: la infinidad de los idiomas disponibles en el mundo representa un campo de exploración fascinante, y la posibilidad de que las personas utilicen estos códigos misteriosos para intercambiar mensajes se convierte en un hecho al parecer casi mágico. De esta manera, la inicial sensación de aturdimiento frente al sinnúmero de posibilidades comunicativas se transforma en abertura, en una actitud positiva e interesada hacia la pluralidad lingüística. La esperanza de los investigadores que se han ocupado de proyectar el *veil aux langues* es que la curiosidad se convierta en motivación a aprender nuevas lenguas en general y, de manera específica, en una motivación capaz de promover el aprendizaje de las lenguas presentes en el currículum escolar.

²³ Para obtener más información sobre los dos proyectos, es posible consultar los sitios indicados en la sitografía.

²⁴ “La tolerancia lingüística, como la tolerancia racial, no nace naturalmente. Es el resultado de la educación”. (La traducción es nuestra)

Además, la introducción en las clases de una elevada cantidad de idiomas (aunque solamente como objetos de observación) representa una ocasión importante para romper el monolingüismo que demasiado a menudo caracteriza el ambiente escolar (como observan Magnin Hottelier y Perregaux, 1995:51), por lo menos en lo que atañe sus actividades oficiales. De hecho, es cada año más evidente que en la escuela se reúnen alumnos de distinto origen (geográfico y social), por lo cual ya están presentes en su repertorio verbal lenguas y variedades lingüísticas diferentes. Por este motivo, incluir en las actividades de *veil aux langues* las lenguas maternas de los estudiantes inmigrantes o hasta los dialectos (que, por ejemplo, en algunas zonas de Italia coexisten con la lengua nacional en una relación de diglosia) significa valorizar a los estudiantes cuya L1 no es la lengua oficial del país y favorecer su integración en la clase, convirtiéndolos en preciosos recursos para sus compañeros gracias a su rica competencia lingüística y experiencia de aprendizaje. De esta forma, como indican Magnin Hottelier y Perregaux (*ivi*, 52), la institución escolar transmite a sus alumnos la idea de que todas las lenguas gozan de la misma dignidad, favoreciendo en todos los alumnos la construcción serena de su propia identidad. En las actividades de despertar a las lenguas todos están al mismo nivel: cada uno puede contribuir a la solución de los problemas gracias a sus conocimientos lingüísticos y sus intuiciones, colaborando con los demás, enseñando y aprendiendo al mismo tiempo.

Por lo que concierne la dimensión cognitiva de los objetivos de este enfoque, en cambio, se hace referencia al desarrollo de la competencia metalingüística de los aprendices.

Moore (1995:27) explica que, para que esto sea posible, es necesario distanciarse de la lengua y concebirla como objeto de observación, separándola así de los significados a ella asociados: sólo así los alumnos podrán reflexionar sobre las características del lenguaje humano de manera autónoma y consciente. Y no cabe duda de que la comparación de una amplia gama de idiomas en relación a fenómenos específicos puede favorecer este tipo de alejamiento.

Una vez identificada la lengua como objeto de observación, los alumnos podrán utilizar su capacidad de observación y los conocimientos adquiridos en su experiencia lingüística para descubrir fenómenos de diferente naturaleza, reconocer similitudes, relaciones de parentesco entre los idiomas analizados o bien diferencias entre ellos, hasta clasificarlos sobre la base de sus rasgos e intentar reconstruir sus reglas a partir de la observación de sus regularidades. De hecho, De Pietro (1995:35) confirma que las

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observaciones de naturaleza metalingüística espontáneas por parte de los alumnos son más frecuentes en las actividades de *veille aux langues* que en las clases de lengua tradicionales dedicadas al análisis de la gramática.

Estas operaciones, amén de enriquecer la competencia metalingüística de los aprendices, conllevan otra posible ventaja: de hecho, al darse cuenta de su capacidad de llevar a cabo con éxito y autónomamente la desafiadora empresa de analizar el fenómeno lengua, los alumnos podrán experimentar el placer del descubrimiento y un sentimiento de satisfacción personal capaz de fortalecer su motivación y su autoestima, con posibles repercusiones positivas en la eficacia del entero proceso de aprendizaje.

Pero el enriquecimiento de la competencia metalingüística en sí no es el verdadero fin de este enfoque: Moore (1995:28) afirma que

le développement de connaissances métalinguistiques (...) permet la mise en place de processus de facilitation dans la construction de savoirs linguistiques, potentiellement transférables d'une langue à une autre, pour mieux connaître sa langue, et mieux apprendre les langues.²⁵

Así, las habilidades metalingüísticas se convierten en herramienta fundamental para el aprendizaje, más conciente y eficaz, de nuevas lenguas, como sugiere Kerschbaumer (1999:12), según el cual "diese Kenntnisse und die durch eine lernerzentrierte, Entdeckungspädagogik erworbenen Fertigkeiten sollten später für den Erwerb weiterer Sprachen nützlich sein"²⁶, contribuyendo al desarrollo de una "preparedness for subsequent language learning"²⁷ (McCarthy, 1994:5). Y esto es posible porque "the tasks favour the development of the ability to think and reflect about language because they succeed in getting learners to be conscious of their language learning process"²⁸ (Masats, 2001:11), como demuestran los resultados del proyecto EVLANG.

²⁵ "El desarrollo de conocimientos metalingüísticos (...) permite la activación de procesos de facilitación en la construcción de saberes lingüísticos, potencialmente transferible de una lengua a otra, para conocer mejor la propia lengua, y aprender mejor las lenguas". (La traducción es nuestra)

²⁶ "Estos conocimientos y las habilidades adquiridas a través de una pedagogía del descubrimiento centrada en el aprendiz tendrían que ser útiles sucesivamente para la adquisición de otras lenguas". (La traducción es nuestra)

²⁷ "(...) preparación para el sucesivo aprendizaje lingüístico". (La traducción es nuestra)

²⁸ "(...) las tareas favorecen el desarrollo de la habilidad de pensar y reflexionar sobre el lenguaje porque consiguen llevar a los aprendices a ser conscientes de sus procesos de aprendizaje lingüístico". (La traducción es nuestra)

Además, ayudar a los alumnos a tomar conciencia de cómo funcionan los procesos y las estrategias de aprendizaje lingüístico permite enriquecer su competencia glotomatética – o sea, la capacidad de aprender las lenguas de forma autónoma –, en una perspectiva de aprendizaje a lo largo de toda la vida (del inglés *Lifelong Learning*) tan importante para el éxito personal en la sociedad contemporánea.

Finalmente, la introducción temprana de actividades de reflexión lingüística en la experiencia escolar de los alumnos responde a una exigencia muy fuerte de los aprendices que, según Pinto (1989:39-40), se manifiesta desde muy pronto y continuamente en todas las personas, la de ir “más allá” del uso automático del lenguaje y descubrir cómo funcionan las lenguas, con todas las ventajas que, en términos motivacionales, comporta la satisfacción de las necesidades percibidas por los aprendices.

3.2.3 Los materiales

En la red existen algunos sitios, que hacen referencia a proyectos internacionales de despertar a las lenguas, en los cuales es posible encontrar ejemplos de materiales didácticos específicamente creados de acuerdo con los objetivos y las características de este enfoque. Los sitios principales son dos:

- la página del proyecto FREPA (*a Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches*, también conocido con la sigla francés CARAP o la española MAREP): aquí es posible encontrar 132 descripciones de materiales proyectados para los cuatro enfoques plurales, 33 de los cuales se pueden utilizar en las clases de despertar a las lenguas. Además hay 59 actividades para el enfoque intercultural, 24 para la intercomprensión y 16 para la didáctica integrada;
- la página del proyecto Janua Linguarum, donde se pueden encontrar 10 materiales para el *eveil aux langues* y 26 presentaciones de otros materiales posibles, clasificados según el autor y el país de procedencia.

Para tener una idea más clara de la tipología de actividades previstas en las clases de despertar a las lenguas, proponemos en seguida un ejemplo.

El conjunto de actividades en cuestión se encuentra en la base de datos de los materiales presentes en el sitio del proyecto FREPA. Su título es “Bonjour” y, como explica la ficha de presentación, es especialmente adecuado para alumnos del segundo o tercer año de la escuela primaria. Se desarrolla a lo largo de una sola clase de la duración

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de 45 minutos. Estas actividades fueron creadas por los miembros del proyecto canadiense ELODiL (*Éveil au Langage et Ouverture à la Diversité Linguistique*)²⁹.

El tema tratado son los saludos en 17 diferentes lenguas. El objetivo final de la clase es ayudar a los aprendices a tomar conciencia de la existencia de una amplia variedad de idiomas diferentes. En la sección verde de la ficha aparece la palabra “Access” que permite abrir un enlace que contiene una descripción más profundizada del material, e incluso los textos preparados para los alumnos.

Como se lee en el documento, la clase comienza con una actividad individual en la cual los alumnos tienen que responder algunas preguntas para demostrar qué saben de las lenguas habladas en el mundo. Sucesivamente, el grupo ve un vídeo que muestra 17 niños saludando en 17 idiomas diferentes. Los alumnos llevan a cabo un ejercicio en el cual intentan asociar a cada niño el saludo correspondiente, y después intentan pronunciar los saludos en las distintas lenguas. Sigue la visión de un segundo vídeo en el cual los niños añaden al saludo también su lengua y su país de origen, que los aprendices, en grupos, tienen que reconocer y escribir en un esquema. Finalmente, cada grupo escribe los países identificados en un mapa en blanco con la ayuda de un mapamundi. Una vez terminadas las actividades, el docente invita a los alumnos a expresar sus impresiones sobre la clase y reflexionar sobre la presencia de distintos idiomas en su propia ciudad, para demostrar que la pluralidad lingüística es una condición común, aunque a veces pase inadvertida.

Podemos observar que este conjunto de actividades respeta uno de los rasgos peculiares del despertar a las lenguas, o sea el elevado número de idiomas presentados a los alumnos. Además, es evidente que el objetivo de la clase no es aprender las lenguas utilizadas, sino llevar a los alumnos a reflexionar sobre cuestiones lingüísticas que interesan el contexto socio-cultural en el cual viven. La dimensión metalingüística, en cambio, en este caso no está presente (aunque la comparación entre los saludos podría estimular observaciones espontáneas por parte de los aprendices) a causa de la naturaleza del tema tratado, que tiene una función introductoria a la pluralidad lingüística y, consecuentemente, a las modalidades de trabajo comparativas típicas del despertar a las lenguas.

²⁹ Para consultar la ficha de presentación y acceder a los materiales específicos para este enfoque es suficiente abrir el siguiente enlace y descargar el documento que contiene la lista de las actividades disponibles: <<http://carap.ecml.at/Teachingmaterials/tabid/2355/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>>.

PART TWO:
THE RESEARCH

CHAPTER 4

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This chapter will provide a detailed description of the research project. All the aspects of our investigation will be dealt with, from the elaboration of the idea on which the research was based, to the description of the process of data analysis.

4.1 The research

The present research is based on the teaching experience that will be described in detail in chapter 5. Its main purpose is to investigate the possibility of enhancing the development of the capacity of Primary School children to focus on form through a plural approach.

The idea of researching this specific aspect of language teaching was developed after a short teaching experience (required as part of an exam of “Didactics of Italian language L1, L2, LS”) carried out in a Venetian Primary School with four non-native speakers of Italian. On that occasion, one of the lessons that was implemented with the group of Bengali and Filipino children dealt with nominal agreement. Various materials had been carefully prepared for the purpose, reasoning about number and gender was guided step by step by various inductive activities, all of which were cooperative and play-like, but, in spite of this, the lesson turned out to be a disaster. An immediate analysis of the experience revealed that some aspects of the lesson (or rather of its protagonists) had not been taken into account while preparing it: children are not yet language learning experts (they have mainly experienced language acquisition), therefore some of the cognitive processes that seem natural for adults who have a long experience of language learning might take more time and need to be carefully supported in young learners. Moreover, the natural attention span of children is more reduced than the one that is expected from adults. Therefore, a lesson that was eminently theoretical and implied a large series of complex cognitive processes was inadequate for very young learners. As a result of these observations, the following lesson was accordingly modified, so as to suit the needs and abilities of the pupils: the positive results that were obtained on that occasion encouraged further investigation of the possibility of having Primary School

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children focus on the form of languages and develop language awareness despite their young age, provided that appropriate techniques are adopted for this purpose.

Another observation that was stimulated by the Venetian teaching experience was related to the tendency of speakers of Italian as a Second Language to feel ashamed of their L1 and their refusal to use it in public. This attitude towards one's language was considered particularly dangerous for young children, since it might undermine their serene growth and integration into the local community.

Therefore, the final internship and thesis of the Second Cycle Degree Programme seemed to offer a perfect opportunity to explore this topic further and try to answer the questions that had previously emerged, this time through a longer (150 teaching hours rather than 20) and more articulate teaching experience.

The research project consisted in a cycle of 13 lessons preceded and followed by some tests. The Learning units were structured as to facilitate the development of language awareness and of the ability to focus on form, but also aimed at promoting a climate of respect and curiosity towards different languages (and the related cultures).

In our attempt to realise primary research, features of both the psychometric-quantitative and the ethnographic-qualitative methods of research can be recognised. In fact, on the one hand pre- and post-tests were used with the purpose of gathering easily comparable data, while, on the other, the creation of a teacher's journal in which impressions and observation about learners and lessons were recorded was typical of qualitative research. Therefore, at the end of the teaching unit, both hard, numerical data and soft data were obtained, allowing for statistical analysis and content analysis to take place at the same time. Both types of data and analysis were complementary in stimulating reflections about the outcomes of our investigation.

4.2 Research questions and hypotheses

The starting point of the research was represented by research questions, which defined the theoretical aspects that would be investigated and guided the planning of the whole project. These questions, in turn, were formulated in terms of hypotheses.

The general aims of our research are strictly related to the objectives of the teaching unit on which it is based, precisely for the reason that they depend on one another. Therefore, as was the case of teaching objectives (that will be presented in 5.2.3), these research questions and hypotheses also focus on different categories: socio-cultural affective and cognitive metalinguistic.

The research questions, grouped together according to the area of interest each one belongs to, are presented in Table 3.

AREAS OF INTEREST	RESEARCH QUESTIONS
<i>Socio-cultural, affective dimension</i>	1a) Do young learners show a positive attitude, a sense of opening towards languages (both their L1 and other languages)? 1b) What is their perception of the process of language learning (as related to their L1 and other languages)? 1c) Can focus on form on the languages of the group's repertoire promote an open attitude towards languages and positive expectations about language learning?
<i>Cognitive, metalinguistic dimension</i>	2a) Are young learners able to concentrate on the form of languages, regardless of meaning? 2b) Can they notice formal aspects of language, focus and analytically reflect on the language phenomena and structures they have noticed (identify patterns, regularities, inductively formulate rules, apply them to generate new words or sentences)? 2c) Is it possible to promote young learners' ability to notice language structures and phenomena and focus on form through a training course that is rich in activities that imply these kinds of operations?

3: Research questions

As can be seen, for what concerns both the socio-cultural and the cognitive dimensions of the project, the first two research questions are visually separated from the last one. This decision depends on the different nature of these groups of questions. In fact, while the first two of each group intend to investigate the features, attitudes and abilities of young learners who have not yet received specific training that aims at the development of the investigated capacities, the last one is meant to verify the effectiveness of the teaching unit in enhancing such qualities.

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If we compare the areas of interest that have been indicated while talking about the teaching unit and the ones reported when listing the research questions, it can be seen that one area (that is to say, the linguistic one) has been excluded from the questions elaborated for the project. This decision was motivated by the realisation that, since the children who were involved in the research are L2 speakers of Italian, progress in their acquisition of the language would be expected anyway, regardless of the implementation of the teaching unit. This depends on the fact that they are exposed to language every day, both at school and outside it, so that it would be impossible to demonstrate that progression in their interlanguage has been caused by the teaching unit, rather than by any other factor. Therefore, this aspect of the project was excluded from our research questions, while higher attention was dedicated to the remaining, more easily measurable dimensions of the research.

The previously identified research questions gave rise to a series of hypotheses (see Table 4) that were formulated before the implementation of the teaching unit.

Hypothesis (1a) and (1b) are mainly based on personal experience rather than on scientific knowledge: in fact, we have already observed that, during the Venetian teaching experience described in 4.1, young non native speakers of Italian often manifested a sense of discomfort when they were asked to use their L1 in public, although they were eager to learn about new languages in general, and occasionally asked for the translation of words and sentences in English from mere curiosity. Such different attitudes might have been caused by sociolinguistic factors: it was probably the awareness that their L1 represented a non prestigious variety in the language repertoire of Italian society that led them to reject it and refuse to identify with it, at least in public, thus partially repressing their natural curiosity about everything that surrounds them, languages included. As regards hypothesis (1b), the learners' personal experience of language learning and acquisition is expected to prove that it is possible to succeed in learning languages, although their limited experience of formal language learning at school (often boring and highly deductive) and the partial realisation of their progress in Italian might lead them to think that it is something particularly difficult.

On the other hand, hypothesis (1c) is supported by research on awakening to language (*veil aux language*, in French): as already explained in chapter 3, one of the positive consequences of bringing different languages to class is the promotion of a more open attitude towards languages, while the positive evaluation of language learning will be encouraged by the experience of language discovery.

AREAS OF INTEREST	HYPOTHESES
<i>Socio-cultural, affective dimension</i>	<p>1a) Learners will show a positive attitude towards languages in general, but a negative one as regards their L1s.</p> <p>1b) Moreover, they will perceive the process of language learning as a difficult enterprise, also for what concerns Italian, their L2. In spite of this, the partial bilingualism experienced by learners will cause a positive evaluation of the possibility of learning languages.</p> <p>1c) Finally, the regular involvement of various languages during every lesson will enhance the positive attitude of young learners towards languages in general.</p>
<i>Cognitive, metalinguistic dimension</i>	<p>2a) Young learners will find it difficult to treat form and meaning as separate phenomena,</p> <p>2b) to notice formal aspects of language and reflect on what they have noticed through complex cognitive processes.</p> <p>2c) However, the learners' ability to carry out these operations will improve as a result of a specific training program.</p>

4: Research hypotheses

As regards hypotheses (2a) and (2b), our negative expectations are motivated by the learners' young age and consequent limited experience of treating the form of language as separate from meaning. This also means that they are expected to have little familiarity with the cognitive processes that are involved in activities that imply a focus on form. Moreover, the children's incomplete competence in Italian might complicate their attempts to reflect on it. These hypotheses are supported by research on the development of metalinguistic competences and abilities in young learners. Pinto (1989: 37), for example, explains that children slowly develop the capacity of distinguishing between the form and the meaning of language, through

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il passaggio da uno stadio, dai tre ai cinque anni circa, durante il quale l'uso del linguaggio cerca il suo ancoraggio nel mondo extralinguistico, a uno stadio che non si annuncia prima dei nove-dieci anni, a partire dal quale il bambino capisce che linguaggio e realtà extralinguistica sono due sfere distinte (...).³⁰

This development happens through a series of intermediate steps, which take place exactly during the age range to which our pupils belong (7-10 years): therefore, we expect that pupils will find it difficult, at least at first, to carry out focus on form operations. However, there are positive expectations as regards the effectiveness of a specifically planned teaching unit (hypothesis (2c)), since it will help students become familiar with new cognitive processes respecting the natural timing of the development of metalinguistic abilities. Moreover, as Pinto (*ivi*, 39-40) stresses, specific work on the metalinguistic dimension of language will satisfy a need that tends to emerge precociously in children, thus strengthening our expectations that the teaching project will produce positive outcomes.

The data gathered during the course and their interpretation will confirm or not confirm the expectations expressed by our hypotheses and answer the research questions.

4.3 Subjects

Below we describe the features of the group of children who participated in the project. Moreover, we present the case of class 2A and the reasons why it was excluded from the research.

4.3.1 Composition of the group of subjects

18 subjects took part in the project. They came from five different classes (2A, 2B, 3, 4A and 4B). However, over the course of weeks the number of pupils who participated in the project underwent some variation, for different reasons. During the first week, 17 pupils took part in the lessons. In some classes the project was addressed to all non-native speakers of Italian. On the other hand, in some others (4B and, at first, 4A)

³⁰“(…) the shift from a stage, approximately between three and five years, during which the use of language is tied to the extralinguistic world, to a stage that does not start before the age of nine-ten, starting from which the child understands that language and extralinguistic reality are two distinct spheres”. (Our translation)

teachers advised splitting the group on the base of the learners' different levels of linguistic competence in Italian.

This decision was later maintained in class 4B, where there were five non-native speakers, but the two pupils who were actually indicated for the project had a much lower fluency and accuracy in Italian than their classmates. On the contrary, in class 4A the pupil who had initially been excluded from the activities because of his almost native-like competence in Italian, was re-integrated into the group only a couple of lessons after the beginning of the teaching unit, because his teacher thought that he might benefit from a specific work on the Italian language anyway. The pupil's re-introduction into the class actually seemed to have a positive effect on the lessons, since his advanced competence could often serve as a model for the rest of the group.

CLASS	NUMBER OF LEARNERS	
	At the beginning of the T.U.	At the end of the T.U.
2A	4	2
2B	3	3
3	5	5
4A	3	4
4B	2	2
TOTAL	17	16

5: Number of learners

For what concerns class 2A, four pupils were initially involved, while after a few weeks two of the learners ceased to take part in the course. This depended on the possibility, according to Italian law³¹, for the families to decide whether or not their children should attend the teaching of Catholic Religion. In case they do not, pupils can

³¹ Art. 9.2 of the *Patti Lateranensi* (a series of agreements that were signed in 1929 by representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and the Kingdom of Italy): "La Repubblica Italiana, riconoscendo il valore della cultura religiosa e tenendo conto che i principi del cattolicesimo fanno parte del patrimonio storico del popolo italiano, continuerà ad assicurare, nel quadro della finalità della scuola, l'insegnamento della religione cattolica nelle scuole pubbliche non universitarie di ogni ordine e grado. Nel rispetto della libertà di coscienza e della responsabilità educativa dei genitori, è garantito a ciascuno il diritto di scegliere se avvalersi o non avvalersi di detto insegnamento. All'atto dell'iscrizione gli studenti o i loro genitori eserciteranno tale diritto, su richiesta dell'autorità scolastica, senza che la loro scelta possa dar luogo ad alcuna forma di discriminazione".

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participate in lessons of “Alternative Activities” or go home, according to the decision expressed by parents. This last option is the one that was chosen by the families of two of the four children of the group.

Learners were aged between 7 and 10 (one of the pupils of class 4B was one year older than her classmates).

Among the 18 pupils who took part in the project (although some of them only participated for a short period), the majority were speakers of different Moroccan varieties of the Arab language (13/18), while the remaining children spoke Albanian (4) and Chinese (1). These languages, plus Italian, English and a little bit of French (that was spoken by a girl of Moroccan origins) made up the language repertoire of the groups.

Moreover, it seems important to note that only three children out of 18 were born outside Italy, and even among them, one came to the country at the age of one. This explains the fact that the learners’ competence in Italian, although not native-like in most of the cases, was quite high, and also their high degree of integration on the Italian culture.

The composition of groups was heterogeneous for what concerns the learners’ competence in Italian (especially as regards class 4B). Therefore, differentiation during the lessons was necessary in order to meet the needs of all pupils.

4.3.2 The case of class 2A

After the first lessons with class 2A, it became clear that the implementation of the teaching unit that was elaborated for the research project would represent a frustrating experience, both for the pupils and for the teacher. In fact, the learners were always distracted, extremely lively and incapable of concentrating in order to carry out the proposed tasks and activities, especially when it came to focusing on form.

The failure of the original teaching project with this class was probably due to the young age of the learners (who were 7 years old), although this cannot be considered the only cause, since another group of pupils of the same age perfectly managed to carry out the proposed activities (sometimes even with better results than older children). Therefore, the real cause of this group’s inability to keep up with the others was probably the unhappy placement of the lesson in the learners’ timetable, since it was the only lesson held in the afternoon, when they were tired, eager to go home and excited after playing in the school park or watching a cartoon after lunch. If we add to this the presence in the group of a boy who caused regular squabbles with the three girls, we

have the complete picture of the situation. Moreover, two of the four children ceased to take part in the lessons after a few weeks, as allowed for by Italian law for the pupils who choose not to be taught Religion at school (see 4.3.1).

For all these reasons, it was soon decided to prepare for this group different, more traditional and less demanding lessons, in order to save the children the frustrating experience of being forced to follow complex lines of arguments they were not ready to understand, and alternatively, more traditional lessons were planned for them. In this case, plurilingual focus on form activities only took place during the first few lessons and only occasionally in the central and final part of the course.

4.4 Data gathering method

Before the implementation of the teaching unit, it was necessary to decide how to test the effectiveness of the Unit in promoting the investigated aspects. Therefore, data needed to be gathered in order to allow for a comparison of the learners' attitude towards languages and metalinguistic aptitude before and after the course.

The tools that were used to obtain such data are a questionnaire, some tests, an observation grid and a journal. Here is a brief explanation of how they were used, while further information about their structure will be provided in the following paragraph.

During the first and the last lesson, learners were asked to fill in a questionnaire about their attitude towards languages and language learning. After that, they were asked to take five different tests that were expressly designed for the purpose of portraying their metalinguistic abilities. Both the questionnaire and the tests were anonymous for the purposes of our research, but children were asked to write their names anyway on the back of the papers they received, so that any problem of completion could be corrected by asking again for the answer (this was especially necessary when the children's handwriting resulted difficult to understand and in case some sections of the questionnaire had received the wrong number of answers).

Moreover, during every lesson the LREs (Language Related Episodes) produced by every child were reported on a copybook as field notes and later inserted in a file named "Metalinguistic Observation Grid", in order to monitor the learners' reactions to the project.

Finally, every day a journal was filled in with some details about the activities that had been done during the lessons and observations about things the children had said or done that seemed relevant for our research. This journal was meant to allow for

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monitoring of the progress of the project and provide some feedback that might be useful to assure the effectiveness of the teaching unit.

The use of an observation grid that was filled in every day with data gathered during the whole duration of the course made our research a longitudinal one, a learning experience that, for every child, lasted 30 hours and aimed at producing progress through specifically created activities.

We can observe that both direct and indirect instruments for collecting data were used for the research. However, if we leave aside questionnaire and tests (that provide hard and easily comparable data), we notice that indirect observation (which provides retrospective data) was the most widely used to monitor the development of the teaching unit and of the pupils' metalinguistic competence. This is natural if we consider that the roles of teacher and researcher were the same person: this implied that, in class, all attention and energies should be dedicated to the pupils in order to support them in their process of language learning, so that only some field notes could be written down during the lessons. However, all the notes collected in the morning at school were re-elaborated in the afternoon, just a few hours later, by filling in the metalinguistic observation grid and the journal, before time could damage the memory of what had happened in class.

4.5 Research instruments

Below we present a description of the instruments (a questionnaire and some tests) that were created and used for gathering data at the beginning and at the end of the teaching unit, in order to register any possible change produced by the course. The instruments used to monitor the development of the Unit (observation grid and teacher's journal) are also presented.

4.5.1 Questionnaire about attitude towards languages and language learning

The questionnaire (that can be consulted in the Appendix) was created with the aim of discovering what young learners think about languages and the process of language learning. The point of view of the children involved in the project is expected to be a special one, given their condition of partial bilingualism in their L1 and Italian.

The title of the questionnaire ("According to me") contained an important indication for its correct filling in: in fact, every child was asked to choose the answers according to what they thought, as a result of their personal experience.

Under the title, the page is then divided into two columns, each one corresponding to a different investigative focus: the column on the left is dedicated to the perception children have about languages, while the one on the right is meant to portray what language learning is like according to them.

In both columns, multiple choice, closed questions were used to discover the pupils' point of view. The given possible answers were of qualitative nature (they were represented by adjectives and not by a numerical scale, which would have been inadequate and too complicated for children).

However, the distinctive feature of this questionnaire was the decision to associate each answer with a funny smiley that had been found on the net and carefully chosen so as to visually represent the meaning of the word it was related to. For example, when children were asked to select an adjective to describe a given language, they could choose between a face with hearts instead of eyes, a disgusted one and a terrified expression.

The decision to use smileys and other decorative elements (although they were printed black and white, which meant that they lost part of their attractiveness) rather than a more traditional and serious questionnaire was dictated by the wish to capture the attention of children, who might otherwise find it boring to spend one hour filling in some tests that were of no use for them. Therefore, this attention to the aesthetic dimension of research instruments was maintained also during the elaboration of metalinguistic tests (as was the case for the teaching materials that were presented in the previous chapter).

4.5.2 Tests on metalinguistic aptitude

After the questionnaire, learners were asked to fill in a test on their metalinguistic aptitude. This test consisted in 5 different parts (that can all be consulted in the Appendix, together with the guide used by the teacher, both during the initial and the final test):

1. words length evaluation;
2. lexical segmentation;
3. rhyme test;
4. word order test;
5. morphological manipulation.

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The first and the second tests aimed at verifying if children were able to consider form and content as separate aspects of language.

In the first one, learners were asked to determine whether the words they heard were long or short (in order to avoid any doubts, only evidently long or evidently short words were chosen: for example, “bill” was supposed to be a clearly short word, while “Kugelschreiber” was clearly long). Each of the eight words was repeated twice, in order to allow children to check their answers. Such words belonged to different languages (Italian, English, Spanish and German) because the task asked to look at the form of words, so the fact that pupils did not know their meanings would not affect the positive outcome of the test (moreover, by doing so an open attitude towards different languages was encouraged right from the beginning).

In the second test, pupils were asked to tell, for each of the sentences they heard, of how many words it was made up. The maximum length of the sentences was of 6 words (like in the case of “I gatti corrono sempre in cortile”, used in the initial test), so that the task was within the capacities also of 7-year-olds, despite their reduce experience of maths. Also in this case, every sentence was repeated twice. The sentences were in Italian, Spanish, English and German.

During the third test, learners were asked to decide whether the couples of words they heard rhymed (for example: “gatto - matto” rhymed, while “rana - geranio” did not). As can be seen from the provided examples, also in this case either the words of each couple clearly rhymed, or they evidently did not (such clarity was necessary, since not all children were familiar with the concept of rhyme, so their evaluation of the input would not be particularly sophisticated). Each of the eight pairs was repeated twice. Again, words belonged to Italian, Spanish, English and German, since the task consisted in comparing sounds, while meanings did not count. This task was meant to test the pupils’ phonological sensitivity.

The fourth test consisted in a set of eight Italian sentences, five of which contained a word order mistake. Pupils were asked to tell if the sentences were correct and, in case they were not, provide the right word order (by moving only one word, like in “Vuole Maria mangiare.”). All the sentences were in Italian, since some degree of familiarity with the morpho-syntactic rules of the language was necessary to complete the task. No limit of time was given. The objective of this test was to verify children’s morpho-syntactic sensitivity.

In all the first four tests, words and sentences were carefully chosen in an attempt of representing different degrees of difficulty.

Finally, the last exercise aimed at testing the pupil's morphological sensitivity and ability to autonomously deduce and apply new rules. Since most of the focusing activities carried out during the course implied some degree of morphological manipulation, this was considered the most important of the five tests on metalinguistic aptitude. Four alien languages were invented for the occasion (they were called URKA, ANDI, KINT and RAG), and learners were asked to deduce some simple morpho-syntactic rules after looking at the provided examples. A demonstration of how this should be done was given before the beginning of the test using the blackboard and chalks of different colours in order to visually signal the relevant morphemes (an operation that they were allowed to repeat on their papers during the test, if they found it useful), and children were asked to actively participate in it, since it was something completely new to them. Of course, even though the structure of the five tests remained the same during the first and the last lesson, the words and sentences chosen for each exercise were modified, still trying to maintain similar levels of difficulty. By doing so, the problems some children had understanding the instructions during entry tests (that required the repetition of examples) were avoided during final tests, and comparable data were obtained for research purposes.

	TEST	OBJECTIVES
1	Word length evaluation	<i>Verifying if children are able to consider form and content as separate aspects of language.</i>
2	Lexical segmentation	
3	Rhyme test	<i>Testing learners' phonological sensitivity.</i>
4	Word order test	<i>Testing learners' morpho-syntactic sensitivity.</i>
5	Morphologic manipulations	<i>Testing learners' morphological sensitivity and ability to deduce and apply rules.</i>

6: Test on metalinguistic aptitude

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The structure of the tests was based on another test, called TAM 1, that was elaborated by G. Candilera and M. A. Pinto (2000: 14-18). The first four parts of our test were inspired by this work, although Candilera and Pinto's data gathering instrument was meant to be used with younger children (aged between 4 and 6).

TAM 1 was preferred to another version of the Test di Abilità Metalinguistiche, the one described in the article of Pinto and Titone (1989: 59 – 128), that addressed children aged between 9 and 13. This decision was motivated by the fact that some of its parts seemed too difficult for the children who took part in the project, given their young age and still partial competence in Italian (this was the case, for example, of the tests of ambiguity, in which learners were asked to explain the polysemy of the words of a sentence, or of the one in which pupils, given the end of a word, should create new words by changing the first sound, both inadequate for children whose L1 is not the language used in the test). Moreover, this test was more semantically oriented than TAM 1 (for example, there were tests on the semantic acceptability of sentences and on synonymy, which would have been quite difficult for L2 speakers with a defective base vocabulary), a feature that did not match the focus of our project. Finally, in Titone's TAM the oral dimension of the tests was essential, because children were led by the interviewer to explain the reasons of their answers (a capacity that is expected from children aged between 9 and 13). However, it was not possible for us to dedicate weeks to carrying out tests individually with each child, given the limited duration of the internship. So it seemed more appropriate to re-use some of the tests of TAM 1, which, although they were originally meant to be carried out orally, could easily suit the written form.

Finally, our fifth exercise on morphological sensitivity was inspired by a test on metalinguistic aptitude called "Zal's language"³², in which learners were asked to derive the rules of an imaginary language and use them to manipulate new words. This kind of exercise was perfectly suitable for a written test, produced easily comparable data and, to some extent, was propaedeutic to the activities of focus on form that would be carried out during the following learning units.

³² This activity was elaborated by Coonan for an *Eveil aux Langues* project.

4.5.3 *Metalinguistic observation grid*

During every lesson, the metalinguistic reflections expressed by every child were noted down. At the end of the lessons, such field notes were stored in a file that contained the so called “metalinguistic observation grid”.

This was an event-based observation grid, since it recorded the occurrences of a specific phenomenon. Every cell of the grid corresponded to a learner: there, all the Language Related Episode produced by the child during the course were catalogued (a detailed explanation of the concept of LREs and their classification will be provided in the discussion of the data gathered during the research, in chapter 6). Moreover, they were grouped according to the date in which they had been recorded.

For each LRE included in the grid, it was expressly specified whether the child’s reflection had emerged spontaneously or whether, as happened most of the times, it had been stimulated by the teacher during specifically designed moments of the lesson that where dedicated to focus on form activities.

By choosing this kind of classification, two operations could be carried out, for different purposes:

- from a didactic point of view, the grid made it possible to monitor the developments produced in the learners’ metalinguistic aptitude over the course of the teaching unit: in fact, it allowed us to identify those learning units that had produced the highest number of LREs. Such lessons could then be analysed in order to determine which activities, techniques or exercises had been more effective in stimulating focus on form, and then extend their use to other learning units;
- from the point of view of research, the grid allowed us to monitor not only the overall effectiveness of the Unit in stimulating and strengthening the subjects’ metalinguistic aptitude, but also the developments (or the lack of any progress) in the ability to focus on form by each single child.

4.5.4 *Teacher’s journal*

Every day, at the end of lessons, the relevant aspects of each learning unit were recorded and described in a journal. Each page of the journal (dedicated to a lesson) contained a series of fixed types of information.

First of all, date, class and number of the learners present that day were indicated on top of the page in order to identify the lesson. Then, the topics that had been dealt with

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in class were listed: they included the lexical dimension of the initial part of the lesson, plus the morpho-syntactic aspects treated in Italian and other languages.

After that, all the activities carried out by the pupils were briefly described, often by making reference to the materials used in class. Here, possible variations with respect to the original structure of the lesson were indicated (such changes might be due to a lack of time that caused the exclusion or modification of some activities, to a special tiredness shown by the learners who were unable to complete the tasks, or to the necessity to differentiate activities according to the pupils' different needs).

The second part of each page of the record was titled "Observations": in this section, the field notes written down in class or other relevant facts that had been noticed during the lesson could find their place. Different headings were identified, in order to differentiate the types of information to be gathered.

The first heading was meant to focus on the pupils' participation in the proposed activities (their positive or negative reactions, comments, active involvement or rather inattention during different moments of the lesson).

The second one aimed at verifying the efficacy of the proposed materials: by doing so, any problems in the elaboration of specific materials (from simple typing mistakes to problems that might undermine the positive outcome of the activities) could be rapidly identified and signalled for immediate correction.

The third heading asked for the presence of problems of any kind, which could be discussed there in order to find a suitable solution and avoid their repetition in the future.

Finally, a general heading "Other" indicated the last part of this section. Here general observations about the development of the teaching unit could be reported, together with suggestions about necessary modifications in the structure of specific learning units or in the teacher's behaviour with the groups. But above all, this section was mainly dedicated to observations about the pupils' attitude towards different languages, cultures and the process of language learning, like relevant demonstrations of curiosity and interest or rather shame when using their L1.

4.6 Data analysis method

The questionnaire and the tests completed by learners at the beginning and at the end of the teaching unit were analysed in order to extract numerical data (for example, the number of correct answers in a specific test, or the number of answers of the same

type for a question of the questionnaire). The data gathered during the first lesson were then compared to the ones obtained during the last lesson of the course, and the results of such comparison were rendered visually through tables and graphs.

For what concerns the third instrument for data gathering that was used in the course of our research, the metalinguistic observation grid, the Language Related Episodes produced by learners were analysed, both from a quantitative and from a qualitative point of view (according to the classification proposed by Fortune and Thorp, 2001).

All these data obtained from tests, questionnaire and the observation grid were then re-elaborated in order to stimulate some personal reflections that were meant to comment on the efficacy of the teaching unit in producing the expected results, answer the research questions formulated before the implementation of the research and verify whether the original hypotheses and expectations were confirmed.

The amount of information contained in the teacher's journal was used to complement such reflections, both for what concerned the cognitive metalinguistic and the socio-cultural affective dimension of the research.

However, the discussion of data and the personal reflections on the experience were always guided by the theoretical framework that had been acquired during our academic path or had been integrated for the specific purposes of this research.

CHAPTER 5

THE TEACHING PROJECT

In this chapter we will describe the teaching experience on which the research is based. This experience consisted in the implementation of a teaching unit of Italian as a Second Language, which lasted 30 hours for each of the five groups of pupils of a Primary School whose L1 differs from Italian.

5.1 Potentials of the L2 class

As a consequence of their own nature, L2 classes show some specific features that make them a particularly rich teaching environment for what concerns linguistic subjects. Such features are: multilingualism, central role of languages and reduced number of pupils.

The concept of multilingualism refers to the presence, in a specific environment, of different languages. Therefore, it describes a societal feature. On the other hand, the word plurilingualism defines an individual condition according to which different languages coexist within the linguistic repertoire of a single person.

According to such a distinction, L2 classes are characterised by their multilingual nature, since their linguistic composition usually includes more than one language (as a matter of fact, at least two: the L1 one of the pupils – in case they all share the same linguistic origin – and the language that is spoken, inside and outside the school, in the country where the course takes place).

However, plurilingualism is also a feature of the group since the pupils master, although with different levels of competence, both their L1 and the L2, and sometimes other languages like, for example, a little bit of English that they study at school and that contributes to the widening of their linguistic horizon.

Both the conditions of multilingualism and plurilingualism can cause a series of positive attitudes in the pupils that might facilitate the process of language learning. For example, they can favour the development of curiosity about different systems of communication, which can have a strong impact on the motivation to acquire new ones.

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In addition to this, they provide an environment in which the comparison of different languages is natural and even spontaneous.

Finally, a plurilingual and multilingual class will potentially show a more open attitude towards languages since its members are used to facing authentic linguistic challenges in their everyday life.

The central role that languages play in the L2 class is also an important factor that can determine the success of the lessons in enhancing the learners' communicative competence in the target language. In fact, this condition can facilitate the development of language awareness and allow for a higher acceptance of a wide range of activities that involve different levels of manipulation of the linguistic code, including the more entertaining communicative tasks but also more traditional exercises such as pattern drills.

The last feature that makes the L2 class a special one is the limited number of pupils that usually take part in the lessons, a number between 2 and 5 children, depending on the class. This was a consequence of the school's choice to implement the L2 project during the hours (two every week) that each class dedicates to the study of the Catholic Religion, during which most of the non-native Italian speakers already used to leave their classes in order to do "Alternative activities" with other teachers.

The small number of pupils implies an increase in the individual speech time of each learner, which is also proportional to the quantity and quality of attention that the teacher can dedicate to each of them. This also implies a higher possibility of effectiveness as regards pair and group tasks: during these, learners can use the target language to fulfil real communicative needs but, at the same time, they can be carefully controlled by the teacher, who can intervene and correct at least the most relevant mistakes. By doing so, the fossilisation of incorrect structures can be prevented, while the specific language features on which the activity is focusing can be further highlighted and suggested to the learner.

The above-described characteristics of the L2 class are the premises that inspired the design of a teaching project that mainly aimed at:

- improving the learners' language awareness and ability to focus on the form of languages, and
- creating a linguistically rich environment in which children can feel free to develop and nourish their curiosity about languages.

5.2 The experience

After analysing the main reasons that led to the decision of projecting and implementing the L2 teaching unit, the following paragraphs will provide a detailed description of the teaching experience.

5.2.1 *The internship*

The L2 project was implemented during a period of internship, as provided by the plan of study of the second cycle degree programme of Scienze del Linguaggio. The internship took place at the primary school “Giuseppe Mazzini” of Montagnana (PD), and lasted 150 hours (corresponding to 6 CFUs).

Since the project exclusively addressed those learners whose L1 was not Italian, an appropriate position for it had to be found in the pupils’ timetable. Therefore, the most suitable solution seemed to be to use the slot that was usually dedicated to “Alternative Activities” (2 hours per week in every class), that is to say activities of various types organised for those children who do not attend the lessons of I.R.C. (Insegnamento della Religione Cattolica). By doing so, the children did not have to miss other important lessons and the number of pupils per group could be kept low (with the above described advantages). During the implementation of the teaching unit, the teachers who usually organised the so-called alternative activities for the learners remained in the classroom and offered their help for a better outcome of the lessons.

Five classes were chosen for the project (for a total of 18 children), which meant that for each group the teaching unit would last 30 hours, distributed over a period of 15 weeks. This was considered to be a sufficiently long lapse of time for the course to produce significant effects in the learners’ linguistic competence in Italian and attitude towards languages in general. The classes were chosen according to the number of non-native speakers of Italian that were present in each of them.

5.2.2 *The teaching unit*

As said before, the teaching unit lasted 30 hours for each group. The hours were divided into 15 lessons of two hours each. Before we explain in detail the structure of our project, it seems useful to recall the meaning of some technical terms that will be used to describe it.

About the learning unit, Balboni (2006: 41) explains that “l’unità di apprendimento è un blocco unitario di percezione di un problema (linguistico, nel nostro caso), che viene

Focus on form in the L2 class

percepito dapprima globalmente, affidando il lavoro all'emisfero destro, poi analiticamente nell'emisfero sinistro, per approdare alla sintesi e alla riflessione conclusiva"³³.

The term learning unit, coined in 2001, represents what learners realise they have learnt during one lesson. A series of interrelated learning units forms a teaching unit, that is characterised by an introductory phase (in which the teacher presents to the class what they are going to learn, how they are going to work and stimulates motivation), a group of learning units that are linked to one another, and a final phase (in which testing, consolidation, further improvement and deconditioning take place).

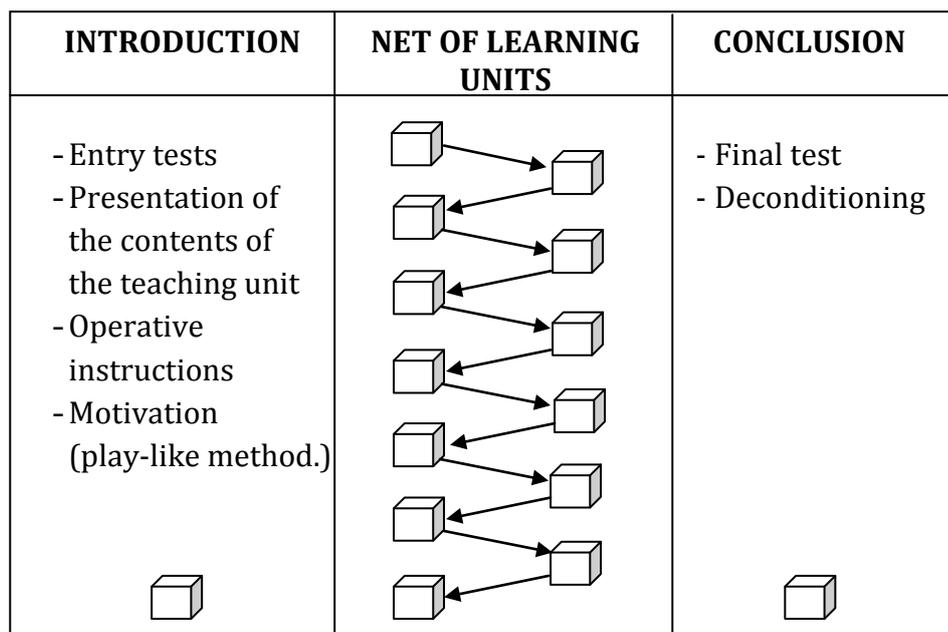
According to these definitions, our project can be described as a teaching unit that comprised 15 learning units: an introductory one (corresponding to the first lesson), a net of 13 "operational" learning units and a final one (that is to say, the last lesson).

During the first learning unit, the children were asked to take some diagnostic tests for research purposes, but they were also told what the contents of the learning units would be and how they would be asked to work. Moreover, the anticipation that a play-like methodology would be used contributed to arousing motivation in the pupils.

On the other hand, after a net of interrelated learning units (that developed different topics while maintaining the same base structure), the final learning unit was dedicated to testing (through the repetition of the tests that the children had taken during the first lesson in order to look for progress in their competence and attitude towards languages). After that, "deconditioning" took place through a series of activities that were meant to stimulate the learners' curiosity and interest in languages without specific language learning objectives (especially games that implied some degree of manipulation of language, but in which the play-like component was the most prominent).

The above described teaching unit can be represented as follows (we use as a model for our representation the scheme that appears in Balboni, 2008:21):

³³ "A learning unit is a unitary block of perception of a problem (a linguistic one, in our case), which is perceived at first globally, assigning the work to the right hemisphere, then analytically in the left hemisphere, in order to reach the final synthesis and reflection". (Our translation)



7: The teaching unit

5.2.3 Objectives and contents

The operation of planning the teaching unit was guided by some general aims (which are connected with the objectives of the research that is based on the teaching experience).

Since the main motivation for the implementation of the project was to improve the pupils' competence in the L2, of course one of the main goals of the Unit was to promote the learners' acquisition of Italian.

Moreover, the multilingual and plurilingual nature of the L2 class determined a second area of interest of the project, since it was seen as an optimal situation in which the children's curiosity for languages could be enhanced. Therefore, the project was also meant to stimulate the learners' awakening to other languages (and cultures) through the creation of specific moments, during every lesson, in which different languages would be brought to the pupils' attention. The direct observation of communicative systems that are different from one's own aimed at promoting the children's relativisation of their point of view (at least concerning languages) and might contribute to the avoidance of prejudices against other people who do not share their origins. Finally, the contact with unknown languages might also feed the learners' curiosity and strengthen their motivation to learn new ones in the future, or even to perfect their competence in their L1 in a more conscious way.

Focus on form in the L2 class

A third concern of the teaching unit was related to the concepts of “language awareness” and “focus on form”. In fact, the project also aimed at promoting occasions in which pupils were encouraged to focus on the form of their languages and favour the creation of language awareness. Moreover, progress in the learners’ metalinguistic competence was expected.

As can be seen from the above-mentioned objectives, the activities of Unit planning and implementation were characterised by three main areas of interest: a strictly linguistic dimension, a socio-cultural and affective one and a more cognitive, metalinguistic perspective.

AREAS OF INTEREST	TEACHING OBJECTIVES
<i>Linguistic dimension</i>	Promote the children’s acquisition of Italian.
<i>Socio-cultural, affective dimension</i>	Stimulate the children’s relativisation of their point of view, opening up to different languages and cultures, avoiding prejudice, strengthening motivation for the learning of new languages and feeding the pupils’ curiosity.
<i>Cognitive, metalinguistic dimension</i>	Encourage the children’s reflection on languages (their L1, Italian and the other ones involved in the learning units), through the promotion of activities that create language awareness and enrich the pupils’ metalinguistic competence.

8: Teaching objectives

These general objectives guided the choice of the specific contents and aims of every lesson. With the exception of the first and the last of the 15 lessons of the teaching unit (that were dedicated to the execution of the questionnaire and of tests that would be used for research purposes), the remaining 13 lessons were structured in such a way as to focus on specific aspects of the Italian language.

The selection of the contents was inspired by the synoptic tables of Rete 1 (Mezzadri-Balboni, 2000), the first of a series of textbooks created in order to support the process of acquisition of Italian as a Second Language.

Although there were five groups (corresponding to five classes of the school), the same program was carried out with all of them, since each group was heterogeneous from the point of view of the children’s competence in Italian (which depended on many

factors, such as the learners' linguistic background, length of their stay in Italy during the past years and degree of integration into the local community). If the program was the same for all groups, however, the way in which the lessons were realised and the materials used was sometimes subject to specific changes to facilitate the learners' acquisition of the contents.

Each learning unit was meant to develop three different aspects of communicative competence: lexical, cultural and morpho-syntactic (although the most relevant dimension in the light of the research that is based on the Unit is the strictly grammatical one). The following table shows the selected contents as they were included in the syllabus.

L. U.	VOCABULARY	CULTURE	FOCUS ON FORM
1	Acquaintance with the children. Tests: attitude towards languages and metalinguistic aptitude.		
2	Nations and nationalities	What languages are spoken in different nations?	Masculine vs. feminine morphology.
3	Greetings	When? (parts of the day, when you arrive/when you leave, degrees of formality).	The structure of questions.
4	Family	Structure of the family. How are family relations perceived in different cultures?	Possessives.
5	Jobs	Typical jobs in different cultures.	The notion of subject.
6	Daily routine	How is a child's day organized in different cultures? Timetables.	Verbal agreement.
7	Hobbies	Hobbies and games in different cultures; organization of free time.	Expressing the frequency of actions.
8	School	Organization of school activities.	Habitual vs. continuous aspect in the present.
9	Animals	What animals can be found in Italy? And in other countries? What animals are considered pets?	Singular vs. plural morphology.
10	Dresses and colours	What do people wear in different cultures?	Nominal agreement.

Focus on form in the L2 class

11	The house	Typical features of houses in different cultures.	Articles.
12	The body	Non verbal communication (how can we use our body to communicate?).	Giving orders (imperative mood).
13	Food	Cultural habits that are related to food.	Offering and asking for things.
14	Tales	Typical tales in different cultures.	Talking about the past.
15	Tests: cultural dimension and metalinguistic aptitude. Goodbyes.		

9: The syllabus

These contents, however, underwent some modifications over the course of the Unit as a result of the feedback received from the learners during the lessons.

2.4 Learning units

The 13 interrelated learning units that formed the central part of the teaching unit were all programmed on the base of a common structure. This structure included three main moments, in which different aspects of the lesson were developed:

- lexical and cultural dimension;
- focus on form,
- practice of the newly discovered rules through communicative tasks.

The first part consisted in the presentation of the topic that would be dealt with during the lesson, followed by some work on vocabulary in order to widen the learners' personal lexicon. This moment was considered particularly important since the children who took part in the project were supposed to have already acquired some basic vocabulary during their stay in Italy, but in most cases lacked an in-depth knowledge of the lexicon, also as regards common every-day words. Moreover, the exploration of vocabulary increased the comprehensibility of the input pupils received, a condition that is necessary for language acquisition and for the efficacy of focus on form activities.

In addition to this, the first part of the lessons also offered the chance to discuss about cultural phenomena.

While widening their lexicon, children were guided to notice some relevant language features that were made salient in the input they received. For example, the activity of enrichment of the vocabulary related to nations and nationalities in Lesson 2 naturally

led the pupils to notice the existence in Italian of different classes of adjectives, each one having their own rule for generating gender morphology.

During the central part of the lesson, learners were asked to focus on the previously identified language features. Relevant examples were provided with the active cooperation of the children, who were often asked specific leading questions in order to elicit words or sentences that would support the reasoning operation. Then, pupils were given a few minutes to carefully observe the examples and try to notice the differences that existed among them. This operation was carried out individually and in silence. After that, children were asked to tell the rest of the group what had struck them, and all their spontaneous comments were listened to before revealing what the expected answer was.

After listening to the children's impressions, their ideas were summarised and integrated in order to build the learners' own rule, always emphasizing the fact that they had created it on their own, without the need to resort to a grammar book. So, learning languages other than one's own is possible and everyone can do it, even small children with little experience of how to do it.

The rule was then formalized by filling in a prearranged text (named "La MIA regola!") that was included in the paper every child received during the lessons, and which served as reference material for the activities.

After actively recreating a rule of Italian, however, learners were asked to focus on the behaviour of an equivalent element or phenomenon in other languages, which might be the First Languages of the children, other foreign languages (such as English or Spanish) or even imaginary languages (the so-called "Alien languages"). Relevant examples were gathered in advance in order to help the children find appropriate language material, check the correctness of their translations and guide their reflexions, although it was not always easy to find reliable and useful material about Chinese, Albanian and Moroccan³⁴ grammar on the Internet.

The last part of the lesson was usually occupied by communicative tasks, pair activities or written individual exercises, which were meant to help the learners practise and fix in their memory the recently formalised rule of Italian.

³⁴ It was particularly difficult to find material about Arabic, since this language is subject to huge diatopic (and not only) variation, and although all the speakers of Arabic who took part in the project came from Morocco, most of the times they disagreed with one another about the translation of words or sentences and attributed such mismatches to the use of different geographic varieties.

Focus on form in the L2 class

If we look at the structure of the lessons as a whole, we will notice that it follows the traditional design of the teaching unit elaborated according to the theories of Gestalt. Such theories identify three main moments in the process of acquisition that reflect the way in which our brain works (as is explained by Danesi's Bimodality and Directionality Theories³⁵): globality, analysis and synthesis.

In fact, during the first part of the lesson, the new topic is introduced and presented in a holistic way through the work on vocabulary, which gives the children the possibility of familiarising with the topic in general terms (without being asked to analyse any specific morpho-syntactic aspect of the language, yet). This first introduction, the possible cultural implications of the theme and the anticipation of what would be done later during the lesson create motivation in the children.

Then, during focus on form activities (both about Italian and other languages) the language forms that learners have been induced to notice are analysed, through hypothesis making and testing, until an appropriate rule is cooperatively formulated.

Finally, the rule is used and practised through exercises, learning activities or tasks of various types in order for the newly discovered language mechanism to enrich the pupil's interlanguage, thus creating a superior synthesis of what has been discovered during the lesson.

If we compare the structure of these lessons with the model of teaching unit proposed by Freddi in 1979, we might notice one major difference: while Freddi positions reflection on language after the synthetic moment of practice, in our Unit reflection was the natural conclusion of analysis, and preceded the consolidation of the rule through various types of activities. This choice depended on what the main focus of the teaching unit was, which, for research purposes, aimed at helping the children develop their capacity to focus on the form of languages and promote language awareness. Therefore, reflection became the real centre of every lesson. Moreover, this was also due to a very simple reason: in fact, since the teaching unit addressed children, it would have been very difficult to maintain the learners' attention in the final part of the lesson. Finally, it seemed more appropriate to reward the learners' effort to notice and make hypotheses

³⁵ According to Marcel Danesi (professor of Semiotics and Communication Theory at the University of Toronto), the two hemispheres of our brain are responsible for two different "modes of learning" (Mollica, 2008: 3): the right hemisphere works in an "intuitive-experimental" way, while the left one is "reflective-analytical". However, both modes are involved in the process of acquisition (Bimodality), although there is a natural direction as regards the order in which they act in the process (Directionality): the right hemisphere comes first, so that a global perception of the object of acquisition precedes its analysis.

about language facts by immediately formulating the rule, rather than waiting for a second, more detailed reflection after some exercises, with the risk of losing not only the pupils' attention, but also their memory of what had been said before.

5.2.5 Exercises, activities and tasks

Before we present the range of activities and exercises that were used during the implementation of the course, it might be helpful to give some definitions of three key terms: exercise, learning activity and task.

As we read in Coonan (2002: 173-4), exercises are usually written, carried out individually and focus on the accuracy of the learner's competence, while learning activities usually imply the presence of more than one pupil and stimulate the learner's fluency and socio-pragmatic competence.

On the other hand, the term "task" refers to a learning situation in which pupils are asked to carry out a non-linguistic assignment, for which they have to resort to all their abilities and competences, including the communicative one. By doing so, their language competence is enriched, even though they are not aware of it.

Now that a clear distinction has been made, let us analyse the main techniques that were included in the implementation of the teaching unit.

For what concerns the acquisition of new vocabulary, all the proposed activities worked on semantic fields (that is to say, words that belong to the same lexical area) and, when it was possible, on complete systems, in order to facilitate the accommodation of new words in the semantic memory (Caon, 2008: 84).

In the vast majority of cases, words were collected through brainstorming: this could be totally free (given a certain topic), or rather aided by some kind of support (like the use of images, of posters, or of more specific backup material, like an atlas or a family tree), as happened most of the time. In a few cases, new words were provided through reading activities, for which short texts and some questions that would guide comprehension were prepared.

Another type of activity that was used (although less often) to explore the vocabulary of Italian was the so-called "Taboo" (from the name of the famous board game), in which children were asked to explain the meaning of a given secret word to the rest of the pupils, who should try to guess it. The rules of the original game include a condition according to which the definition should not contain a series of words (reported under the secret one) that are the most commonly used to refer to it. This rule was eliminated

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when playing with the children, since it would have made it too difficult for them to succeed. “Taboo” was also used as a deconditioning activity at the end of the teaching unit, while sometimes it was inserted at the end of single learning units when there was extra time before the bell rang, or if children seemed too tired for more demanding activities (this was possible because a small box containing new words that had been learnt during the previous learning units was taken to every lesson).

In both cases, the new words were reported on the learners’ copybook in the form of a list, a spidergram (that is to say, a diagram with a word in the middle of the sheet representing the general theme and a series of other words that belong to the same lexical field connected to it through some branches) or next to corresponding images, so as to facilitate memorisation.

The techniques that were used to stimulate noticing and guide the learners’ focus on language will be dealt with in detail in the following chapters.

As regards the final part of each learning unit (the one that was dedicated to the consolidation of the newly discovered rules), an analysis of the implemented activities reveals the predominance of exercises over communicative tasks. In fact, of the 13 central learning units of the project (one of which was dedicated to a revision of the contents of the previous lessons), only 4 contained communicative tasks (an incomplete grid of which each member of the pair had different parts, an interview, the dictation of an outfit and of some gestures to a classmate). Only one included a creative (although individual) learning activity, while 7 were the learning units that ended with exercises of various types that were meant to enhance the pupils’ accuracy about the employment of rules. Some examples of such exercises are: filling in a family tree with the appropriate possessives (in pairs), writing sentences given a specific subject or describing the situation represented in an image using two related sentences (one in the Simple Present, the other one using the progressive periphrasis “stare + gerund”), both of which were carried out individually.

The teaching unit was also characterised by the wide use of a play-like methodology, which seemed particularly suitable due to the young age of the learners. The play-like aspect of the lessons was especially evident in some of the proposed activities, that were inspired by famous games like “Memory”, “Nomi, cose, città”, “Sacco pieno, sacco vuoto” or the already mentioned “Taboo”.

The first one was revisited by creating pairs of cards on which, with inks of different colours, the subject and the predicate of a sentence were separately written. Then, the

cards were displayed on the table (the writings being covered) and the children, in turns, turned two cards each in order to reconstruct the original sentence. For them it was a game, but what they were actually doing was focusing on the agreement relation that exists between a verb and its subject.

The game “Nomi, cose, città” was proposed during the lesson that was dedicated to animals, in order to widen the children’s vocabulary about the topic. Children were asked to pick a letter of the alphabet and then try to remember as many animal names beginning with that letter as they were able to.

As regards “Sacco pieno, sacco vuoto”, on the other hand, it was used only with one group, whose members showed particular problems when they were asked to recognise the presence of double consonants in a word. They had to stand up (“sacco pieno”) when they heard a word with no double consonants, and squat (“sacco vuoto”) when they heard a word that contained them.

All these games (as well as other activities) were made more entertaining and enjoyable through the introduction of a score (even though creating competition among the children sometimes entailed the risk of negative reactions for those who did not win).

5.2.6 Teaching materials

Original materials were produced in order to support the pupils’ process of acquisition, since no pre-existing textbook was used in the lessons. Such materials enriched the pupils’ LASS (Language Acquisition Support System), a label introduced by Bruner that refers to a series of potential sources of language acquisition at the learner’s disposal (and includes the teacher’s learning action, help that is offered by peers and materials that can be strictly learning or of different nature, like *realia* or everything that is available on the net).

In our case, the materials that were created for the teaching unit consisted in working sheets (that each child received at the beginning of every learning unit and that contained the exercises and activities of the lesson) and support materials of various nature (which were used by the teacher, mainly during the initial part of the lesson, in order to promote brainstorming activities and the acquisition of vocabulary). The latter varied a lot according to the purpose for which they were elaborated. For example, some lessons required the creation of posters, of a family tree, of a series of images or of cards that were used to revisit famous games so as to facilitate language acquisition (see

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paragraph 2.2.7). Other such materials, on the other hand, were *realia* like an atlas or an illustrated “Dictionary of animals”, which were taken to class in order to capture learners’ attention with their colourful images.

Most of the elaborated materials were produced using common technologies (a word processor for texts and images found on the Internet) but always paying attention to some relevant details.

For example, all papers were characterised by a similar layout: the frame that decorated the page, the choice of the fonts used to give instructions about exercises, the fonts used to write them and the one chosen for titles were always the same. Moreover, all papers contained an immediately recognisable section named “La MIA regola!”, which was essential for the activities of focus on form since it aided the formulation of rules that would constitute every pupil’s personal reference grammar. The same thing happened with the section dedicated to multilingual focus on form, which appeared in the papers created for the first lessons of the teaching unit.

The creation of patterns as regards layout aimed at helping pupils become familiar with the structure of the learning unit and stimulate autonomy in the use of materials.



La MIA regola!

In italiano:

Esistono modi diversi per dire:

- cosa faccio di solito (ad es. _____
_____)
- e cosa sto facendo adesso (ad es. ____
_____) che si forma usando
_____ + _____.

10: “La MIA regola!”



11: Multilingual Focus on Form

Another important aspect that was taken into consideration during the phase of material production was the “attractiveness” of all materials that always needed to be eye-catching in order to obtain pupils’ attention. Children are used to watching colourful cartoons and playing high definition videogames, so it is fundamental for learning materials to match up to their expectations. Therefore, the choice of original fonts (like “**Jokerman**”, that was used for titles) and the wide use of images (many of which were funny, or reproduced the children’s favourite cartoons) become particularly important for the positive outcome of lessons. Moreover, such materials offered a surplus value with respect to the cartoons or videogames children use in their free time, since the former allowed pupils to give free rein to their imagination in order to personalise them. Neither should we forget that the use of carefully chosen images can facilitate the process of memorisation of new words, which are associated with corresponding visual elements, thus taking into account the needs of those children whose visual intelligence prevails over other types of intelligence.

However, in order for materials to be actually attractive, there needed to be variation in the choice of new images and graphic solutions, in an attempt to surprise learners every week.

Last, but not least, all materials needed to be usable: for example, lines and spaces needed to be wide enough for primary school learners to write in them (a feature that could not always be easily obtained, given some pupils’ giant writing).

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All these observations show that form is actually important in the creation of materials, since it needs to have the power to stimulate a positive attitude towards the lesson and capture learners' attention. A colourful poster or a small decorated box containing little cards might seem banal to an adult, but for children of that age they are immediately identified as beautiful and pleasant, and such positive qualities are extended to the activities that are related to them.

Some examples of the materials produced for the teaching unit are available in the Appendix (the first one is a paper that was used for an activity on vocabulary and focus on form about school and the opposition between Present Simple and the periphrasis "stare + gerund", while the second and third papers were used by a pair of children to carry out a two-way task on the morphology of adjectives in Italian).

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS: A PLURILINGUAL FORM-FOCUSED APPROACH IN PRIMARY SCHOOL L2 CLASSES

In this chapter we will try to answer the research questions we introduced in chapter 4 by presenting and analyzing the relevant data that were gathered during the implementation of the research project.

Even though 18 pupils took part in the course, only the data produced by 13 of them will be analysed in the present chapter. This decision was motivated by two main reasons:

- three of the children did not complete both the entry and the final tests and questionnaires (either because they joined their group after a few lessons or because they ceased to take part in them), so it was not possible to compare their answers before and after the teaching unit;
- the two learners from class 2A who were present during the whole duration of the teaching project required the creation of different, more traditional learning units (in which no multilingual focus on form activities were done) since they were unable to concentrate sufficiently enough to carry out the proposed activities because the lesson took part in the afternoon (see paragraph 4.3.2); therefore, their data were not comparable to the ones obtained in the other classes.

6.1 Children's attitude towards languages

The first research question is concerned with the learners' attitude towards languages before the implementation of the teaching unit:

(1a) Do young learners show a positive attitude, a sense of opening towards languages (both their L1 and other languages)?

The relevant data that will be used to try to answer this first question were obtained through the already mentioned questionnaire about attitude towards languages and

language learning. The eight statements of this data gathering instrument were coded as follows:

CODE³⁶	STATEMENTS
<i>AL 1</i>	My language is ...
<i>AL 2</i>	Italian is ...
<i>AL 3</i>	English is ...
<i>AL 4</i>	Other languages are ...
<i>AL 5</i>	Learning my language was ...
<i>AL 6</i>	Learning Italian is ...
<i>AL 7</i>	Learning English is ...
<i>AL 8</i>	Learning other languages is ...

12: Questionnaire: coding

The answers to statements AL 1, 2, 3 and 4 given by learners during the first lesson of the course provide useful data to respond to the first research question. The pupils were asked to choose among five different possible answers: each language could be defined as “facile” (easy), “difficile” (difficult), “bella” (beautiful), “brutta” (ugly³⁷) or “strana” (strange). However, it was only when the questionnaires were taken to class that it became clear that the answers provided for these statements would require a double choice: one for what concerns the degree of difficulty of the language and the other one as regards a more “aesthetic” evaluation of it (was it beautiful, ugly or strange?³⁸). Such a distinction should have been visually signalled to the children in order to prevent mistakes, but at that point it was too late to modify the layout of the page and identify two distinct groups of answers. In spite of this, the problem was easily overcome by guiding the completion of the questionnaire (an operation that would have been done anyway), in order to make sure that the right number of answers was given by every child. In case of mistakes (which took place, when only one answer was selected, or when two adjectives of the same category were ticked) the presence of the child’s name on the back of the paper made it possible to ask him/her to answer the statement again.

³⁶ The code “AL” refers to “Attitude towards languages”.

³⁷ In the Italian language, judgments of value are often expressed in aesthetic terms, like in this case.

6. Analysis: a plurilingual form-focused approach in primary school L2 classes

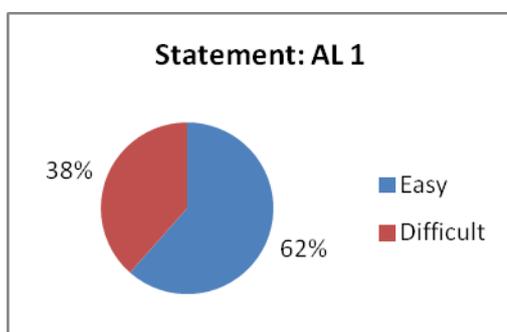
Therefore, the two types of answers to statements AL 1-4 will be treated separately, distinguishing between judgements about the degree of difficulty (group (a): “easy” and “difficult”) and the ones about the degree of “pleasantness” of languages (group (b): “beautiful”, “ugly” and “strange”).

As regards the first group of judgments, the pupils answered as follows (all decimals have been rounded up or down to whole numbers, which are easier to handle for our research purposes):

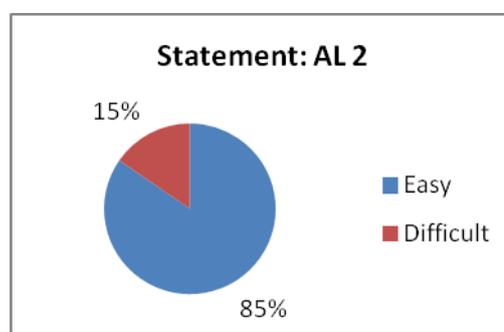
STATEMENT	“EASY”	“DIFFICULT”
AL 1	62 %	38 %
AL 2	85 %	15 %
AL 3	62 %	38 %
AL 4	15 %	85 %

13: Entry questionnaire: Statements AL 1-4, answers of group (a)

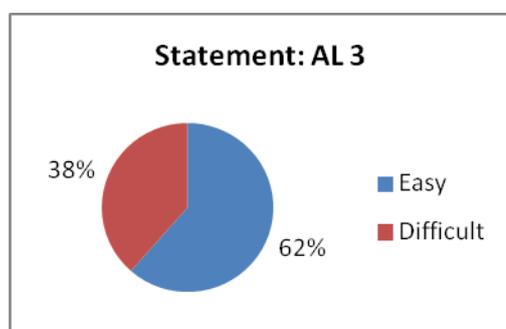
These data can be visually represented with the use of some pie charts, which render the relation between which languages the pupils perceived as easy or difficult more clearly.



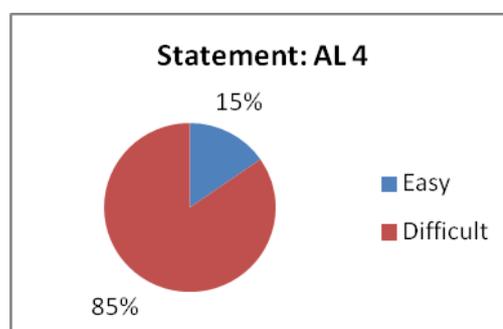
14: Entry questionnaire: Statement AL 1, answers of group (a)



15: Entry questionnaire: Statement AL 2, answers of group (a)



16: Entry questionnaire: Statement AL 3, answers of group (a)



17: Entry questionnaire: Statement AL 4, answers of group (a)

Focus on form in the L2 class

As we can see from these data, in spite of the fact that they were asked to give a general judgment of complex communication systems that had both easy and difficult aspects, learners showed a positive overall evaluation of the degree of difficulty of the languages they are used to dealing with inside and outside school: more than half of them defined as “easy” their L1 and English (statements AL 1 and AL 3), the foreign language studied by Italian primary school pupils starting from the first class, while the vast majority of children expressed the same judgement about Italian (AL 2), their L2. This particularly positive evaluation of Italian might seem surprising in a context of L2 teaching, but it can be explained by the almost lifelong duration of the pupils’ stay in Italy, which allowed for an almost native-like acquisition of the language.

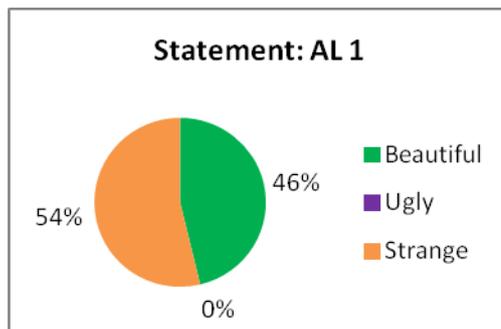
On the other hand, only few children expressed a positive judgement of what were called “other languages” (AL 4), thus creating a clear distinction with respect to the remaining statements. This feeling of reluctance towards the vast range of languages that can be included in the label, however, might find its explanation in the very nature of the statement. In fact, while filling in the questionnaire, children showed some embarrassment since they could think of both easy and difficult languages (usually Spanish and German, respectively), and were unable to give a single answer. This uncertainty might have influenced their answers, although a sense of wariness when dealing with something unknown is completely natural and should be expected, especially from children with little (conscious) experience of languages and language learning.

Something slightly different was revealed by the second group of answers, as we can see from the following data:

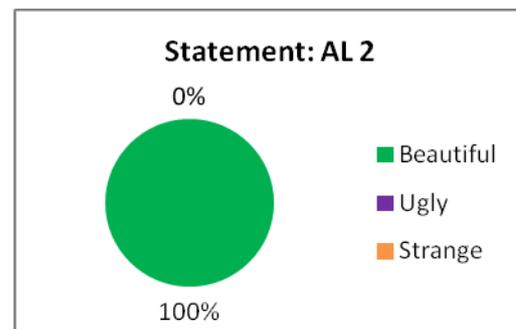
STATEMENT	“BEAUTIFUL”	“UGLY”	“STRANGE”
<i>AL 1</i>	46 %	0 %	54 %
<i>AL 2</i>	100 %	0 %	0 %
<i>AL 3</i>	92 %	0 %	8 %
<i>AL 4</i>	77 %	0 %	23 %

18: Entry questionnaire: Statements AL 1-4, answers of group (b)

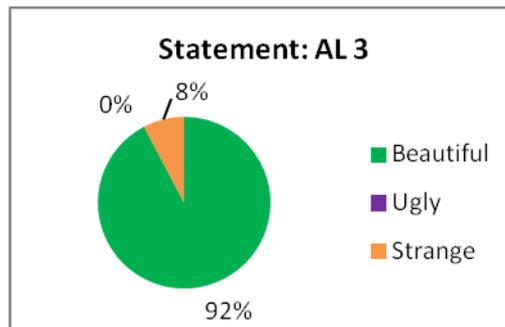
6. Analysis: a plurilingual form-focused approach in primary school L2 classes



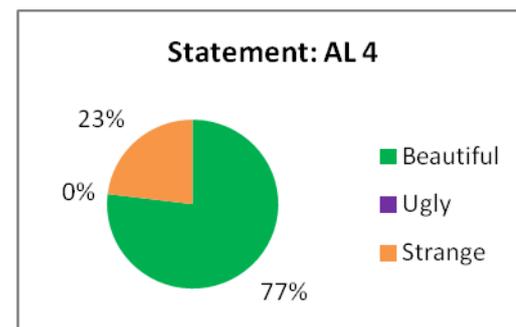
19: Entry questionnaire: Statement AL 1, answers of group (b)



20: Entry questionnaire: Statement AL 2, answers of group (b)



21: Entry questionnaire: Statement AL 3, answers of group (b)



22: Entry questionnaire: Statement AL 4, answers of group (b)

In this case, the learners' answers to the four statements were more heterogeneous: on the one hand, Italian (statement AL 2) was defined by all the pupils as "beautiful", and English (AL 3) still received a positive evaluation (only one child chose the adjective "strange"); on the other, the so-called "other languages" were mainly described as "beautiful", while the learners' native languages were classified by the majority of pupils as "strange". Moreover, it is also interesting to observe that none of the four (groups of) languages was defined as "ugly".

If we compare the answers of groups (a) and (b), we will notice some mismatches for what concerns the pupils' L1 and the so-called "other languages" (while English and especially Italian are described as both easy and beautiful): in fact, "other languages" are perceived as difficult but beautiful, while the children's L1s turn out to be easy but strange.

The results of statement AL 4 can be explained by children's natural curiosity and excitement about everything that surrounds them: this feeling of enthusiasm for what is new, however, is attenuated by their little experience of how to learn new languages, although their situation of partial bilingualism might lead us to attribute such weakening of curiosity to the lack of consciousness of the fact that they already have some experience with this regard.

The pupils' answers to statement AL 1 might be motivated by different factors. The L1s are mainly defined as "easy" (although 5 out of 13 children chose "difficult"), but when they are asked to express an "aesthetic" evaluation, learners choose "strange" rather than "beautiful", which might be the expected answer since this is the language that reminds the children of their families, the language of affection. However, this decision seems to be due to sociolinguistic reasons: in fact, although they had previously been reassured about the fact that there were no incorrect answers, providing they were sincere, learners tended to look at the papers of their classmates before choosing their own answers, as if trying to understand which the expected, less embarrassing answer would be. And such a choice seemed to depend on the degree of prestige associated with each language. Therefore, the realisation that their native languages were not considered prestigious in the language repertoire of Italian society, most learners decided not to choose the most positive answer (i.e. "beautiful") and opted for the least negative of the remaining options, "strange", which offers the advantage of not being negative although a bit vague.

On the base of these data, we can state, in response to research question (1a), that young learners do show a positive and open attitude towards languages, that might be perceived as more or less intriguing ("beautiful" or "strange") but are never defined as "ugly", and therefore unworthy of being curiously observed or learnt. This is especially true for Italian and for English, while the broadness of the label "other languages" gave rise to more heterogeneous, although mainly positive, definitions. A partial exception to this statement is represented by the pupils' L1s, which are described as "easy" and "strange" at the same time, probably in an attempt to show a higher degree of integration into the local society by distancing themselves from their non-prestigious first languages. Such results confirm hypothesis (1a), namely that learners would show a positive attitude towards languages in general, but a negative one towards their own L1s.

6.2 Children's perception of the process of language learning

The second research question deals with the pupils' perception of the process of language learning and its feasibility before the implementation of the teaching project:

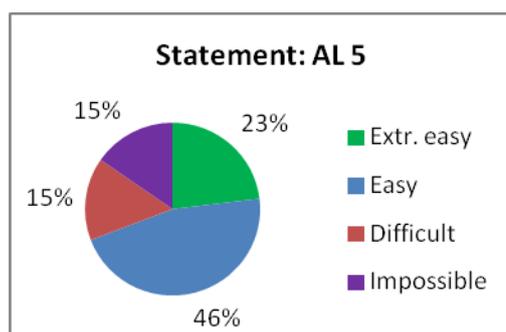
(1b) What is young learners' perception of the process of language learning (as related to their L1 and other languages)?

6. Analysis: a plurilingual form-focused approach in primary school L2 classes

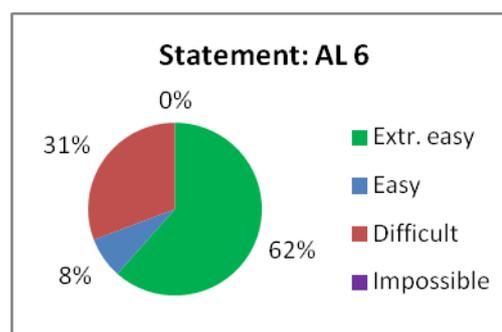
The research instrument that provides useful data in relation to this research question is, again, the questionnaire. This time, we will analyse the answers given during the first lesson to statements AL 5 (“Learning my language was ...”), AL 6 (“Learning Italian is ...”), AL 7 (“Learning English is ...”) and AL 8 (“Learning other languages is ...”). Children were asked to define the process of learning various languages according to their perceived difficulty. Four degrees of difficulty were provided by the answers among which the pupils’ were asked to choose: “facilissimo” (extremely easy), “facile” (easy), “difficile” (difficult) and “impossibile” (impossible). The children answered as follows:

STATEMENT	“EXTREMELY EASY”	“EASY”	“DIFFICULT”	“IMPOSSIBLE”
AL 5	23 %	46 %	15 %	15 %
AL 6	62 %	8 %	31 %	0 %
AL 7	15 %	38 %	23 %	23 %
AL 8	8 %	15 %	38 %	38 %

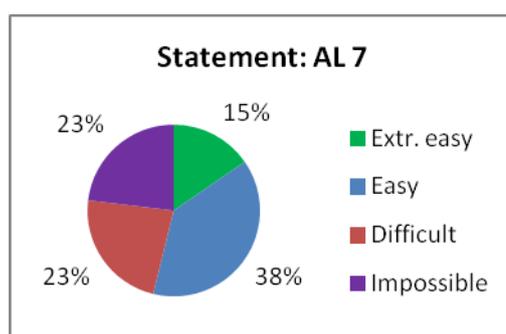
23: Entry questionnaire: Statements AL 5-8³⁹



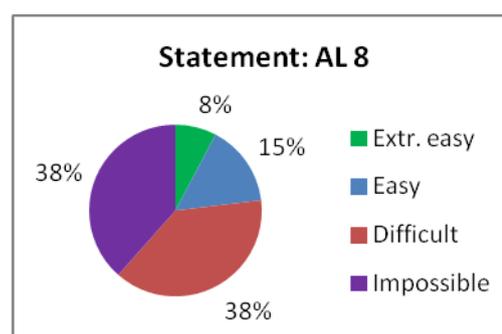
24: Entry questionnaire: Statement AL 5



25: Entry questionnaire: Statement AL 6



26: Entry questionnaire: Statement AL 7



27: Entry questionnaire: Statement AL 8

³⁹ The sum of the percentage values contained in the lines of this chart is slightly inferior or superior to 100 (99 or 101, respectively) as a result of the procedure of rounding. The same thing happens in charts 33 and 38. We decided to leave the values as they were (without modifying the results in order to obtain a total of 100) since this is considered the most rigorous choice by statistics experts, as reported by Caselli (2005:193).

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Our data reveal a general sense of confidence in the possibility of learning languages: the sum of the pupils who answered “easy” and “extremely easy” is superior to negative answers in the case of their L1s (69%) and L2 (70 %); the situation is more balanced in relation to English (53% of positive answers, as opposed to 46% negative expectations), while the so-called “other languages” are defined as “difficult” or even “impossible” to learn by 76% of the learners.

Again, the range of languages implied by the phrase “other languages” might be responsible for the results of statement AL 8, which clearly diverge from the ones obtained for statements AL 5 (the pupils’ L1s), 6 (Italian) and 7 (English) since they express pessimistic expectations about the possibility of learning languages: in fact, the children were often undecided and confused when they tried to choose an answer for this statement, because “other languages” might refer to both easy communication systems (such as Spanish, for example) and difficult and complex ones (like German, as they explained). Therefore, the diverging results obtained in this case might be a consequence of the lack of clarity of the statement itself.

As regards the balance between positive and negative expectations that can be observed in the results of statement AL 7, this partial deviation from the results obtained for statements AL 5 and AL 6 might be due to the fact that, in the Italian school system, as a result of a recent reform, English is taught by primary school teachers of other subjects who, therefore, have not received a specific training for language teaching. In our opinion, this lack of specific competences by the teachers who are responsible for the children’s learning of foreign languages in such a significant age range might be the cause of the observable swing from the trend revealed by statements AL 5 and 6.

In spite of this, our data allow us to state, in response to research question (1b), that young learners do show positive expectations about the possibility of learning languages, even if different degrees of confidence can be recognized according to the pupils’ familiarity with the languages mentioned in the statements: in fact, while the majority of children appear to be confident of the possibility of learning the languages they have already come in contact with (Italian, English and their L1s), they seem not to have realised yet that the learning processes they have experienced so far can be applied to new, not yet known languages. This might be the reason why they expressed a sense of perplexity while answering the last statement.

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Such results allow us to confirm hypothesis (1b) only partially: in fact, if it is true only a minority of children denied the possibility of learning languages, most of them positively evaluated such process, especially for what concerns Italian and their own L1s.

6.3 Effectiveness of the teaching unit: the socio-cultural affective dimension

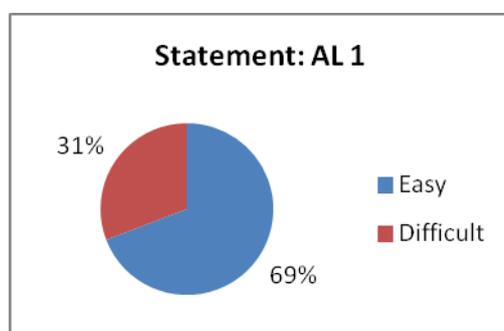
The third research question is meant to verify the effectiveness of the teaching unit, whose lessons always included activities that involved the pupils' L1s or other foreign languages, in promoting in young learners a positive attitude towards languages and optimistic expectations about the possibility of learning languages:

(1c) Can focus on form on the languages of the group's repertoire promote an open attitude towards languages and positive expectations about language learning?

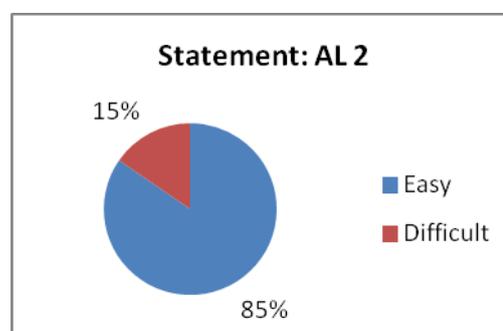
In order to answer this question, the data gathered through the questionnaire during the first lesson will be compared with the ones obtained through the final questionnaire, in search of differences that might have been produced by the teaching unit.

	STATEMENT	"EASY"	"DIFFICULT"
AL 1	My language is ...	69 %	31 %
AL 2	Italian is ...	85 %	15 %
AL 3	English is ...	46 %	54 %
AL 4	Other languages are ...	23 %	77 %

28: Final questionnaire: Statements AL 1-4, answers of group (a)

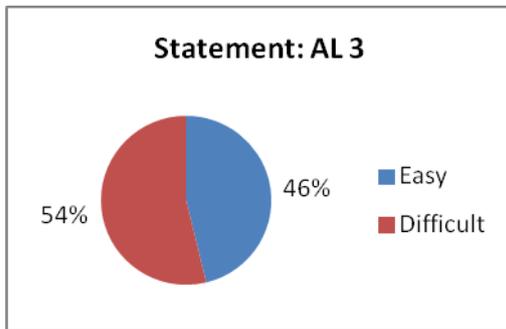


29: Final questionnaire: Statement AL 1, answers of group (a)

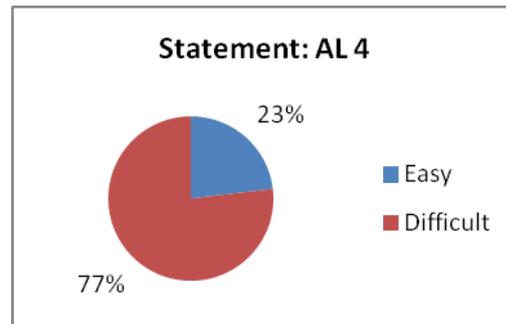


30: Final questionnaire: Statement AL 2, answers of group (a)

Focus on form in the L2 class



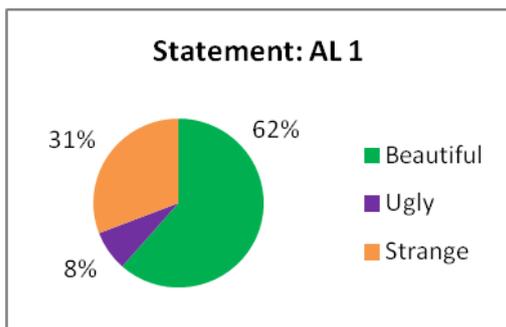
31: Final questionnaire: Statement AL 3, answers of group (a)



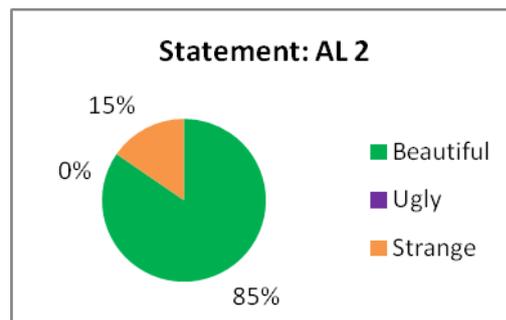
32: Final questionnaire: Statement AL 4, answers of group (a)

STATEMENT	“BEAUTIFUL”	“UGLY”	“STRANGE”
AL 1	62 %	8 %	31 %
AL 2	85 %	0 %	15 %
AL 3	77 %	0 %	23 %
AL 4	38 %	8 %	54 %

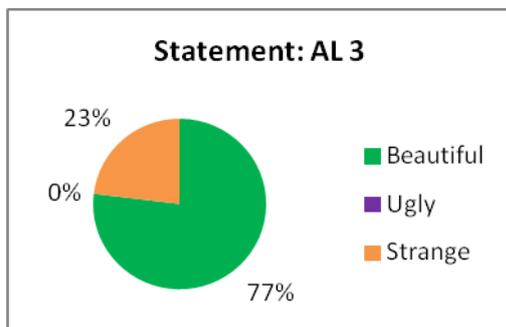
33: Final questionnaire: Statements AL 1-4, answers of group (b)



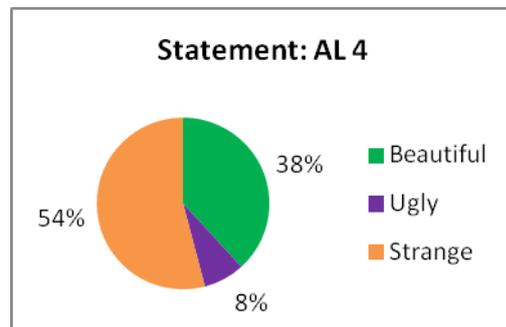
34: Final questionnaire: Statement AL 1, answers of group (b)



35: Final questionnaire: Statement AL 2, answers of group (b)



36: Final questionnaire: Statement AL 3, answers of group (b)



37: Final questionnaire: Statement AL 4, answers of group (b)

As we can see if we compare these first data to the ones presented in 6.1, the teaching unit seems to have produced some changes in the pupils’ attitude towards languages, although they are slight.

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The learners' native languages, for example, turn out to be perceived as a little more "easy", less "strange" and more "beautiful" than they were at the beginning of the teaching experience (although one child defined his/her L1 as "ugly"). Even if the change is small (it corresponds to an increase of 7% for the answer "easy" and of 16% for "beautiful"), it still proves an improvement in the pupils' perception of their own L1s, in spite of their marginality in the sociolinguistic context of the society in which they live.

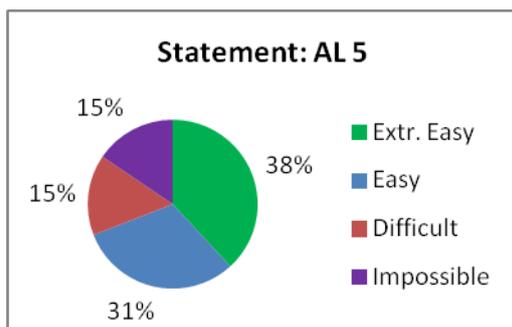
As regards Italian, on the other hand, no change occurred between entry and final questionnaire in relation to the degree of difficulty of the language, while the language started to be considered "strange" by 15% of the children who defined it as "beautiful" during the first lesson. This kind of modification in the pupils' opinion about their L2 might be explained by the discovery of new rules of the language, which did not affect its pleasantness, but rather made it more complicated in the children's eyes.

If we observe the data about English, we will notice an increase of 16% in the percentage of learners who defined it as a "difficult" and a "strange" language (even if the majority of children still consider it beautiful). This worsening of the learners' opinion about the foreign language might be the result of the introduction of a new methodology while analysing it. In fact, in their English classes, primary school children are mainly used to learning vocabulary or fixed sentences that they memorise, and very rarely do they break them down in order to analyse their morpho-syntax. On the contrary, during the learning units in which they were asked to observe English examples, the pupils were asked to focus on the formal dimension of the language in order to recognise its patterns and rules. We suggest that this practice might have added an impression of complexity in the learners' idea of the language, and thus could be responsible for the change shown by our data.

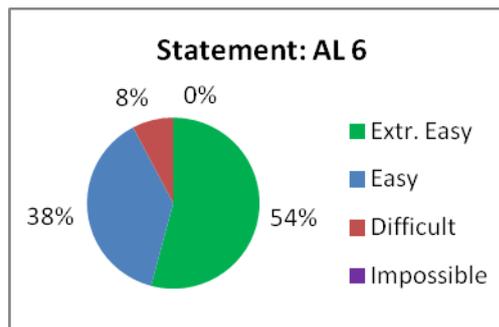
Finally, the so-called "other languages" also experienced a little change as regards their perceived degree of difficulty, which decreased by 8%, while they became more "strange" than "beautiful" thanks to an increase of 31% in the former answer (and one pupil even defined them as "ugly"). Such worsening in the learners' opinion about languages in general was explained by one of the children, who was asked why she had chosen negative answers to the statement in spite of all the activities of autonomous language discovery that had been successfully carried out in the course of the teaching unit. The answer was very simple: other languages can be autonomously analysed and learnt, but this process implies complex reasoning and reflection.

STATEMENT		“EXTREMELY EASY”	“EASY”	“DIFFICULT”	“IMPOSSIBLE”
AL 5	<i>Learning my language was ...</i>	38%	31 %	15 %	15 %
AL 6	<i>Learning Italian is ...</i>	54 %	38 %	8 %	0 %
AL 7	<i>Learning English is ...</i>	31 %	38 %	23 %	8 %
AL 8	<i>Learning other languages is ...</i>	8 %	15 %	62 %	15 %

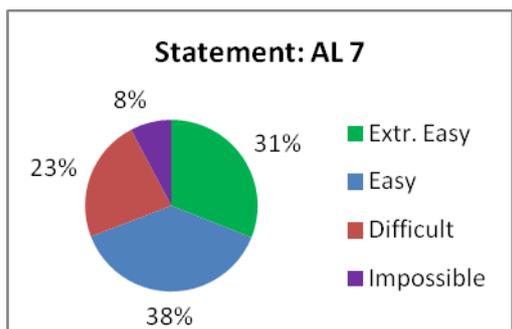
38: Final questionnaire: Statements AL 5-8



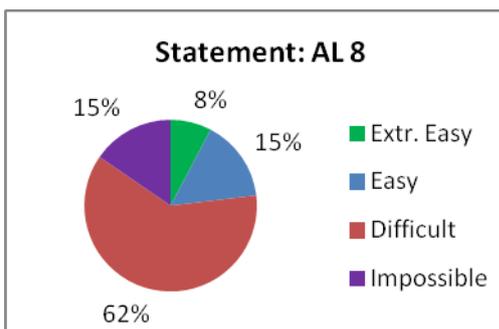
39: Final questionnaire: Statement AL 5



40: Final questionnaire: Statement AL 6



41: Final questionnaire: Statement AL 7



42: Final questionnaire: Statement AL 8

The comparison of this second group of data with the ones presented in 6.2 reveals a general increase in the learners’ confidence in the possibility of learning languages: in the case of the children’s first languages, for example, we can notice an increase of 15% as regards the answer “extremely easy”; with respect to Italian, there was a growth of 30% for the answer “easy” and a decrease of 23% for “difficult”. Also English underwent a decrease of 15% for the answer “impossible”, which corresponded to an increase of 16% for “extremely easy”. The data also show a decrease of 23% as regards the answer “impossible”, and an increase of 24% for “difficult”.

Although these data follow a unitary trend of increased optimism about the effectiveness of language learning processes, they might also seem in contrast with what is revealed by the first group of answers that were analysed at the beginning of this paragraph. In fact, with the exception of the pupils’ L1s, languages are perceived as more

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difficult and strange, but, at the same time, learning them seems to the pupils a more feasible operation. However, these facts are not really in contrast with each other as they might seem: in fact, the discovery of the unquestionable inner complexity of language systems does not necessarily discourage young learners about the possibility of understanding and learning them, provided they are trained to use appropriate cognitive tools to succeed in this enterprise.

According to these data, we can state that the teaching unit was successful in promoting a curious and confident attitude towards languages and language learning, as we had supposed in our hypothesis (1c).

6.4 Children's ability to separate form and meaning

The fourth research question deals with the learners' ability to treat form and meaning as separate dimensions of language, before the implementation of the teaching unit:

(2a) Are young learners able to concentrate on the form of languages, regardless of meaning?

In order to answer this question, we will analyse the results obtained by the pupils in three of the five entry tests on metalinguistic aptitude they took during the first lesson:

- Test 1 (coded as MA⁴⁰ 1): was meant to verify the children's ability to separate form and meaning by asking them to identify long and short words in different languages;

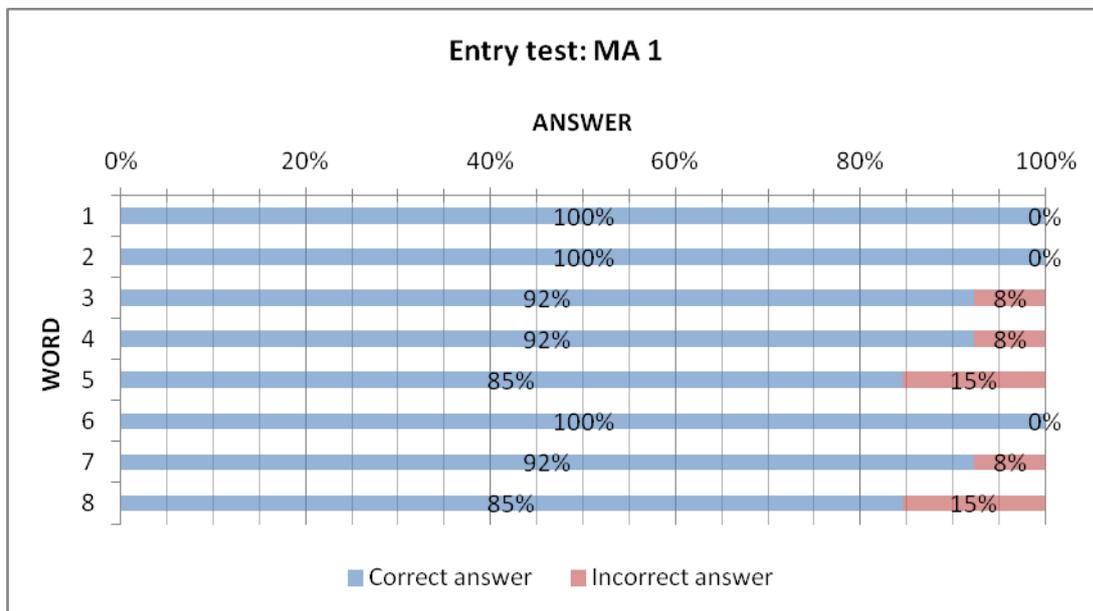
WORD	CORRECT ANSWER	INCORRECT ANSWER
1	100 %	0 %
2	100 %	0 %
3	92 %	8 %
4	92 %	8 %
5	85 %	15 %
6	100 %	0 %
7	92 %	8 %
8	85 %	15 %

43: Entry test: MA 1

⁴⁰ The code "MA" refers to "Metalinguistic aptitude".

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Our data can be visually represented with the use of a bar chart. The type of bar chart that has been chosen seems particularly suitable for our purpose since it expresses the relation that exists between correct and incorrect answers for each word, sentence or pair of words, while, at the same time, providing a global representation of the outcomes of each test.



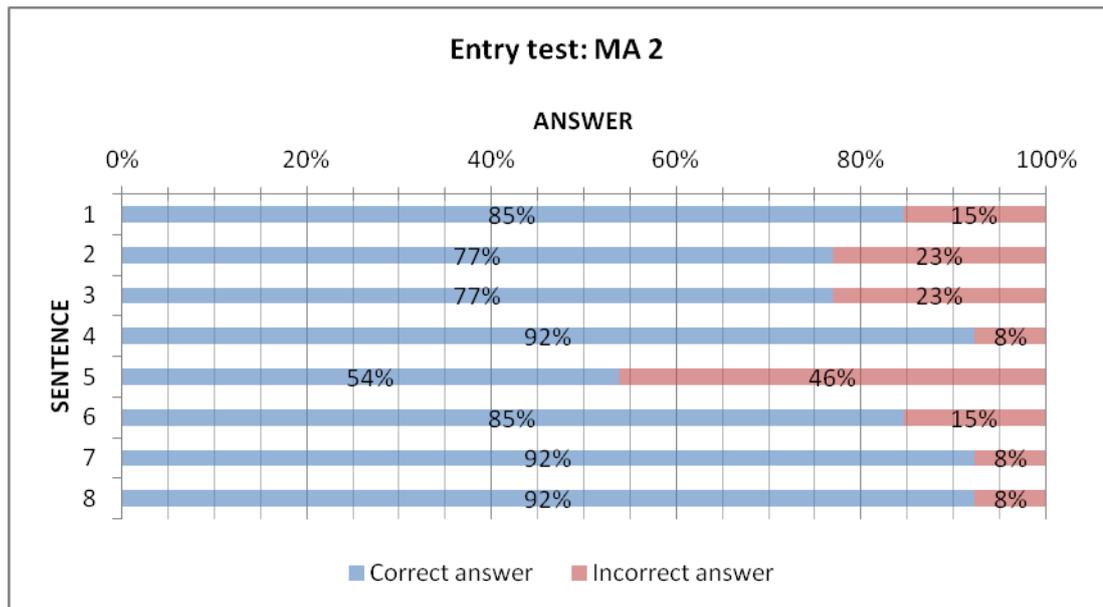
44: Entry test: MA 1

- Test 2 (coded as MA 2): was meant to test the learners' ability to distinguish between form and meaning by having them count the words of some sentences in different languages;

SENTENCE	CORRECT ANSWER	INCORRECT ANSWER
1	85 %	15 %
2	77 %	23 %
3	77 %	23 %
4	92 %	8 %
5	54 %	46 %
6	85 %	15 %
7	92 %	8 %
8	92 %	8 %

45: Entry test: MA 2

6. Analysis: a plurilingual form-focused approach in primary school L2 classes



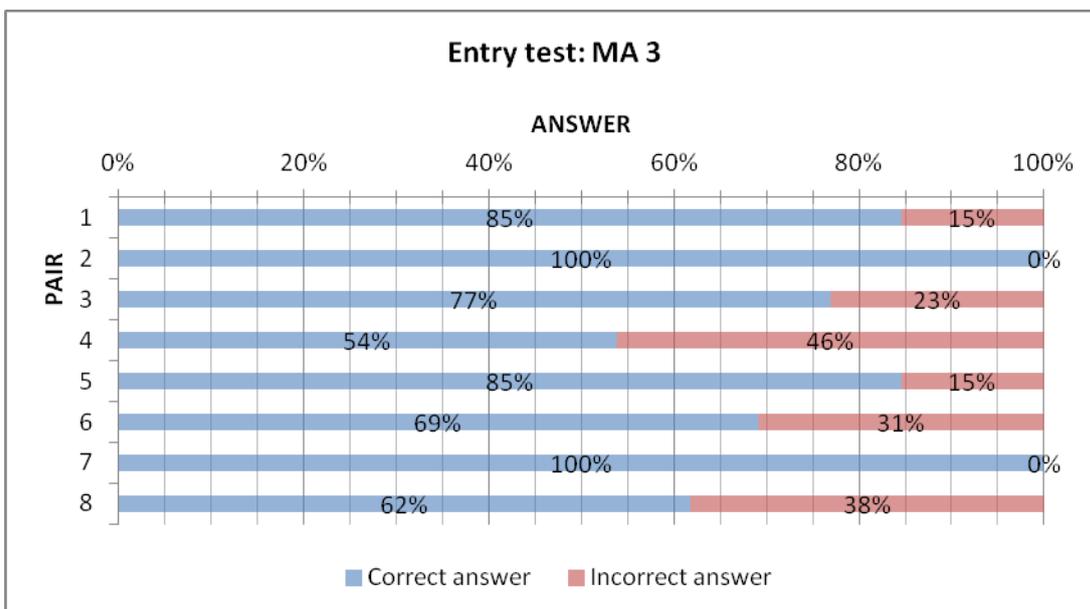
46: Entry test: MA 2

- Test 3 (coded as MA 3): was meant to check the pupils' phonological sensitivity (and, therefore, their ability to carry out a task that was exclusively based on the form of language) by asking them to decide whether the pairs of words of various languages they heard rhymed or not.

PAIR	CORRECT ANSWER	INCORRECT ANSWER
1	85 %	15 %
2	100 %	0 %
3	77 %	23 %
4	54 %	46 %
5	85 %	15 %
6	69 %	31 %
7	100 %	0 %
8	62 %	38 %

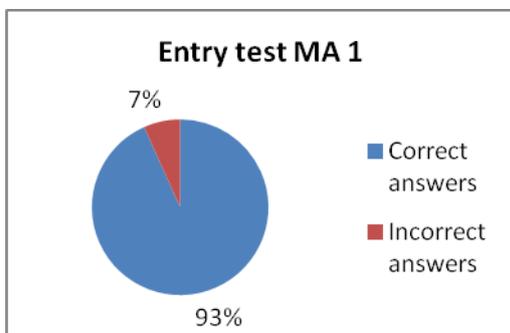
47: Entry test: MA 3⁴¹

⁴¹ In some cases, some children gave more than one answer for the same pair of words. This happened once with pairs 1,3 and 5 and twice with pair 4. Such answers were considered incorrect, since they indicate the pupils' incapacity to decide whether the words rhymed or not, and therefore to solve the task.

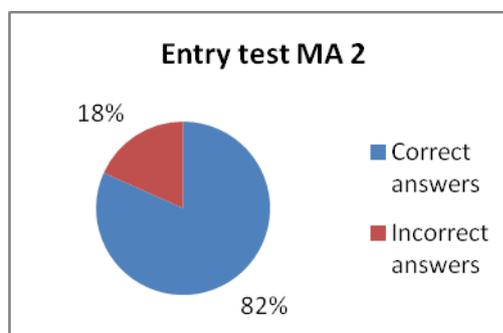


48: Entry test: MA 3

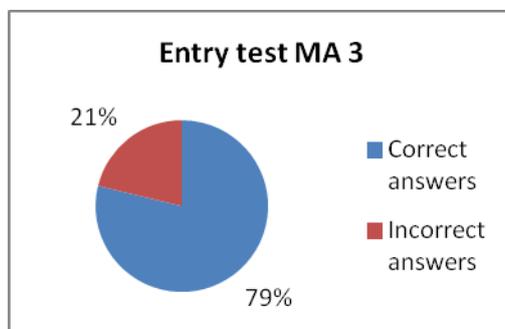
The results obtained by the pupils in tests MA 1, 2 and 3 reveal a high ability to separate the form and the meaning of words and sentences. In fact, if we add together the correct answers given by the learners in every test we obtain high percentages of success: test MA 1 totalled 93 % of correct answers, test MA 2 scored 82 % and test MA 3 obtained 79 % of right answers.



49: Entry test MA 1: overall results



50: Entry test MA 2: overall results



51: Entry test MA 3: overall results

However, some problems emerged during the first administration of the tests. In the case of test MA 1, for example, the ease with which learners analysed the words revealed

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that, probably, the task would have been more effective for our research purposes if only Italian words had been used, in order to create a clear mismatch between their meaning and their form (as was the case, for example, of word 3, “sassolino”, in which a long string of sounds contrasts with the small dimension of the word’s referent). However, while the learners were filling in the test it turned out that, for some children, the use of foreign languages seemed to complicate the choice rather than simplify it (as would have been expected, since the separation between meaning and form was thus facilitated), because, according to them, knowing the meaning of words was necessary to carry out the task. A couple of times during the first lesson the request to know the translation of some words was satisfied, a mistake that was no longer made during the following lessons, since children then chose their answers according to the length of the Italian translation. Moreover, sometimes children showed a more advanced metalinguistic competence than the one expected in this test, since they based their answers on the count of syllables (which, however could sometimes be misleading).

But the main problem was represented by the nature of test MA 2: in fact, its administration showed that the use of foreign languages at sentence level was too difficult for the children, since it did not allow them to distinguish where a word ended and the following one began. Therefore, sentences had to be pronounced slowly, almost revealing the correct answer by emphasizing the pauses between words. Another problem that emerged during this test was that some children counted the syllables or even the letters that made up each sentence, rather than the number of words, in spite of the fact that they had received clear instructions about it.

On the contrary, no specific problem emerged in relation to test MA 3, and even the presence of phones and phonemes that aren’t used in the Italian language did not seem to trouble the learners.

In the light of these considerations, we should probably put our evaluation of the data in its right perspective: in spite of their homogeneity, our data do not allow us to clearly investigate the pupils’ capacity to separately analyse form and meaning, or, at least, not the totality of them do. More specifically, we should not take into consideration the data that, in test MA 2, refer to foreign sentences (i.e. sentences 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7), since their slow pronunciation probably influenced the children’s answers, while only sentences 1, 4 and 8 offer a realistic (and still positive) portrait of the pupils’ abilities.

As regards test MA 1, on the other hand, we think that its results should not be disregarded altogether, as the problem we have identified might suggest: in fact, despite

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the expectable facilitation the use of foreign languages might produce, the learners' wish to know the meaning of words and their subsequent decision to choose the right answer according to the meaning and length of the Italian translation reveal their unease about a task that implied the separation between meaning and form. In spite of this sense of uneasiness, the positive results obtained by the children in this first test confirm their ability to separate the two dimensions of language.

According to these data and considerations, we can state, in response to research question (2a), that young learners who belong to the age range 7-10 are able to concentrate on the form of languages regardless of their meaning, contrary to our expectations as they were expressed in hypothesis (2a) (namely that the pupils would find it difficult to treat form and meaning as separate phenomena). However, it should be noted that these very positive results might be due, to some extent, to the structure of the tests: in fact, as we explained in 4.5.2, they were inspired by a TAM originally projected for younger learners, which was preferred to the one that addressed children belonging to the age range 9-13 in the belief that the pupils' partial competence in Italian would further complicate the tasks.

6.5 Children's ability to notice and reflect on formal aspects of language

The fifth research question is concerned with the learners' ability, before the implementation of the teaching unit, to carry out activities of analysis, reflection and manipulation that have the formal dimension of language as their object:

(2b) Can they notice formal aspects of language, focus and analytically reflect on the language phenomena and structures they have noticed (identify patterns, regularities, inductively formulate rules, apply them to generate new words or sentences)?

The results obtained during the first lesson in two different tests will be taken into consideration in order to answer this question: test MA 4 will provide an insight into the pupils' ability to implicitly focus on the form of language and notice its phenomena, while test MA 5 will show whether or not young learners can explicitly carry out cognitive, metalinguistic processes that allow for the identification and reflection on the regularities of languages. Moreover, we will analyse the amount of LREs produced by the children over the course of the teaching unit: these soft data

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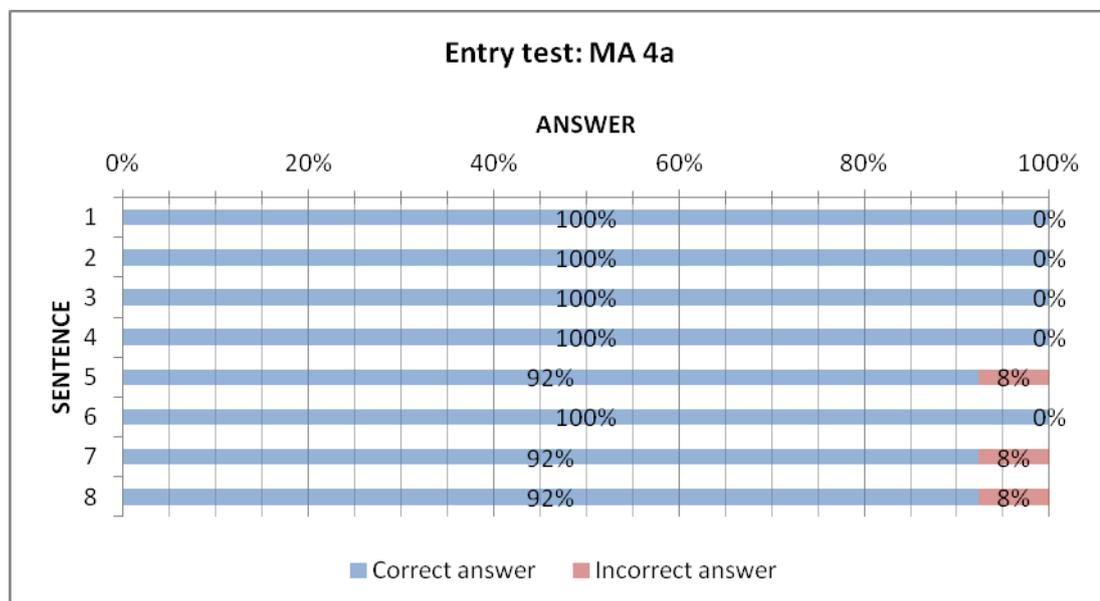
will help us enrich our reasoning and provide a more complete answer to research question (2b).

6.5.1 Tests MA 4a, MA 4b and MA 5

The first test whose results we are going to analyse in this paragraph required the children to express grammaticality judgements about eight sentences of Italian (data coded as MA 4a) and correct those that they identified as wrong, due to word order mistakes (MA 4b).

SENTENCE	CORRECT ANSWER	INCORRECT ANSWER
1	100 %	0 %
2	100 %	0 %
3	100 %	0 %
4	100 %	0 %
5	92 %	8 %
6	100 %	0 %
7	92 %	8 %
8	92 %	8 %

52: Entry test: MA 4a



53: Entry test: MA 4a

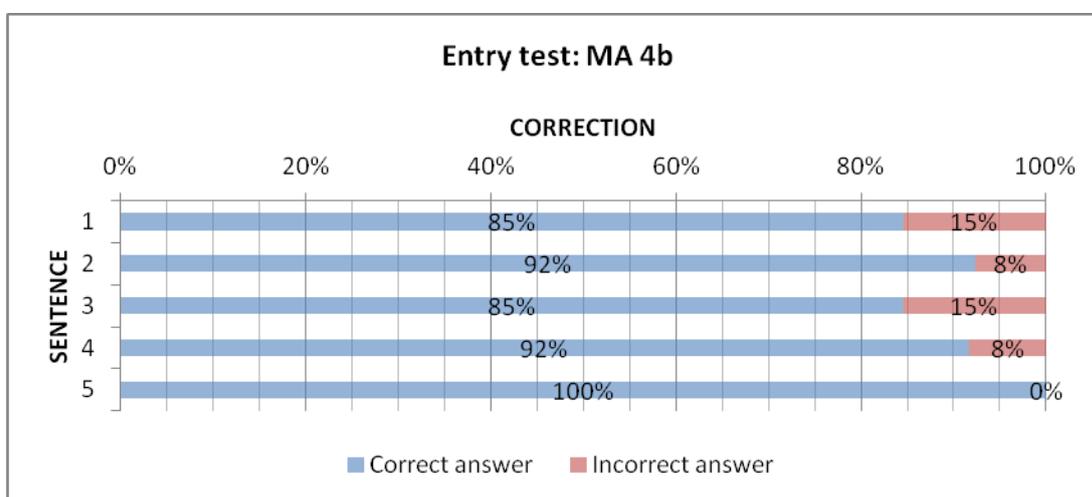
As regards test MA 4b, it should be specified that, while analysing the pupils' answers, in some cases more than one possible correction was accepted for the same sentence, providing it was acceptable from a morpho-syntactic and pragmatic point of view; those sentences that would have been acceptable only if produced in a marked context and

Focus on form in the L2 class

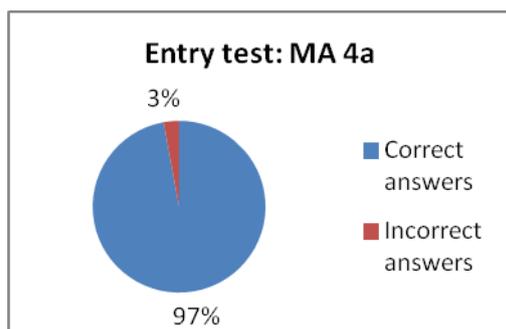
with a marked intonation (as might be the case of focussed or dislocated sentences) were considered incorrect, since the pupils' competence in Italian was not sufficient to produce such sophisticated utterances. Orthographic mistakes were not taken into consideration, especially given the children's young age.

SENTENCE ⁴²	CORRECT ANSWER	INCORRECT ANSWER
1	85 %	15 %
3	92 %	8 %
4	85 %	15 ⁴³ %
5	92 %	8 %
8	100 %	0 %

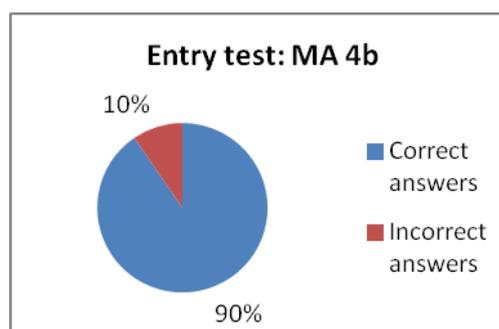
54: Entry test: MA 4b



55: Entry test: MA 4b



56: Entry test MA 4a: overall results



57: Entry test MA 4b: overall results

⁴² Only the incorrect sentences of test MA 4 were considered, since the others did not receive any correction.

⁴³ One of the two corrections that were not accepted might be considered grammatical from a strictly morpho-syntactic point of view ("Sai non cucinare?", i.e. "Are you able not to cook?"), but it has been classified as incorrect because of its extremely reduced possibilities of use in any communicative situation or context.

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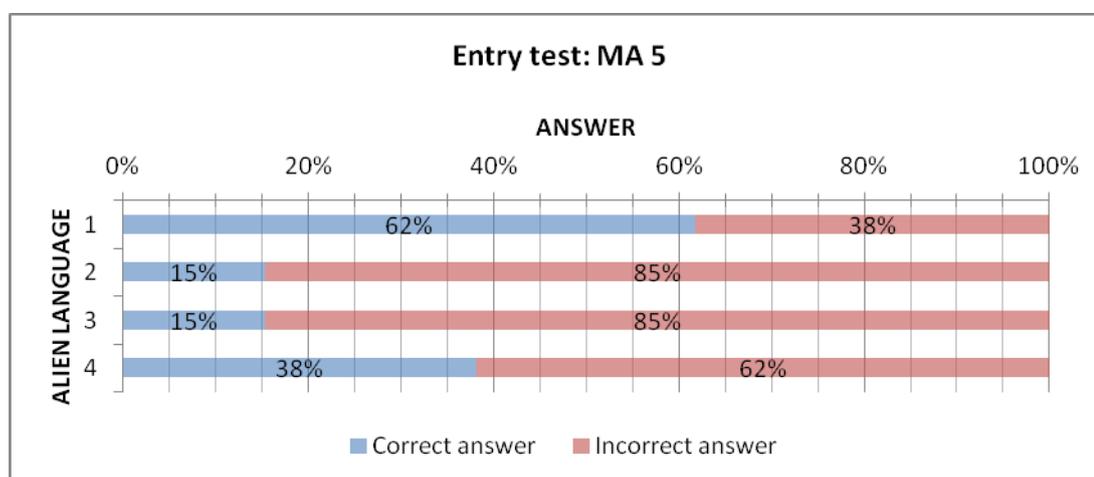
Among all the tests that were used in the research project, this was the one that the children understood and carried out most easily. Before the administration of the test in class, no examples were necessary, probably because this one was more similar than the others to the activities children are used to doing in traditional lessons. It was carried out individually and no limit of time was given, but all children completed the task quite quickly. Moreover, as we can see from the above reported data, most children were successful in carrying out the tasks proposed in test MA 4. More precisely, 97% of the grammaticality judgements expressed by the learners were correct, and so were 90% of the corrections they proposed for the wrong sentences.

The high degree of success experienced by the pupils with respect to this test reveals that they have already developed a rather high competence in Italian and that they are able to observe the form of the language and notice, in this case, its mistakes. The results of test MA 5 will allow us to verify whether such ability evolves into the capacity to explicitly reflect on language and manipulate it during more complex activities.

Test MA 5 was more complex than the previously described ones: in fact, the pupils were asked to analyse some words or simple sentences from four alien languages in order to identify and apply the rules that were responsible for morpho-syntactic changes in the examples.

ALIEN LANGUAGE	CORRECT ANSWER	INCORRECT ANSWER
1	62 %	38 %
2	15 %	85 %
3	15 %	85 %
4	38 %	62 %

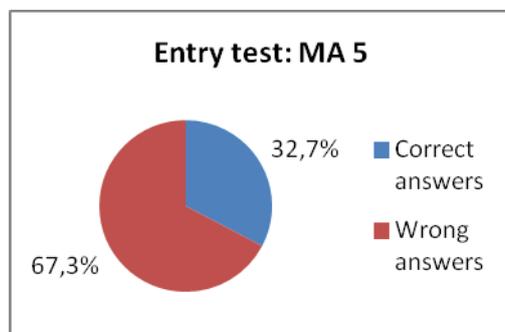
58: Entry test: MA 5



59: Entry test: MA 5

Focus on form in the L2 class

As revealed by the results obtained by the learners in test MA 5, of the five tasks of the test on metalinguistic aptitude this was the most difficult one for our primary school non native speakers of Italian. In fact, as chart 60 shows, two thirds of the children who took part in the project failed to identify and formulate the rule that was needed to reconstruct each of the four missing words.



60: Entry test MA 5: overall results

Such results, however, were foreshadowed by the pupils' difficulty in carrying out the test, which was observed during its administration. In fact, the completion of this task resulted particularly difficult, it took a lot of time and most pupils did not manage not only to give the right answers, but even to give any answer at all, since they were not familiar with the cognitive operations involved in the exercise. Maybe this problem could have been solved by offering, for every language and rule, a richer set of examples, that would have made morphological changes more salient for learners (although salience was provided anyway by using bold fonts to write the relevant morphemes of each word). However, the fact that some children actually succeeded in providing correct answers and the higher ease with which most of them completed the task during the final test proved that it was not too difficult for children of that age.

In spite of the progress that occurred during and after the implementation of the teaching unit, we have to acknowledge that the ability of noticing salient aspects of the formal dimension of language, which was observed in task MA 4, does not seem to correspond to the capacity to carry out more complex metalinguistic processes, like the ones involved in the type of exercise proposed in test MA 5.

It should be noted, however, that children obtained sensibly better results when working on the examples of the first alien language: this phenomenon might be due to the fact that, before the beginning of the fifth test, children were shown an example of how the task should be carried out: input enhancement techniques were used, and the reasoning to get to the correct answer, to which the pupils actively participated, was

guided step by step by the teacher. We suggest that the learners' better outcomes in the first exercise of test MA 5 might have been favoured by their still fresh memory of the example they had received, which strengthens our hypothesis that a specific focus on form training might produce significant progress in the children's metalinguistic abilities.

This last observation can be confirmed by the high amount of Language Related Episodes produced by the children in the course of the unit: in fact, right from the first learning units, the pupils started to express personal reflections about the language elements and phenomena that were brought to their attention.

6.5.2 Language Related Episodes

The LREs produced during every class were graphically recorded as field notes, recopied in a specifically created grid and subsequently coded in order to analyse the pupils' reactions to the project. They represent important qualitative data, since they portray the teaching unit's effectiveness in having the children focus on language (Mennim (2007) and Williams (2001) provide other examples of the usefulness of LREs when investigating the efficacy of learning processes). Therefore, they will also be taken into consideration in order to answer research question (2c), in the next paragraph.

Since they were noted down as field notes during the lessons, our LREs are not quotations of the children's words (except for a few cases in which it was possible to record the sentences as they were pronounced), but rather summaries of the meaning of their observations.

The definition that was taken into account when selecting, coding and analysing our data is the one formulated by Swain (in Doughty-Williams, 1998:70), according to which a Language Related Episode is "any part of a dialogue in which students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or other- or self-correct".

All the collected LREs were then coded: each one was identified by

- an upper-case letter, corresponding to one of the 13 learners (the letters were distributed after ordering the pupils from class 2B to class 4B and disposing the children of each group in alphabetical order);
- a number, corresponding to the learning unit during which they were produced (thus allowing us to identify the learning units that were most productive in this respect);

Focus on form in the L2 class

- a lower-case letter, in order to distinguish between the various LREs produced by the same child during the same lesson.

The results of this first coding operation are combinations like A3b, H4a or K9c.

Once all the LREs were identified, they were classified according to two criteria: a first distinction was made between spontaneous and induced episodes, after which they were categorised according to the nature of the pupils' comments and observations (although this operation was not always easy, and a higher degree of objectivity of the coding practice would be granted by comparing our classifications with those obtained by other researchers using the same criteria). The second type of taxonomy is the result of the adaptation to our data of the classification proposed by Fortune and Thorp (2001:146-51). A detailed description of the criteria that were used to code and classify our data is reported in table 61.

CODE		CODING CRITERIA
S/I	I	Induced: stimulated by specific questions, during activities in which pupils were asked to focus on specific language phenomena.
	S	Spontaneous: uttered spontaneously by pupils, without the teacher's intervention to direct their attention on specific aspects of language.
TYPE	f.b.	Form based: pupils' observations that concern the most formal, morpho-syntactic dimension of language (recognising word categories and morpho-syntactic phenomena, word insertion, elimination or movement, addition or loss of morphemes for functional or lexical reasons, recognising the context in which morpho-syntactic phenomena take place, etc.).
	m.b.	Meaning based: pupils' observations that concern the meaning the focused element or phenomenon expresses.
	s.b.	Sound based: pupils' observations that concern language sounds (both the segmental and suprasegmental dimension). Among these, we include some observations that were stimulated by phonetic similarities between words or expressions belonging to the same language or to different languages.
	u.b.	"Use" based: pupils' observations that concern the pragmatic dimension of language, that is to say the use of language in different contexts.
	g./u.	Grammatical vs Ungrammatical: grammaticality judgments ("You can/cannot say so").

61: LREs coding criteria

Below we give some examples of LREs for each coding category:

- **f.b.:** *“Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione degli articoli in arabo, ha osservato che l’articolo rimane invariato”* (C12d, I)⁴⁴; *“Durante l’attività di riconoscimento del soggetto ha improvvisamente esclamato ‘Adesso ho capito! Quando vedo “vi” so che è “voi”!’”* (I6a, S)⁴⁵.
- **m.b.:** *“Durante il ripasso dei pronomi personali in italiano ha detto che in francese ‘tu’ si dice ‘tois’”* (I5a)⁴⁶; *“Eseguendo un esercizio sulla corretta assegnazione dell’articolo maschile singolare ha osservato che ‘Se dico “Lo suono” è un’azione!’”* (G14e, S)⁴⁷.
- **s.b.:** *“Alla richiesta di identificare l’elemento di differenziazione tra frasi dichiarative e interrogative si/no in italiano ha indicato l’allungamento nella pronuncia della parola finale come elemento distintivo”* (K3a, I)⁴⁸; *“Durante l’osservazione di alcuni esempi in albanesi ha osservato che il sintagma albanese “han buc” (mangio mela) è omofono a un’espressione araba usata come rimprovero”* (K5c, S)⁴⁹.
- **u.b.:** *“Alla richiesta di identificare l’elemento di differenziazione tra domande si/no e domande a costituenti ha indicato che al primo tipo di domande si risponde sì o no”* (D3d, I)⁵⁰; *“Durante l’analisi dei saluti in italiano ha osservato: ‘A quelli che conosci devi dire ciao, non arrivederci!’”* (J3a)⁵¹.

⁴⁴ “At the request to indicate the distribution of articles in Arabic, the child answered that the article stays unchanged.”

⁴⁵ “During the activity of subject recognition, the child suddenly exclaimed: ‘Now I understand! When I see “vi” I know it’s “you”!’”

⁴⁶ “During the revision of personal pronouns in Italian, the child said that in French ‘you’ is said ‘tois’”. This LRE was stimulated by the pupil’s realization that these two words had the same meaning.

⁴⁷ “During an exercise on the correct choice of the masculine singular article, the child observed: ‘If I say “lo suono”, it is an action!’” (because of the homophony between the combination article “lo”+ noun “suono” (= the sound) and the combination pronoun “lo” + verb “suono” (= I play it))

⁴⁸ “At the request to identify the difference between declarative sentences and yes/no questions in Italian, the child indicated the lengthening in the pronunciation of the final word as a distinguishing element.”

⁴⁹ “During the observation of some examples from Albanian, the child observed that the Albanian phrase ‘han buc’ (eat apple) and an expression used in Arabic as a reproach are homophones”. This LRE was stimulated by the fact that the strings of sounds used in the two languages to express different meanings almost coincided.

⁵⁰ “At the request to identify the difference between yes/no questions and constituent questions the child observed that to the first type of questions one must answer yes or no”.

⁵¹ “During the analysis of Italian greetings the child observed: “To those you know, you must say “ciao” (= informal), not “arrivederci” (= formal)”. The pupil’s observation is not meant to criticize the grammaticality of the utterance “Ciao”, but rather the appropriateness of its use.

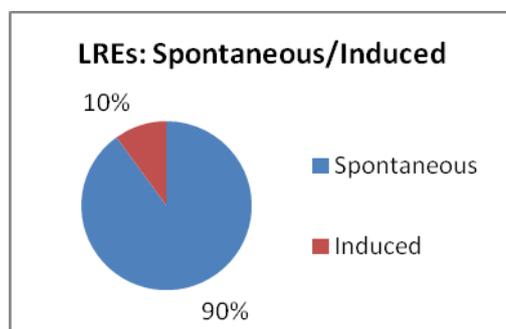
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- **g./u.:** *“Di fronte a una serie di esempi posti per stimolare l'identificazione della terminazione -ndo (sto mangiando, sto bevendo, sto dormendo, sto uscendo...) ha osservato che “sta” nella seconda frase ‘non va bene’” (A8b, I)⁵²; “Durante la riflessione sul rapporto tra soggetto e verbo ha confermato di aver compreso che un cambio di soggetto implica un cambiamento nella flessione verbale osservando ‘Non si può dire *noi lavorate’” (B5e, S)⁵³.*

A complete list of all the LREs that were gathered during the teaching unit can be consulted in the appendix (Appendix 3).

At the end of the coding operation, it turned out that the 13 children who took part in the project produced a total of 392 LREs during the 12 lessons⁵⁴ that took place in every class. The average number of LREs produced by every child at the end of the teaching project is 30, while each of the 12 learning units stimulated the overall production in the four classes of an average of 33 LREs, i.e. an average of 8 LREs per single lesson.

90% of these LREs were induced by the teacher through specifically planned activities and questions that concerned both Italian and other languages, while only 10% of them were spontaneous. However, given the learners restricted familiarity with focus on form operations, such data can still be positively evaluated.



62: LREs: Spontaneous/Induced

As regards the second type of classification, the vast majority of the LREs were form based (85%), as we can see from charts 63 and 64. This kind of result confirms our

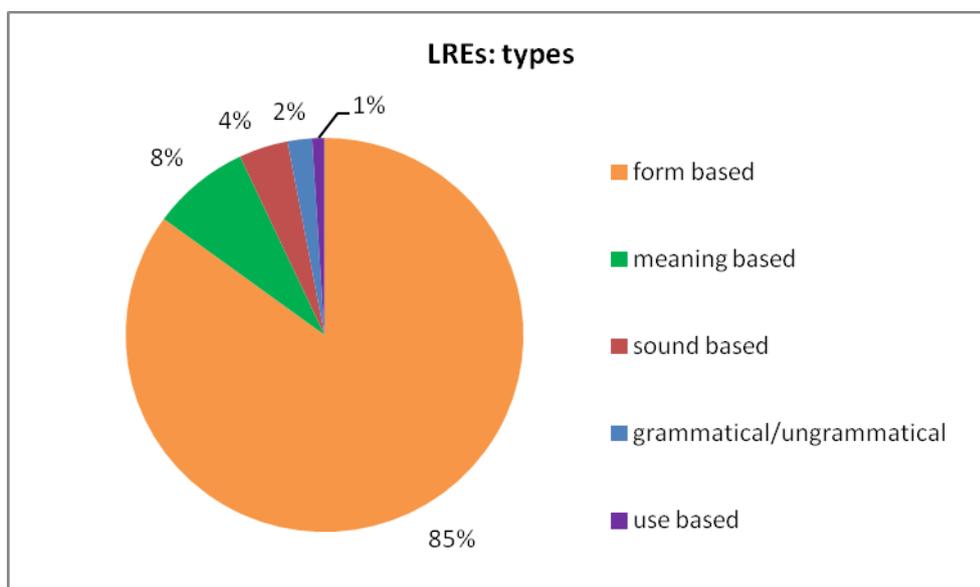
⁵² “While observing a series of examples that had been given to promote the identification of the morpheme -ndo (sto mangiando, sto bevendo, sto dormendo, sto uscendo...), the child observed that ‘sta’ in the second sentence ‘is wrong’.”

⁵³ “During the reflection on the relation between subject and verb, the child confirmed that she had understood that a change of subject implies a change in verbal inflection by observing: ‘You can’t say *noi (1st person plural) lavorate (2nd person plural)’.”

⁵⁴ Lessons 1 and 15 were dedicated to the administration of tests and questionnaire, while lesson 11 was occupied by a revision of the previously introduced contents.

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expectations, since most of the focus on form activities addressed formal aspects of language, precisely the ones that might be easier to observe for children who did not know all the languages that were analysed in class during every learning unit.



63: LREs: types

TYPE OF LRE	PERCENTAGE
<i>f.b.</i>	85 %
<i>m.b.</i>	8 %
<i>s.b.</i>	4 %
<i>g./u.</i>	2 %
<i>u.b.</i>	1 %

64: LREs: types

The soft data obtained through the metalinguistic observation grid, whose coding process and main results have been presented above, can be useful to answer research question (2b) in that they show that young learners are indeed able to notice formal aspects of language and express judgements, observations and reflections about them, providing they are suitably stimulated. In fact, the number of LREs produced by the children during the first lessons of the unit is already very close or even superior to the average number of LREs per learning unit we indicated above (33).

These data create positive expectations about the efficacy of a specifically planned teaching unit in stimulating the development of the learners' ability to focus on the form of languages.

L.U.	Number of LREs
2	39
3	29
4	31
5	37

65: Number of LREs per Learning Unit (L.U.s 2-5)

According to these data and considerations, we can state, in response to research question (2b), that young learners are able to notice salient language forms or phenomena, while they still find it difficult to carry out those complex cognitive operations that would allow them to recognise the patterns of language, turn them into rules and apply them to produce new words and sentences. Therefore, we can confirm hypothesis (2b) (which stated that the children would find it difficult notice and reflect on formal aspects of language through complex cognitive processes), with the exception of the pupils' ability to notice salient language forms in the input they receive, which turned out to be more advanced than we had expected.

6.6 Effectiveness of the teaching unit: the cognitive metalinguistic dimension

The final research question is meant to investigate the effectiveness of the teaching unit in developing the ability to notice and carry out focus on form activities:

(2c) Is it possible to promote young learners' ability to notice language structures and phenomena and focus on form through a training course that is rich in activities that imply these kinds of operations?

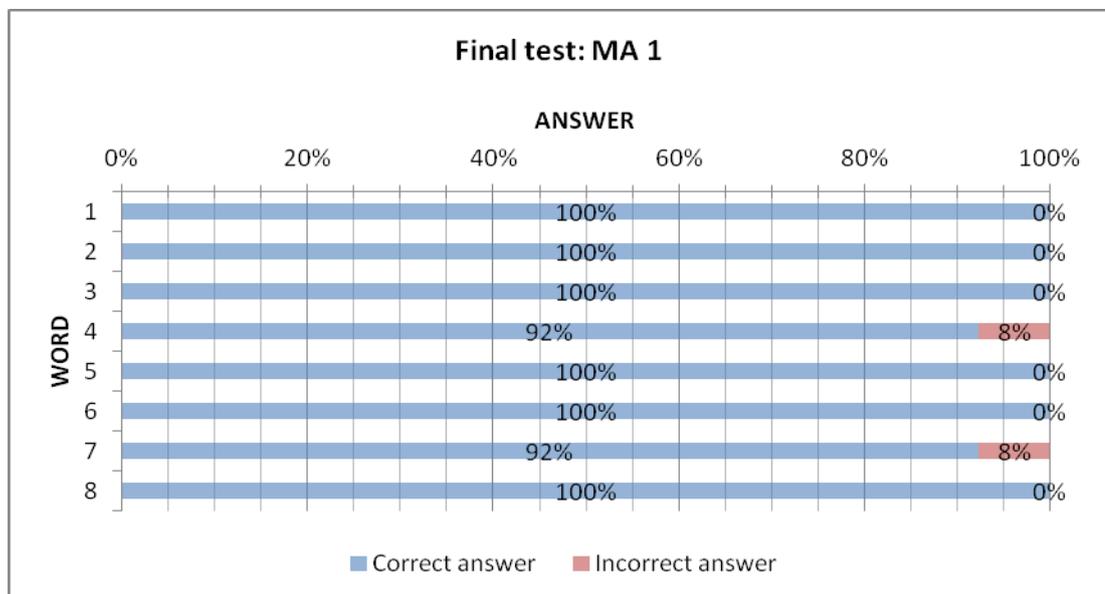
In order to answer this question, the results obtained by the pupils during the five final tests will be compared to the ones that were already presented in 6.4 and 6.5. Moreover, the soft data acquired through the metalinguistic observation grid will be used to further support the answer.

If we compare the vast amount of data that were gathered through the five tests at the end of the teaching project with the ones that were collected during the first lesson, we notice some differences, although most of the times they are small ones because the pupils' results in the entry tests were already successful, to a large extent.

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WORD	CORRECT ANSWER	INCORRECT ANSWER
1	100 %	0 %
2	100 %	0 %
3	100 %	0 %
4	92 %	87 %
5	100 %	0 %
6	100 %	0 %
7	92 %	8 %
8	100 %	0 %

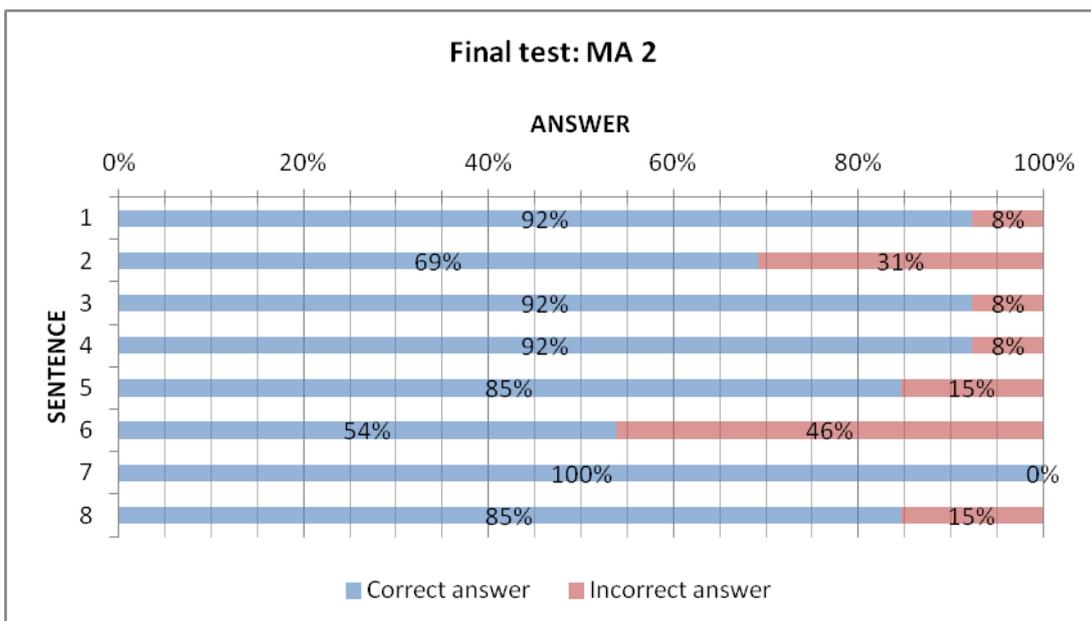
66: Final test: MA 1: identify long and short words in different languages



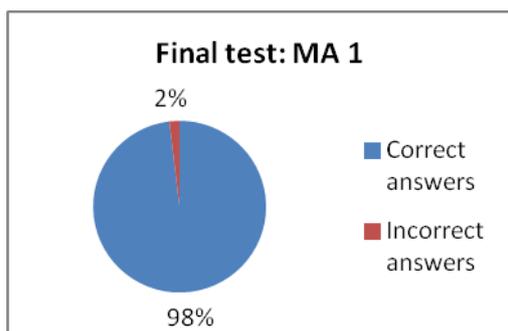
67: Final test: MA 1

SENTENCE	CORRECT ANSWER	INCORRECT ANSWER
1	92 %	8 %
2	69 %	31 %
3	92 %	8 %
4	92 %	8 %
5	85 %	15 %
6	54 %	46 %
7	100 %	0 %
8	85 %	15 %

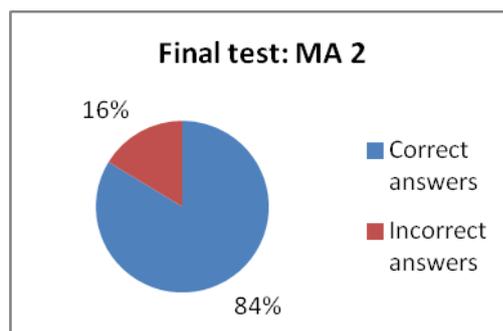
68: Final test: MA 2: count the words of sentences in different languages



69: Final test: MA 2



70: Final test MA 1: overall results

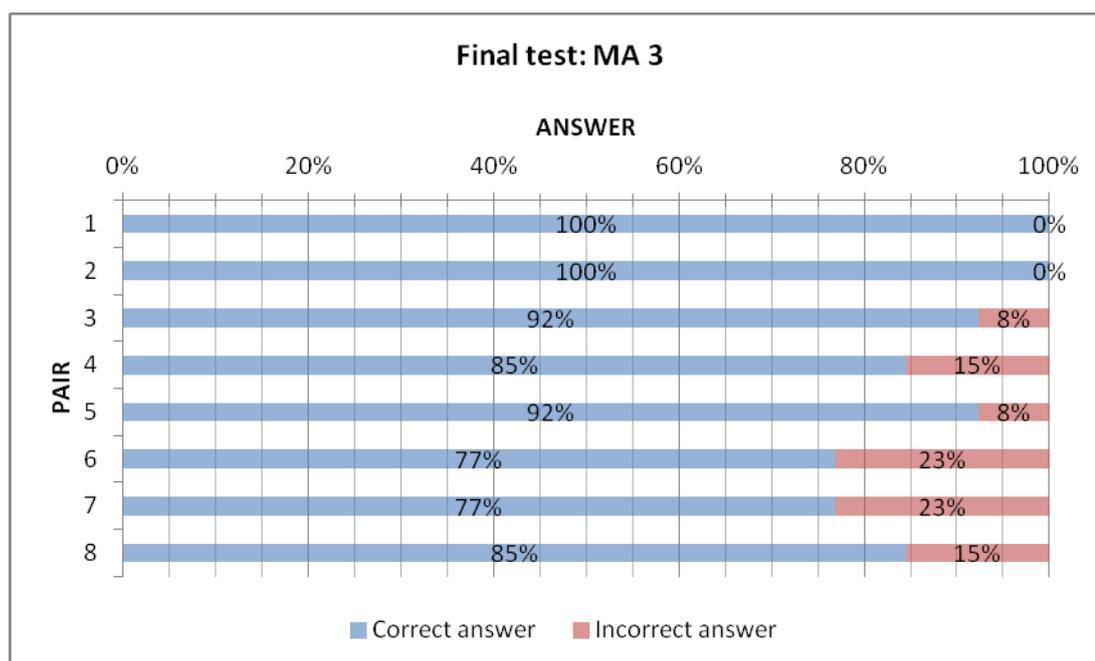


71: Final test MA 2: overall results

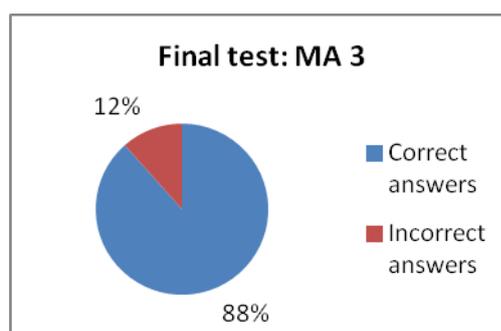
PAIR	CORRECT ANSWER	INCORRECT ANSWER
1	100 %	0 %
2	100 %	0 %
3	92 %	8 %
4	85 %	15 %
5	92 %	8 %
6	77 %	23 %
7	77 %	23 %
8	85 %	15 %

72: Final test: MA 3: identify rhyming pairs of words in different languages

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73: Final test: MA 3



74: Final test MA 3: overall results

As regards the children's ability to conceive form and meaning as different aspects of language (tests MA 1, 2 and 3), which had proved to be already quite developed before the implementation of the teaching unit, the data show a little improvement of 5% for the test MA 1, of 2% for MA 2 and 9% for MA 3, the most reliable of the three tests (as we stated in paragraph 6.4).

We can observe that the results of test MA 2 differ from the ones of the remaining two tests in that the improvement experienced by the children is less evident. We have already commented on the inappropriateness of using foreign languages in this test at sentence level, a decision which damaged the reliability of this specific research instrument: therefore, while in the initial test only three sentences out of eight were in Italian, the final test was modified and only three were in a foreign language (sentences 2, 3 and 6), so that the correct answers would not be suggested to the pupils while reading the sentences. However, this modification seemed to convey a higher degree of

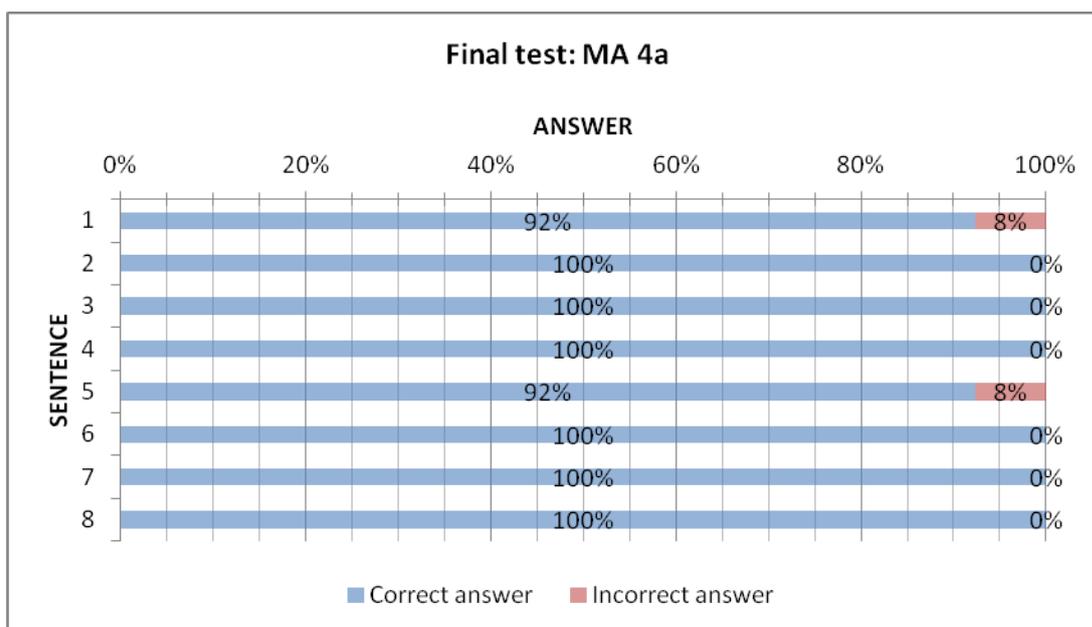
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difficulty to the test rather than simplify it, thus explaining the only minimal improvement in the learners' results. This might be due to the fact that, in this case, most of the sentences were read at normal speed, so that the correct answer was not suggested by the creation of pauses to signal the presence of word boundaries, as happened during the first lesson. Therefore, the results obtained at the end of the teaching project can be considered more reliable than the ones gathered through the corresponding entry test.

The following charts refer to the learners' capacity to notice formal aspects on language and put into practice focus on form operations.

SENTENCE	CORRECT ANSWER	INCORRECT ANSWER
1	92 %	8 %
2	100 %	0 %
3	100 %	0 %
4	100 %	0 %
5	92 %	8 %
6	100 %	0 %
7	100 %	0 %
8	100 %	0 %

75: Final test: MA 4a: find the mistakes in Italian sentences

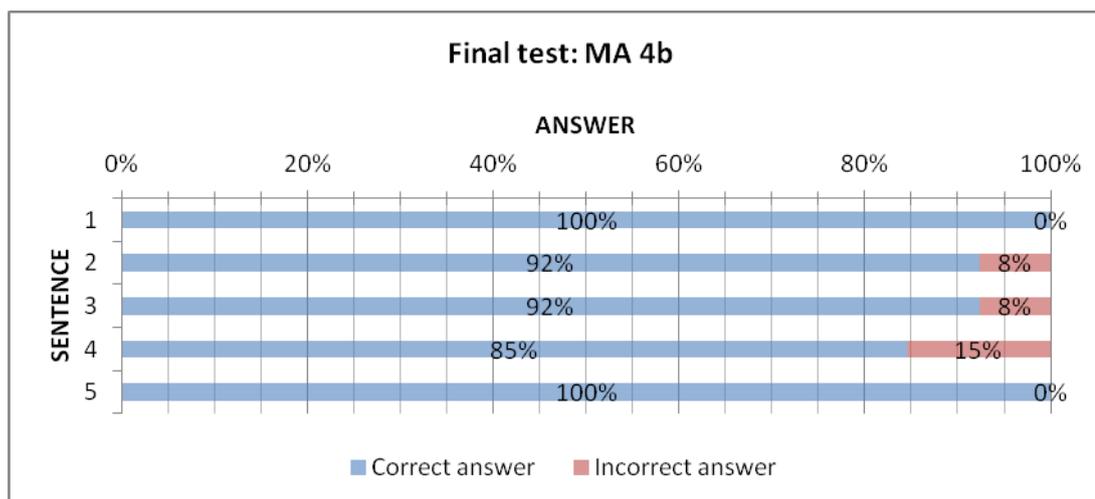


76: Final test: MA 4a

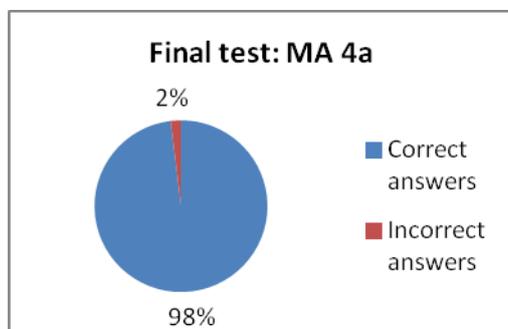
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SENTENCE	CORRECT ANSWER	INCORRECT ANSWER
1	100 %	0 %
5	92 %	8 %
6	92 %	8 %
7	85 %	15 %
8	100 %	0 %

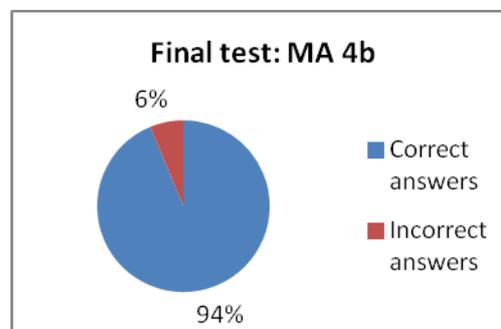
77: Final test: MA 4b: correct the identified mistakes



78: Final test: MA 4b



79: Final test MA 4a: overall results



80: Final test MA 4b: overall results

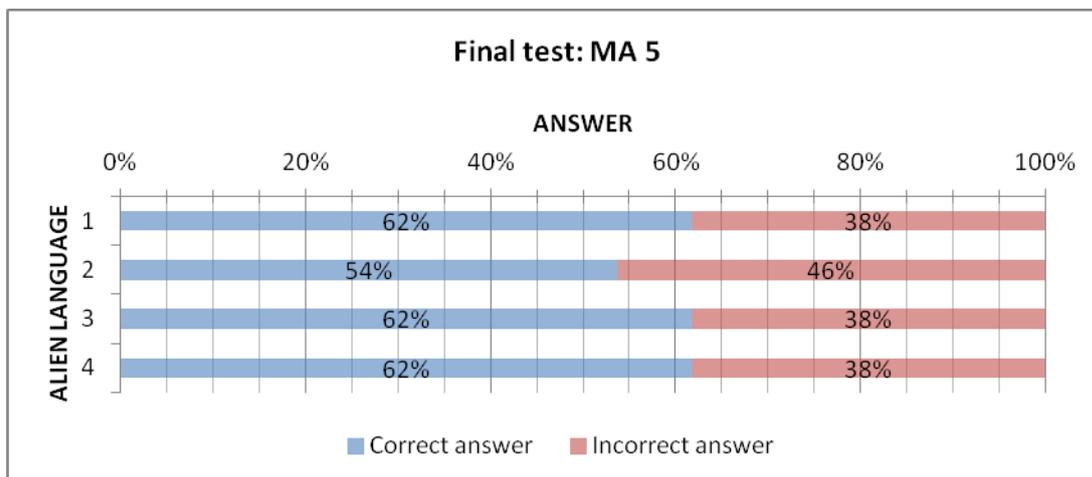
As was the case of tests MA 1, 2 and 3, the results of test MA 4 (both a and b) also show a little improvement in the children's ability to notice salient aspects of languages. Given the high percentage of correct answers obtained in the corresponding entry tests, we can only observe a growth of 1% in the correct answers of test MA 4a and of 4% for test MA 4b.

But the most evident improvement experienced by the pupils is related to their capacity to carry out focus on form operations, as demonstrated by the results of test MA 5, which show an increase of 27% in the amount of correct answers.

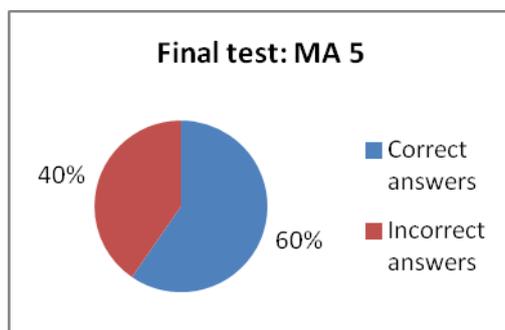
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ALIEN LANGUAGE	CORRECT ANSWER	INCORRECT ANSWER
1	62 %	38 %
2	54 %	46 %
3	62 %	38 %
4	62 %	38 %

81: Final test: MA 5: identify and apply the rules of four alien languages



82: Final test: MA 5



83: Final test MA 5: overall results

The learners' higher degree of familiarity with the cognitive operations that were necessary for the positive outcome of this task was already announced by their attitude towards the test during the last lesson of the teaching unit: while in the first lesson they were not even able to understand how the task should be carried out, when they received the test at the end of the unit most of them filled it in very fast and without any hesitation. This change is the result of the pupils' progressive development of the ability to reflect on language, which was easy to observe during the lessons. In fact, individual focus on the language gave few results at first: this depended on the fact that the learners did not know how to proceed and what to look for when they watched the given examples, because they were not accustomed to activities of this kind. However, they

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soon started to become familiar with some basic tricks that emerged when they compared their observations and were guided towards more exhaustive answers by the teacher, like focusing on word order, looking at the beginning and the end of the words in search for differences, or checking if the identified language phenomenon might have been caused by an opposition between masculine and feminine, singular and plural, vowels and consonants.

In spite of this, this gradual familiarisation of the children with focus on form strategies is not mirrored by the number of LREs⁵⁵ produced during every learning unit, which seems to depend on the internal characteristics of the lesson rather than on development of the learners' metalinguistic aptitude, as shown by the data of chart 84.

<i>Learning unit</i>	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	12	13	14
<i>Number of LREs</i>	39	29	31	37	17	6	43	74	38	40	9	29

84: Number of LREs per learning unit

Therefore, the data that concern the Language Related Episodes produced over the course of the teaching unit can only be used to confirm the trend indicated by the five final tests on metalinguistic aptitude (and their comparison to the initial ones), while they do not portray the gradual development of the pupils' metalinguistic abilities at different stages of the teaching unit.

However, as we observed in 6.5.2, the fact that right from the first lessons a number of LREs superior to the average per learning unit (which corresponds to 33) was produced by the group, testifies the efficacy of the teaching unit in stimulating those complex abilities that had only partially been revealed by the results of tests MA 4a, MA 4b and, above all, MA 5 at the beginning of the course.

Moreover, the data obtained through the metalinguistic observation grid can be used to comment on the decisions a teacher can make while planning a learning unit in order to enhance focus on form, or on the features of a learning context that can successfully contribute to this promotion⁵⁶.

Finally, all the data that have been presented in this paragraph allow us to state, in response to research question (2c), that the implemented teaching unit was successful

⁵⁵ We provided a general introduction of these data in paragraph 6.5.2.

⁵⁶ A discussion of the features of a learning unit that facilitate the promotion of attention to form and of other implications suggested by our analysis of the LREs will be provided in the next chapter.

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in promoting the learners' ability to look at form and meaning as separate aspects of language, to notice relevant language phenomena and, above all, apply complex cognitive processes for the identification of patterns, the formulation of rules and their application to produce new words and sentences, as shown by the comparison of the data gathered through the five tests at the beginning and at the end of the teaching project and by the high amount of LREs produced by the pupils. Such results do confirm hypothesis (2c), according to which the children's ability to notice and reflect on formal aspects of language would improve as a result of a specific training program.

6.7. The case of the two learners of class 2A

The above presented data refer to four of the five groups who took part in the project. In fact, as we explained in 4.3.2, class 2A required the elaboration of alternative learning units since the liveliness of the children made it impossible to carry out the teaching unit as it had been originally planned.

However, the data that were gathered in this class concerning the two learners who participated in all the lessons of the teaching unit might be compared to the ones obtained in the other classes in order to verify if the improvements that were observed in the previous paragraphs might also have taken place without specifically planned plurilingual focus on form activities. Of course, we are conscious of the fact that, especially for its extremely limited number of pupils, this cannot be considered a proper "control group" (which it was not meant to be, by the way), but we think that the comparison of the two groups of data might stimulate some interesting reflections about the effectiveness of the teaching project and of the research.

STATEMENT		"EASY"	"DIFFICULT"	
AL 1	<i>My language is ...</i>	100 %	0 %	Entry
		100 %	0 %	Final
AL 2	<i>Italian is ...</i>	100 %	0 %	Entry
		100 %	0 %	Final
AL 3	<i>English is ...</i>	0 %	100 %	Entry
		0 %	100 %	Final
AL 4	<i>Other languages are ...</i>	0 %	100 %	Entry
		0 %	100 %	Final

85 : Class 2A. Entry and final questionnaire:
Statements AL 1-4, answers of group (a)

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STATEMENT	“BEAUTIFUL”	“UGLY”	“STRANGE”	
AL 1	100 %	0 %	0 %	Entry
	100 %	0 %	0 %	Final
AL 2	100 %	0 %	0 %	Entry
	50 %	0 %	50 %	Final
AL 3	50 %	0 %	50 %	Entry
	0 %	0 %	100 %	Final
AL 4	0 %	0 %	100 %	Entry
	50 %	0 %	50 %	Final

86: Class 2A. Entry and final questionnaire: Statements AL 1-4, answers of group (b)

STATEMENT	“EXTREMELY EASY”	“EASY”	“DIFFICULT”	“IMPOSSIBLE”	
AL 5 <i>Learning my language was ...</i>	50 %	50 %	0 %	0 %	Entry
	0 %	0 %	50 %	50 %	Final
AL 6 <i>Learning Italian is ...</i>	100 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	Entry
	100 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	Final
AL 7 <i>Learning English is ...</i>	50 %	0 %	50 %	0 %	Entry
	0 %	50 %	0 %	50 %	Final
AL 8 <i>Learning other languages is ...</i>	50 %	0 %	0 %	50 %	Entry
	0 %	0 %	50 %	50 %	Final

87: Class 2A. Entry and final questionnaire: Statements AL 5-8

If we compare the answers of the two pupils that were gathered through the questionnaire during the first and the last lesson of the teaching unit, we notice that the learners’ judgements about the degree of difficulty of languages did not undergo any change, while some little variation can be noticed with respect to the “aesthetic” evaluation of the languages: in fact, while Italian and English started to be considered more “strange” (after an increase of 50% of this answer in both cases), one of the pupils changed their mind about the so-called “other languages”, which were defined both “strange” and “beautiful” (while in the entry test they were only considered “strange”). However, no language was ever defined “ugly”.

On the other hand, the learners’ answers about the possibility of learning languages seem to have undergone a negative swing during the course, with the exception of Italian: in fact, both the children’s L1s and “other languages” are defined “difficult” or even “impossible” to learn, while English is considered either “impossible” or “easy”, but no longer “extremely easy”.

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These data acquire special interest if we compare them with the ones we presented in paragraph 6.3: by doing so, we realise that if there is little difference between the two groups as regards the children's perception of languages and their attitude towards them (which is positive in both cases), the same cannot be said with respect to their confidence in the possibility of learning languages, which seems to be successfully promoted by a specifically planned teaching unit that constantly creates occasions for the pupils to meet and explore new languages, but not by traditional monolingual lessons. According to this observation, it is no surprise to notice that the only language that was not affected by this phenomenon is Italian, the only language with which the pupils of class 2A worked during their lessons.

TEST		CORRECT ANSWERS	INCORRECT ANSWERS	
MA 1	<i>Identify long and short words in different languages.</i>	88 %	12 %	Entry
		94 %	6 %	Final
MA 2	<i>Count the words of sentences in different languages.</i>	88 %	12 %	Entry
		75 %	25 %	Final
MA 3	<i>Identify rhyming pairs of words in different languages.</i>	100 %	0 %	Entry
		75 %	25 %	Final

88: Class 2A. Entry and final test: Tests MA 1-3

The tests that were used to investigate the pupils' ability to conceive meaning and form as separate reveal a general worsening in the ability of the learners of class 2A to distinguish between the two dimensions, with the exception of test MA 1, although we already observed (see paragraph 6.4) that test MA 3 is the most effective in portraying the children's actual abilities, while tests MA 1 and 2 imply some problems that partially invalidate their results (especially the latter).

However, a comparison of the results of test MA 3 obtained by the two groups of learners reveals that the progress shown by the pupils who took part in the research project is much more evident than the one experienced by the two children of class 2A, who only improved their results in the first test.

On the other hand, as we can see from chart 89, the results of test MA 4 (both a and b) show an improvement in the pupils' abilities to notice salient elements of Italian sentences (in this case, mistakes) and correct them. The same thing happened to the other group, even though progress in this respect was especially expected of class 2A,

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which dedicated all the lessons to promoting the development of a richer competence in the children's L2.

TEST		CORRECT ANSWERS	INCORRECT ANSWERS	
MA 4a	<i>Find the mistakes in Italian sentences.</i>	81 %	19 %	Entry
		94 %	6 %	Final
MA 4b	<i>Correct the identified mistakes.</i>	86 %	14 %	Entry
		89 %	11 %	Final

89: Class 2A. Entry and final test: Tests MA 4a, 4b

ALIEN LANGUAGE	CORRECT ANSWER	INCORRECT ANSWER	
1	0 %	100 %	Entry
	50 %	50 %	Final
2	0 %	100 %	Entry
	0 %	100 %	Final
3	0 %	100 %	Entry
	50 %	50 %	Final
4	0 %	100 %	Entry
	50 %	50 %	Final

90: Class 2A. Entry and final test: MA 5: identify and apply the rules of four alien languages

Finally, the most surprising data of our comparison between class 2A and the rest of the group emerged during test MA 5. In fact, the pupils' incapacity to solve the task that was observed in class 2A (as well as in the others) during the first lesson was expected to remain unchanged at the end of the course, since only few focus on form activities had been carried out, mainly during the first learning units. In spite of this, one of the two learners actually managed to provide the correct answers to three of the four little exercises of test MA 5. This result is hard to explain, since it seems to lessen the strength of our hypothesis that the improvements shown by the other group in this test were a consequence of the teaching unit's efficacy. However, the unexpected progress manifested by one of the learners might be the result of the orientation to form occasionally experienced also by this group during some of the learning units, together with a potentially higher aptitude of this pupil, who always tended to perform better than her other classmate (for example, she produced 78% of the LREs of this class).

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Moreover, the fact that this group only produced 9 LREs during the whole course (8 of which were concentrated in the first lessons, precisely the ones that also in this class were implemented according to the original teaching project) leads us to confirm our statement that a specifically planned teaching unit is actually more effective in inducing learners to concentrate on the formal dimension of language, notice its peculiarities and reflect on them.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION: RESULTS, POTENTIALS AND LIMITS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

In this chapter, we will present our final observations on the research project. We will comment on the development and implementation of the teaching project, further reflect on the results of the research and, on the basis of our observations, try to formulate some suggestions for further research in this field.

7.1 The teaching project: some reflections

In chapter 5 we described the teaching project that was planned in order to help the learners strengthen their ability to reflect on language and develop a more positive, curious and open attitude towards languages and the possibility of learning new ones.

In the following paragraphs, we will comment on the teaching experience, taking into consideration both its positive and negatives aspects. Many of the observations that inspire our reflections were recorded during the implementation of the teaching unit in the journal that was filled in after every lesson.

7.1.1 Reactions, comments and adjustments

The teaching unit stimulated positive reactions from the children who took part in the project. But some aspects of the Unit more than others created special enthusiasm in the learners. The one that probably struck them the most was the use of a play-like methodology: it was sufficient to present the activities as “games” to immediately obtain the learners’ attention and participation. This was true for all of them, in spite of their different ages.

Moreover, most pupils were attracted by the layout of the materials that were created for the lessons, especially by the abundant presence of funny or original images that they could colour in order to personalise their learning resources.

Another feature of the learning units that seemed to have a particularly positive impact on the learners’ attitude during the lessons was the occasional introduction of activities that implied the exploitation of abilities that are not traditionally related to

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language learning, like drawing (for example, during the dictation of an outfit to a classmate), colouring (even when this operation was only meant to promote focus on form) or using their whole body in movement (in order to reproduce the gestures of non-verbal communication, or memorise lexical expressions related to the body). These activities allowed the children to be thoroughly involved in the learning process, and acquisition was expected to benefit from it, since the association of positive feelings and memories with the process of language learning can help lower the affective filter.

But if some of the learners preferred those activities in which the right hemisphere was mainly involved, others seemed to be more at ease when they were asked to solve very formal, individual exercises and drew pleasure from such systematic occupations (as they spontaneously said, expressing their appreciation for those lessons that gave more space to activities of this kind, like the learning units that were dedicated to articles). Therefore, it became evident that it was important to grant some variation as regards the activities proposed during every learning unit in order to meet the preferences of all the learners.

Of course, so much enthusiasm for new types of activities, a new (inexperienced) teacher, small groups and, in some cases, new learning environments (many of the lessons took place in the computer room) sometimes caused a bit of confusion, which in most cases was easily overcome (also thanks to the intervention of the other teacher that was in the room).

The teaching project was also successful in respecting the features that are typical of L2 workshops (as presented in 5.1 and in chapter 1): in spite of the presence, in each group, of children whose levels of competence in the Italian language differed, more or less evidently, from the ones of their classmates, the limited number of pupils allowed for each learner to be helped individually by the teacher. Moreover, a higher degree of differentiation of the proposed activities was possible. If we compare this special situation with what happens during normal lessons, we notice that the amount of speech time and attention dedicated to each child in L2 lessons is superior, with consequent advantages for the development of the pupils' interlanguage.

However, the teaching project also met with some problems that required the introduction of appropriate adjustments.

For example, the communicative task that was originally identified as the most suitable final activity for each learning unit was soon substituted by more traditional exercises (see the distinction made in 5.2.5), in which accuracy was considered more

important than fluency. At first sight, this change seems to contradict our original intention of privileging communicative activities, but it was made necessary by the nature of the teaching intervention itself. In fact, after the first lessons it became clear that what learners needed was not the chance to use the language in order to fulfil real communicative needs (which is the purpose of communicative activities and which they already did in their everyday experience when talking to their friends and teachers), but rather the possibility to identify those language elements and structures that made their competence in Italian imperfect and improve them, thus creating new correct language habits. Therefore, individual, written exercises offered the children the chance to control and reflect on the language forms they were using, and made it easier for the teacher to identify errors and bring the learners' attention to them. In other words, communicative tasks are essential in situations of FL teaching, where there are reduced possibilities for learners of using the language for real communicative purposes outside the classroom, but from our experience they turned out not to be essential when the target language is also the main means of communication that pupils use in and outside school. Such learners already have many chances to develop their fluency: what they lack is a specific and individualised intervention on those errors that have become a part of their competence in the L2, or that require targeted input in order to develop new areas of their interlanguage and obtain accuracy.

Another reason that determined the predominance of exercises is related to the research implications of the teaching unit. Since the central aspect of every learning unit was the formulation of a rule of Italian, it was natural to propose activities in which the autonomously created generalisation should be applied correctly in order to be tested and consolidated in the learners' Long Term Memory.

However, the social dimension of learning was not disregarded altogether, since in some cases the exercises were carried out in pairs, thus enhancing the pupils' cooperation, especially thanks to the careful formation of couples.

The necessity for a change in the type of activities carried out in class, as well as in the aspect of language competence that should be privileged (accuracy rather than fluency, at least for the majority of the pupils) was confirmed by the results of a revision that took place after Christmas holidays. The impression that some of the children were not actually acquiring the contents (both lexical and morpho-syntactic) that were dealt with in class led to the insertion of a lesson (in place of the 11th learning unit) dedicated to a revision of the topics that had been treated in the previous months (see Appendix 4).

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The results obtained by the learners in the revision revealed that the contents needed to be practiced more, also through those traditional exercises that had found little space in the original structure of the lessons in favour of more pleasant communicative tasks, and that had gradually been introduced over the course of the lessons.

Therefore, a further change seemed necessary during the last learning units: two of them were dedicated to articles, while the last one before testing dealt with the language structures used in the Italian language for giving orders (with the consequent exclusion from the syllabus of the lessons that had initially been reserved for “Offering and asking for things” and “Talking about the past”). Articles seemed to be the perfect topic for the introduction of more formal exercises, given the not too high degree of difficulty of the focusing activities that were necessary in order to discover the rules (and of the rules themselves), but, at the same time, the importance for the children to improve their competence in the use of this grammatical category (so that the activities responded to an actual need of the pupils).

Another modification that was introduced in the course of the project was the elimination, from the learners’ working sheets, of the section dedicated to multilingual focus on form (see image 11). In fact, during the first lessons, the results of this second focus on form were also written on the working sheet in a provided section. However, this activity seemed to slow down the rhythm of the lesson, because it turned out to be difficult to summarise the learners’ observations in a few words without being too technical or inaccurate. Therefore, this practice was soon abandoned, while still maintaining the oral part of the focusing activity.

In addition to the above presented ones, other small, less “structural” changes to specific activities, the materials used in class or even the general organisation of lessons (for example, excessive length of some learning units) took place as a result of the notes that were regularly recorded in the journal.

7.1.2 Particularly successful activities

Over the course of the teaching unit, some activities turned out to be particularly appropriate and effective for L2 workshops dedicated to primary school children.

Among them, activities on vocabulary appeared especially useful, since they represented an attempt to solve an actual problem of L2 speakers. In fact, it was noted that in many occasions the children had developed the ability to have intuitions about the meaning of words according to the context in which they appeared, even though

they were unable to provide any explanation of their sense. This can be considered a useful skill when dealing with languages other than one's own, but, at the same time, it can block the learners' motivation to acquire new vocabulary, to ask for explanations or autonomously use the dictionary, thus preventing further progress in the acquisition of the language.

This phenomenon is related to the notions of BICS and CALP, as they were elaborated by Cummins in 1979. As we read in Coonan (2002: 80-81), BICS represents that Basic Interpersonal Communication Skill that allows the speaker to "survive" in the new language environment,

(...) interagire in conversazioni fatiche con amici su argomenti quotidiani (parlare di sé, del proprio lavoro, di hobby, di gusti ecc.) o per chiedere informazioni e servizi (per strada, al ristorante, in un negozio, in albergo, a uno sportello ecc.). Permette all'individuo di leggere e di scrivere testi brevi e facili (una lettera, una cartolina, un messaggio ecc.) su argomenti per lo più familiari.⁵⁷

The risk for those people who have only developed this kind of competence is to think that they do not need to push their acquisition of the language further, since they are already able to successfully interact in the L2. However, this sense of satisfaction with one's basic language competence can be a major drawback for the speaker's personal fulfilment, as Balboni (2002: 213) stresses, while talking about the sociolinguistic situation in Italy. In fact, "anche quando ha raggiunto la BICS, l'immigrato passa la sua vita di relazione con gli italiani in situazione di inferiorità sul piano linguistico e culturale"⁵⁸, a sense of inferiority that can trigger feelings of frustration and discomfort that will dangerously pervade every aspect of their life.

This situation becomes even more worrying when it affects children who are in the middle of their schooling, since they will need to be able to use the target language not only to convey basic ideas or feelings, but rather as an efficient medium for studying new and sometimes complex concepts of various nature. For this to be possible, they will have to develop CALP, Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, a kind of

⁵⁷ "(...) interact in phatic conversations with friends about everyday topics (talking about oneself, about one's job, hobbies, tastes, etc.) or to ask for information or services (in the street, at the restaurant, in a shop, in a hotel, at a counter, etc.). It allows one to read and write short simple texts (a letter, a postcard, a message, etc.) mainly about familiar topics". (Our translation)

⁵⁸ "Even when they have reached BICS, immigrants spend their life relating to Italians in a situation of inferiority on a linguistic and cultural level". (Our translation)

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competence that is achieved using the L2 “in attività che implicano l’uso di processi cognitivi di ordine superiore quali l’analisi, la sintesi, la valutazione, la generalizzazione, il fare ipotesi, ecc.”⁵⁹ (Coonan, 2002: 83). Therefore, activities on vocabulary were considered particularly important and were included in every lesson in order to make the learners aware of the incompleteness of their competence, and motivate them to enrich it.

Such activities often began with a brainstorming session, in order for the pupils to share the vocabulary they already knew about the topic and add to it only those words and expressions they actually needed to acquire. Brainstorming seemed particularly suitable for L2 classes, since they were heterogeneous as regards the learners’ competence in Italian. Therefore, every child had the chance to give their active contribution to the success of the activity and, as a result of that, feel appreciated by the rest of the group. Everyone could be useful to the class: the least competent were asked to suggest the most common terms, while more advanced speakers found it more challenging to recall rare, difficult terms, thus avoiding a potential sense of boredom and becoming an important resource for their classmates.

Moreover, working on the vocabulary occasionally had another motivating effect: in fact, sometimes children spontaneously made lexical discoveries (for example, during the lesson on jobs some learners identified the mechanism of word formation for jobs connected to music, like “pianista”, “batterista”, “violinista”, etc.) and the satisfaction that resulted from their unexpected observation had the power to feed their motivation for the rest of the lesson.

Another important group of activities that seemed particularly effective in motivating the learners to improve their competence in Italian is the one that included didactic adaptations of games that primary school children are traditionally used to playing, like the already mentioned “Memory”, “Nomi, cose, città”, “Sacco pieno, sacco vuoto” and “Taboo” (see 5.2.5). These activities made the pupils forget they were perfecting their language competence, lowered the affective filter and managed to stimulate the active and enthusiastic participation even of the shyest learners. The only risk was for the pupils to feel “underestimated” by the choice of such childish activities, so different from the ones they were used to doing in class. However, this kind of reaction never took

⁵⁹ “[...] in activities that imply the use of higher order cognitive processes such as analysis, synthesis, evaluation, generalization, hypothesis making, etc.”(Our translation)

place in any of the groups: for example, even if the children who played “Sacco pieno, sacco vuoto” were in the fourth class (and so they might have felt they were too old for a nursery game like this), they loved this play-like activity and explicitly asked to repeat it at the beginning of every lesson.

As regards “Taboo”, this kind of activity was perceived by learners as a game, but, at the same time, it forced them to paraphrase the meaning of the words they were assigned, thus improving their competence. As Caon (2008: 87) stresses, “l’abilità di fare perifrasi e di definire è apparentemente semplice, richiede in realtà una capacità di astrazione e di *problem solving* strategica per lo sviluppo di competenze comunicative nella lingua dello studio”⁶⁰. Therefore, activities of the kind seem particularly suitable for the development of CALP, since they have the children carry out complex cognitive processes without them to realise it, thanks to the enjoyable form of the activity.

Finally, all these didactic games had a powerful motivational impact on the learners, since the promise of ending the lesson with an entertaining activity usually managed to capture their attention right from the beginning.

A last remark should be made about the differentiation of materials and activities that was carried out within each group. This operation was especially necessary in class 4B, where the difference between the levels of competence in Italian of the two pupils was extremely high, as often revealed by the comments included in the teacher’s journal about this class:

“Resta da risolvere il problema di come coinvolgere seppure in maniera diversa le due bambine, che richiedono attenzioni differenziate a causa dei loro diversi livelli di competenza in italiano.” (Teacher’s journal: class 4B, 8.11.2011)⁶¹

“Le bambine hanno partecipato volentieri alla lezione, anche se inizialmente la grande disparità di competenza tra le due ha generato un po’ di noia nella bambina cinese, che doveva continuamente rallentare il proprio ritmo per aspettare la compagna.” (Teacher’s journal: class 4B, 29.11.2011)⁶²

⁶⁰ “The ability of paraphrasing and defining is only seemingly simple, while actually it requires a capacity for abstraction and problem solving that is strategic for the development of communicative competences in the language that is used for studying.” (Our translation)

⁶¹ “We still need to solve the problem of how to involve, although in different ways, the two girls, who require differentiated attention because of their different levels of competence in Italian.”

⁶² “The girls enjoyed taking part in the lesson, even though initially the great difference between their competences bored the Chinese pupil, who often had to slow down her rhythm to wait for her classmate.”

This heterogeneity caused a sense of boredom and irritation in the child whose competence was higher, while the other was also frustrated by the difficulty she experienced while carrying out the activities and by the annoyed reactions of her classmate. Therefore, various differentiation strategies were used in order to solve the problem: for example, while the less competent child was helped to do an activity, the other pupil carried it out individually, and was often asked to repeat it with some variations as she waited for her classmate to complete it. By doing so, each of the children received the amount and type of attention she needed: the pupil whose competence was lower could be helped to acquire the basic structures and words she lacked, while the most advanced learner had the chance to improve her competence through challenging activities.

7.2 The socio-cultural, affective dimension

One of the two dimensions of our research project was the socio-cultural, affective one, which aimed at the development of an attitude towards languages and cultures (both the ones of the pupils and the others) that should be open, curious and free from any form of prejudice. In the following paragraphs we will comment on the two main components of this dimension (and the very different results they obtained): the space that culture found in our project and the involvement of many languages in the activities that were proposed to the children.

7.2.1 Cultural reflections

An important observation is necessary as regards the cultural dimension that was originally identified for every learning unit and included in the syllabus (see image 9). In fact, while gradually becoming acquainted with the learners, it became clear that the long-lasting stay in Italy of the pupils attenuated the potential cultural differences that there might have been among them and with respect to the Italian culture. We are talking about children, most of whom were born and raised in the country (except for some short periods that they occasionally spend abroad to visit their families) and who are used to spending a relevant part of their day completely immersed in the Italian culture (at school but also in their free time, for example when they play sports or watch television). Therefore, it soon turned out to be impossible to dedicate every time specific moments of the lesson to the focusing on cultural differences that actually did not exist. The most evident example of this impossibility is represented by the lesson on the

human body and its fitness for non-verbal communication, probably the most suitable for the emergence of cultural differences or even conflicts, during which nothing relevant was identified by the children, who, on the contrary, were perfectly aware of the value the analysed gestures had in the Italian culture.

The solution that was adopted in order to fulfil the socio-cultural objectives of the project in spite of this complication was to stimulate and enhance the learners' spontaneous comments on cultural differences that emerged during the activities (for example, by asking leading questions to the children while they were carrying out undemanding tasks, like drawing or colouring), always emphasizing the fact that differences do exist and need to be respected. The teacher's journal offers some examples of activities that managed to stimulate some reflections on cultural aspects of life:

L'osservazione dell'atlante ha stimolato alcune riflessioni di tipo culturale (nell'atlante era presente la fotografia di una tribù africana i cui membri non indossavano vestiti) che denotavano stupore davanti alla diversità. (Teacher's journal: class 4B, 25.10.2011)⁶³

C'è stata anche la possibilità di ascoltare le impressioni delle bambine che hanno frequentato la scuola in paesi diversi, anche se il discorso non è stato particolarmente approfondito. (Teacher's journal: class 4A, 15.12.2011)⁶⁴

However, there were some cases in which cultural differences did emerge spontaneously, the most relevant of which took place with some 7-year-old Muslim children, who seemed to be disturbed as they saw a necklace with a cross-shaped pendant (that was consequently removed during the following lessons in order not to make them feel uncomfortable, although it was not a religious symbol). The learners' awkward reaction was faced by stressing the fact that different religions can coexist in a relation of mutual respect, but it demonstrated that religious beliefs constitute one of those aspects that are not subject to cultural absorption, in spite of a prolonged contact between different cultures. This observation was confirmed on another occasion, when an 8-year-old Moroccan boy, during the lesson that dealt with jobs, stated that it would be a serious problem for a woman to work, like his father used to say, in compliance

⁶³ "The observation of the atlas stimulated some cultural reflections (in the atlas there was the picture of an African tribe whose members were naked) that revealed astonishment at the sight of diversity."

⁶⁴ "We also had the chance to listen to the impressions of some children who attended school in different countries, although it was not a particularly exhaustive discussion."

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with the traditional role that is attributed to women according to the Islamic religion (although changes in this respect seem to be happening already, since other children of Moroccan origin testified that their mothers are actually working, or driving).

7.2.2 Plurilingual lessons

The decision to include many different languages in the activities of each learning unit was motivated by the wish to stimulate the development of an attitude of openness, acceptance, tolerance and curiosity towards languages. This was one of the two dimensions of the research project, together with the cognitive, metalinguistic one. But although the latter was, at least initially, the main goal of the project, the development of positive attitudes towards languages soon turned out to be an objective of primary importance for the children's serene growth. In fact, even a first observation of the learners' attitude towards their L1 revealed that they were reluctant to use it when their classmates or teachers were present. This perception was later confirmed by the answers they gave to the questionnaire (see research question (1a), paragraph 6.1)). The learners' reaction was most likely due to their awareness that their L1s are considered varieties of low prestige in the Italian language repertoire, together with the teachers' prohibition of using such languages at school (a ban that was probably determined by the need to encourage the pupils' use of Italian in order to facilitate language acquisition, but also a successful integration into the mainly Italian-speaking class). However, also the decision to repress an important component of the children's identity represented a potential danger for the correct development of their personality. Therefore, our project was meant to help the children realise that all languages are endowed with equal dignity, regardless of the prestige they might acquire in a specific sociolinguistic context.

At first, when the children were asked to use their L1s, they seemed ashamed of their language background. It seemed as if somebody was invading their private space by having them expose what they perceived as their weak point. This feeling gave rise to a series of negative reactions, like the refusal to speak or embarrassed giggles instead of an answer.

But for many of them, the possibility to use their L1 without feeling guilty for it soon caused enthusiasm. Probably the most significant example of such a positive reaction is the case of a girl, in class 4B, whose competence in Italian was extremely limited as a consequence of a three-year-long stay in Morocco, during which she forgot everything

she had previously learnt in Italy. For her, resorting to her first language represented an extremely joyful experience, the possibility to feel free and do what she liked, feeling reassured by the use of a familiar code. This had positive repercussions on her participation to the lessons, especially as regards her attitude, often superficial and uninterested, which suddenly became passionate and active when her L1 was involved, so much that it was difficult to convince her to use Italian again (as testified by the teacher's journal):

Nel caso della bambina marocchina, la possibilità di ricorrere all'arabo sembra rappresentare una specie di liberazione, che le dà grande gioia, tanto che è difficile convincerla a tornare all'italiano o "disciplinare" l'uso della L1 per farle produrre gli esempi necessari a condurre la riflessione plurilingue. (Teacher's journal: class 4B, 08.11.2011)⁶⁵

Such enthusiasm soon led the pupils to the spontaneous use of their first languages: in fact, almost in all the groups some children insisted (before, during or after the lessons) on offering the teacher and their classmates examples of words or sentences, which were sometimes written on the blackboard, also using ideograms or the Arabic alphabet.

Dopo un momento iniziale d'imbarazzo, le bambine hanno risposto alle richieste di traduzione con sollecitudine, continuando ad "offrire" al gruppo parole nelle loro lingue ed aiutando con pazienza le compagne e la maestra a pronunciare o scrivere correttamente le parole analizzate. (Teacher's journal: class 2B, 25.10.2011)⁶⁶

The change of attitude already took place in the first lessons: this was the case of an Albanian child who, at first, refused to pronounce even the name of his city of origin. But in the course of the first learning unit he started to accept his language background and took very seriously the use of his L1 in class, considering it an important responsibility towards his friends, since his capacity to translate words and sentences in Albanian would allow his classmates to carry out focus on form activities on the language. So deep

⁶⁵ "In the case of the Moroccan girl, the possibility of resorting to Arabic seems to represent a kind of liberation, which gives so much joy that it is hard to convince her to start using Italian again or to 'discipline' the use of her L1 so that she produces the examples that are necessary to carry out plurilingual focus on form."

⁶⁶ "After a first moment of embarrassment, the children answered the request of translation with promptness, kept 'offering' the group words in their L1s and patiently helped their classmates and the teacher to pronounce or write correctly the analysed words."

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was his maturation with this respect, that he was the child who, during the second learning unit, eagerly asked: “What languages are we going to learn today?”.

In spite of this, it should be noted that the children’s process of acceptance of their (almost) bilingual linguistic identity was not a linear one: in fact, moments of enthusiasm for the use of their L1s alternated with others of embarrassment and unease. Such discontinuity is explained by the complexity of the matter, which concerns the learners’ own plurilingual identity and has a psychological relevance with respect to the development of their personality. For this reason, the problem can only be solved gradually, by educating the pupils to respect themselves and their personal history through constant attitudes and activities that stress the value of all languages.

However, the observation of classroom dynamics revealed the importance of the group’s overall attitude towards the use of many languages: those children whose classmates (or, at least, the leading child of the group) carried out the proposed activities with enthusiasm also tended to react positively. On the contrary, one of the groups generally reacted negatively to the requests to use their L1s. Therefore, it was decided to widen the language repertoire of the class by occasionally having recourse to foreign languages such as English (studied at school by the children) and Spanish (spoken by the teacher), and even some invented “alien languages”, which could be used to exercise the learners’ ability to focus on form without always forcing them to expose themselves to the embarrassment that using their first languages seemed to cause. This choice seemed to help the learners face the lessons with less anxiety, even though also the reassuring and encouraging participation of the teacher of the class in the activities of language comparison and reflection contributed to their gradual change of attitude. But if this specific group benefited from the decision, other children seemed disappointed to miss an opportunity to use their L1.

Among all the groups, class 2B was probably the one in which the pupils developed the most sincerely curious attitude towards languages, as testified by their questions and remarks recorded in the teacher’s journal:

Degno di nota è l’atteggiamento di curiosità rispetto alle lingue che le bambine hanno manifestato più volte nel corso della lezione, con frasi come “Maestra, facciamo i saluti anche in inglese?”, “Maestra, ho imparato delle parole in spagnolo!”, “Ti posso dire altre cose in

albanese?” o la competizione tra bambine aventi L1 diverse per offrire per prime alla classe esempi nella propria lingua materna. (Teacher’s journal: class 2B, 08.11.2011)⁶⁷

The plurilingual dimension of each learning unit was soon identified by the children, who soon started to spontaneously produce or ask for examples of languages other than Italian and their L1s. For example, during the lesson on greetings, one group wanted to analyse them in English, while a girl who had lived in France shared with the class what she knew about greetings in French. Other children also started to make spontaneous comparisons between languages (without being led to do so by the activities), like when they noticed that the inflection of plural nouns in English and Spanish follows similar patterns.

In some cases, the general interest in languages gave rise to the explicit wish to learn new ones, and this is particularly significant since the children stated they wanted to learn German, which was usually referred to as an example of difficult and unpleasant language:

Le bambine hanno chiesto all’insegnante di dire alcune parole in tedesco, per poi osservare “Che fortunata che sei a sapere il tedesco!”, mentre un’altra alunna chiedeva “Come si fa ad impararlo?”. (Teacher’s journal: class 2B, 13.12.2011)⁶⁸

This kind of interest was anticipated and confirmed by the already mentioned habit of trying to imitate the sound of the classmates’ L1s, a behaviour that spontaneously emerged in more than one group.

Finally, the inclusion of many languages in the lessons also favoured the successful development of the cognitive dimension of the teaching project, since on many occasions the pupils spontaneously observed language phenomena in their friends’ L1s, made comparisons between languages, provided “technical” information about their own L1s and negotiated forms and meanings with their classmates who shared their linguistic origin.

⁶⁷ “Often during the lesson the children manifested a remarkably curious attitude towards languages, with sentences like ‘Teacher, shall we learn greetings in English as well?’, ‘Teacher, I’ve learnt a word in Spanish!’, ‘Can I tell you other things in Albanian?’ and through the competitions between children having different L1s to be the first to offer the rest of the group some examples in their languages.”

⁶⁸ “The girls asked the teacher to say some words in German, and then observed ‘You’re so lucky to know German!’ while another pupil asked ‘How does one learn German?’.”

7.3 The cognitive, metalinguistic dimension

The second main dimension of our research was concerned with the development of metalinguistic abilities. The following paragraphs will provide some comments about the pupils' reactions and the outcomes of the activities that were elaborated and carried out with this purpose. Moreover, we will try to define the features of focus on form-friendly learning units.

7.3.1 Focus on form in the L2 class

The choice of including a metalinguistic dimension in our teaching and research project was motivated by the wish to help the children develop those complex cognitive abilities that might be helpful for their acquisition of Italian and of the other languages they will learn over the course of their lives. Moreover, the experience of discovery of the phenomena of various languages might help the children understand that learning languages is possible, provided one knows how to do it.

For these reasons, some focus on form activities were included in every learning unit (for a theoretical introduction of focus on form, see chapter 2). Such activities, which always involved the whole group, consisted in the observation of some examples of words or sentences taken from Italian: the children were asked to tell the rest of the group if they noticed something interesting (similarities or differences) in the given examples, and then try to hypothesise an explanation for the phenomenon they had noticed. The children negotiated their hypotheses by sharing and discussing their impressions, before the whole reasoning was summarised by the teacher. These operations were constantly stimulated by specific questions, especially when the learners found it difficult to notice any relevant elements, and therefore needed a little push. Metalanguage was only used in order to simplify communication, but its correct use was not the goal of the project.

After reflecting on Italian, an analogous phenomenon was observed in the children's L1s or in other languages (Spanish or English, mainly). However, it should be noted that the focusing on languages other than Italian was more superficial than the one carried out on the children's L2, for two main reasons: the difficulty of finding useful material in order to facilitate the pupils' reasoning, and the awareness that the main goal of the Unit was the acquisition of Italian, so that excessive attention to other languages might risk to compromise the chances to obtain actual progress in the learners' L2.

Thanks to this second multilingual focus on form, three main purposes could be reached. On the one hand, the pupils had the chance to train their ability to focus on the forms of languages: if the object of observation changed, the procedure did not. This intuition is confirmed by Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis, usually represented by the metaphor of the iceberg, whose tips are the languages that constitute our personal language repertoire. As Balboni (2002:161) states,

la nostra capacità di elaborare lingua, la parte sommersa dell'iceberg, cresce quando studiamo una lingua straniera: immettendo ghiaccio, cioè riflessione e nuovi processi di acquisizione linguistica, l'intero iceberg della competenza comunicativa si innalza, sollevando non solo la lingua straniera ma anche la lingua materna.⁶⁹

Likewise, the learners' capacity to focus on form was expected to be enhanced if they focused on different languages, thus increasing that range of cognitive processes at their disposal that are useful when carrying out metalinguistic activities.

On the other hand, children were offered the possibility to develop their language awareness by realizing through their own direct experience that languages sometimes do differ in relation to the same phenomena, but sometimes they do not, and even when they do variation is still predictable (what in Linguistics is known as the Principles and Parameters Approach⁷⁰); finally, the inclusion of new languages in the activities assured the fulfilment of the socio-cultural, affective component of the teaching unit's objectives, allowing the pupils to open up their language horizons, creating a really multilingual and plurilingual environment and enhancing the importance and dignity of all languages, even (and especially) of the pupils' L1, usually excluded from school activities.

Moreover, some focus on form activities on imaginary alien languages were occasionally proposed in class for the children to further practice the metalinguistic operations they had started developing during the previous learning units, and with class 3 an additional game called "Rule hunting" (in the style of some typical *jeu de rôle*

⁶⁹ "Our capacity to elaborate language, the submerged part of the iceberg, grows when we study a foreign language: when we add more ice, that is to say reflection and new processes of language acquisition, the whole iceberg of communicative competence rises, thus lifting not only the foreign language, but also the L1". (Our translation)

⁷⁰ Noam Chomsky, the famous American scholar and founder of many of the most important approaches in modern Linguistics, explained that all natural languages consist of a series of fixed features that are common to all of them (the so-called principles, like the fact that in all languages there are subjects) and of some parameters, features that are subject to variation but only within a small range of fixed possibilities. Both principles and parameters constitute the scaffolding of the Universal Grammar that is innate in all humans' brains and which allows for the rapid acquisition of L1s in small children.

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langues tasks) was carried out during a spare hour, in which the two pairs of children were asked to reconstruct the rule of nominal inflection in the language of the planet Zuxor.

Focus on form was always proactive (see 2.2.2), since it was necessary to select in advance appropriate examples in Italian and, above all, the L1s of the children in order to be able to stimulate useful cognitive processes that would lead the learners to some progress with this respect. Most of the phenomena that were selected for the lessons were of morpho-syntactic nature, because this was considered the aspect of the linguistic system that could be more easily observed by learners with no competence in the languages to which the examples belonged: in this sense, it comes as no surprise to discover that the vast majority (85%) of the LREs recorded in our metalinguistic observation grid were classified as “form based” (see paragraph 6.5.2). On the other hand, this decision led the learners to pay attention only to this aspect of language, so that they found it very difficult to notice or explain those phenomena whose distribution was determined by the interpretation of the sentences (as was the case of the distinction, in Italian, between present simple and the continuous periphrasis “*stare + gerund*”, indicating events that are taking place while the speaker is talking). Moreover, the habit of searching for differences made it difficult for them to notice the similarities that existed between languages, which would also help them optimise the process of language acquisition (therefore they were sensitised about the need to do it).

For a positive outcome of the focusing activities, it was important to choose suitable grammatical themes. For example, a particularly successful learning unit was the one on nominal morphology, since it was easy for the pupils to identify the changes that occurred between the given examples and explain their causes. On the contrary, the lesson on the imperative mood turned out to be inadequate, especially for younger children who were not familiar with the very concept of imperative. Moreover, it was also important to carefully choose the right examples (an enterprise not always easy when it came to analysing languages like Arabic, Albanian or Chinese), which would avoid a double risk: the failure of the activity and the possibility for some children to make up sentences in their L1s when they could not remember them.

In addition to the careful selection of topics and examples, other devices could be used to increase the efficacy of focus on form activities. For example, the creation of exercises on the phenomenon of Italian that was analysed during the learning unit was often effective in helping the children understand the rule, solve possible doubts and

allow for the new structure to enter their Long Term Memory, as was the case of the lessons on articles.

Another important device that effectively promoted noticing and complex cognitive operations of comparison and hypotheses making was the use of input enhancement techniques. Such techniques were meant to increase the saliency of the selected language features in the eyes of the children, so that they would be noticed more easily, thus having more chances to become an object of reflection. As White explains (Doughty-Williams, 1998:86), there are different ways of enhancing the input learners receive, among which input flooding, rule explanation and typographical enhancement are the most common. In our project we mainly used the last technique, which consisted in using colours, bolding, italics, enlargement, underlining or circling in order to direct the pupils' attention towards those aspects of the words or sentences in the examples that might give rise to focusing processes. The use of these techniques (which were also promoted while the learners were solving their exercises, since they were encouraged to use colours in order to make sure they were applying the rule correctly) gave positive results, as shown by the comment of a girl who, during the revision, explicitly said that she remembered the rule about the distribution of the periphrasis "stare + gerund" because when she had learnt it she had been asked to use colours to memorise it:

Degna di nota è stata l'osservazione fatta da una bambina che, durante l'attività di revisione sull'opposizione tra tempo presente e "stare + gerundio" ha detto di ricordare l'attività svolta in classe durante la lezione dedicata all'argomento, nella quale gli studenti erano chiamati a creare due frasi (una per ogni struttura) per descrivere alcune vignette, e successivamente a cerchiare con i colori il suffisso -ndo e il verbo "stare" (tutti questi particolari, compresi i colori usati per cerchiare le parole, sono stati ricordati dalla bambina spontaneamente). (Teacher's journal: class 4A, 19.01.2012)⁷¹

The efficacy of typographical input enhancement was also confirmed, in class 2B, when the children filled in test MA 5, the one about alien languages. In fact, on that occasion, two of the three children did not manage to correctly carry out the task in spite of the previously demonstrated ability to observe and reflect on languages, but when

⁷¹ "Remarkable was the observation made by a girl who, during the revision activity about the opposition between present simple and 'stare + gerund' said she could remember the activity that had been done in class during the learning unit dedicated to the topic, in which the pupils were asked to create two sentences (one for each structure) to describe some drawings, and then had to circle with some colours the suffix -ndo and the verb 'stare' (all these details, including the colours that were used to circle the words, were spontaneously remembered by the child)."

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they were asked to repeat the test orally while the teacher highlighted with some colours the salient formal aspects they had noticed, they managed to solve correctly all the four exercises.

The use of input enhancement techniques was therefore effective in promoting the children's autonomous (although induced) discovery of various types of language phenomena, and the surprise experienced by the learners when they realised that they had discovered something new and that they had done it without anybody's help must have further increased their motivation based on the pleasure of discovery. This kind of reaction was particularly evident in class 4A, where one of the children often exclaimed, with visible excitement, that she had understood the specific phenomena that were being analysed, or that she had noticed something spontaneously.

Degna di nota è stata l'eccitazione provocata in una bambina dall'aver compreso come identificare le caratteristiche formali della lingua che le veniva chiesto di identificare (ad esempio, come riconoscere il soggetto o il morfema flessivo verbale) a testimonianza del fatto che l'attività di riflessione sulla lingua può essere piacevole se condotta in maniera efficace e adeguata agli alunni. (Teacher's journal: 24.11.2011)⁷²

Moreover, the learners were also motivated by the pleasure of challenge, which was constantly stimulated whenever they were asked to look at the provided examples in search of relevant elements. It was a challenge towards themselves and their personal cognitive abilities, but also towards their classmates, since their attempt to produce more observations than their friends was easy to notice, especially in some groups.

Finally, some of them also manifested a sort of "affective" motivation, since they explained that their commitment to focusing activities was due to the wish to contribute to the positive outcome of the research.

Another consequence of the focus on form activities that were proposed during every learning unit is the promotion of the socio-cultural, affective dimension of the project, since the pupils seemed eager to test their abilities by observing not only the languages they knew, but also unknown ones, in order to understand how they worked.

As we observed in 7.2.2, again the group turned out to be decisive in determining the learners' reactions to focus on form and their more or less active involvement in the

⁷² "Remarkable was the excitement caused in a girl by the fact of understanding how to identify the formal features of language that she was asked to identify (for example, how to recognise the subject, or the verbal inflectional morpheme), proving the fact that focus on form activities can be pleasant if it is carried out effectively and in a way that is suitable for children."

7. Discussion: results, potentials and limits of the research project

proposed activities. The observation of classroom dynamics revealed that only one of the four groups that took part in the project did not show the enthusiastic attitude that could be noticed in the three remaining classes, as confirmed by the data collected through the metalinguistic observation grid. It was the case of class 4A, whose pupils also showed some reticence about the use of their L1s in class (which suggests that the two dimensions were actually linked to each other). In fact, it turns out that the average number of LREs produced by each learner in this class was inferior to the average of the other groups:

CLASS	AVERAGE LREs PER PUPIL
2B	31
3	30
4A	26
4B	36

91: Average number of LREs per pupil per class

As regards the remaining groups, on the other hand, the children were so deeply involved in the focusing activities that they gave rise to real competitions, in which they competed with each other to be the first one to answer and to notice more language features or phenomena than their classmates. On these occasions, their attitude was euphoric (especially in class 3), which is surprising if we think that they were doing grammar, although in a more challenging way.

La riflessione sull'italiano ha visto un grande entusiasmo da parte dei bambini, che non vedevano l'ora di condividere con il loro gruppo le loro osservazioni, o piuttosto "illuminazioni", data l'euforia e sollecitudine con cui le comunicavano, sovrapponendosi gli uni gli altri. La riflessione sull'arabo è stata più semplice e rapida, ma ugualmente efficace. (Teacher's journal: class 3, 21.12.2011)⁷³

A partial exception to this phenomenon was represented by class 4B, in which the vast majority of the LREs (60 out of 72) was produced by one of the children. But in this case, the limited participation of the other pupil to focusing activities was not due to a lack of interest or enthusiasm, but rather by her extremely poor competence in Italian,

⁷³ "The reflection on Italian obtained great enthusiasm from the children, who could not wait to share with the group their observations, or rather 'enlightenments', given the euphoria and the promptness with which they communicated them, drowning out each other. The reflection on Arabic was more simple and fast, but equally effective."

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which made it difficult for her even to understand the questions she was asked. In spite of this, the other pupil was not discouraged by her classmate's defection, and she managed to find the motivation to carry out focus on form activities anyway, while each answer the other learner was able to give was considered a little conquest.

Class 2B was particularly successful in formulating correct observations about the majority of the language phenomena they focused on. This proves that focus on form activities can be implemented with very young children, providing they are trained to carry them out effectively. Moreover, it confirms that the problems that emerged with class 2A were not caused by the learners' young age.

As was the case for the plurilingual dimension of the lessons, the children also soon understood that each learning unit included a moment dedicated to the observation of formal phenomena. Therefore, they started to spontaneously tell the rest of the group what they noticed, even before the beginning of focusing activities.

Sembra che i bambini abbiano compreso come vengono organizzate le lezioni, si aspettano che venga loro richiesto di osservare la lingua alla ricerca di fenomeni particolari e hanno iniziato a fare delle osservazioni (non sempre corrette o pertinenti!) anche prima che venga loro richiesto di farlo (ad esempio, una bambina ha osservato che "papà" e "padre" iniziano entrambi con la lettera <p>, mentre un bambino ha osservato che la parola "mio" in albanese "significa qualcosa, cioè topo"). (Teacher's journal: class 3, 09.11.2011)⁷⁴

And such spontaneous observations sometimes also gave rise to interesting discussions, like the one about polysemy that is reported in the metalinguistic observation grid:

(Discussione spontanea iniziata da una bambina marocchina:) "Se in albanese ci sono 2 parole che si dicono uguali ma che hanno significati diversi, come fanno i suoi genitori (di un compagno albanese) a capire il significato giusto?". (G7a, S)⁷⁵

However, to increase the chance to obtain such positive results in focusing activities, it is necessary to train the pupils to carry out cognitive processes of observation,

⁷⁴ "The children seem to have understood how the lessons are organised, they expect to be asked to observe the language in search of special phenomena and have started to make observations (not always correct or pertinent!) even before they are asked to do it (for example, a girl noticed that 'papà' and 'padre' both begin with letter <p>, while a boy noticed that the word 'mio' in Albanian 'means something, that is to say "mouse"."

⁷⁵ "(Spontaneous discussion started by a Moroccan child:) 'If in Albanian there are two words that are pronounced the same but have different meanings, how do his parents (of an Albanian classmate) understand what the right meaning is?'"

comparison, reflection and hypothesis making and testing. In fact, the administration of exercises about alien languages over the course of the teaching unit revealed that only some children were immediately able to understand the tasks and carry them out correctly. To the others, the operations needed to be explained step by step, sometimes more than once, and they should be further helped through the use of input enhancement techniques, which they were encouraged to use autonomously. However, by helping each child individually and according to their needs, satisfying results could be obtained by all of them, as shown by the speed and degree of autonomy with which they solved analogous exercises during the following lessons and in final test MA 5.

Moreover, the rhythm of every learner should always be respected, by differentiating the focusing activities (when possible): for example, when solving the exercises about alien languages, some children managed to analyse only one language, others analysed all of them, while the ones who showed a higher aptitude for this kind of tasks were asked to invent their personal alien languages.

In the light of the above presented account of the project, our experience of implementation of a teaching unit for primary school children that included regular moments dedicated to focus on form can be judged positively, given the involvement shown by the pupils and the progress they experienced over the course of months. However, experiences of this kind should not be underestimated: in fact, so much enthusiasm does not completely overshadow the cognitive complexity of such activities, as testified by one of the children who, during the last lesson of the unit, naively stated that learning languages is possible, but sometimes also very demanding.

7.3.2 Focus on form-friendly learning units

As anticipated in 6.6, in the light of the data obtained through the metalinguistic observation grid (described in 6.5.2) we will try to analyse the learning units that were implemented during our research in order to define which of their features were useful for the promotion of metalinguistic abilities. To do so, we will compare the two most effective learning units with the two least effective ones, and try to draw some conclusions that might be useful for other teachers interested in this methodology.

As we can read in table 84, the two learning units which promoted the highest number of LREs were lessons 9 (74 LREs) and 8 (43 LREs).

The former dealt with a reflection about number morphology in Italian nouns. The first part of the lesson was dedicated to an activity on the vocabulary of animals: the

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children played “Nomi, cose, città”, trying to guess the names of animals which began with a given letter and recording them on their copybooks. After this simple activity, they were asked to observe some carefully chosen examples of Italian names of animals (masculine, feminine and with different endings), derive their plural form and reflect on it in order to reconstruct their own rule about it. Their hypotheses were negotiated, discussed and tested, and the final rule was written by the children while they filled in the “La MIA regola!” section of their working sheets. After this operation, they were asked to guess how plural nouns were formed in English and Spanish. Both during the observation of Italian and of the two foreign languages, input enhancement techniques were employed, by using colours to circle the relevant morphemes the pupils identified. Finally, each child received an image in which different animals were represented and was asked to write a description of it, specifying the quantity of specimens for each species.

Learning unit 8, on the other hand, dealt with the opposition between present simple and the Italian continuous periphrasis “stare + gerund”. The lesson began with a brainstorming session in which pairs of children were asked to remember as many lexical items as they could about school (dividing them into four classes: object, people, teachers’ actions and pupils’ actions). After this, a verb was chosen among the ones mentioned by the children to recreate the opposition between the two grammatical forms, and the learners were asked to observe any differences of form or meaning, before filling in “La MIA regola!”. Then, the pupils were asked to think about their L1s to verify if they also contained analogous phenomena. Finally, each child was given a series of images representing actions, which they had to describe using both grammatical forms and underlining with a colour “stare” and the morpheme “-ndo”.

As we can notice, both learning units followed the structural pattern we presented in 5.2.4: at first, a short activity on vocabulary, then focus on form on both Italian and other languages, and finally an exercise for the learners to practise the newly discovered rule. However, the same structure was also used to project learning units 7 and 6, which turned out to be the least effective ones from the point of view of focus on form (with 6 and 17 LREs, respectively).

Learning unit 7 dealt with the expressions used to express the frequency of actions. During the first part of the lesson, the children played the revisited version of the game “Taboo” with expressions indicating hobbies, and read a short text in which expressions of frequency were used. Then, they reflected on the function of such expressions and

tried to order them on a line, from “never” to “always”. They repeated this operation by ordering the corresponding expressions used in their L1s and finally wrote a short text in which they described the hobbies of the character represented, together with the symbols of various pastimes, on an image each one received.

The language feature that was chosen for the pupils to focus on in learning unit 6 was verbal agreement. Initially, the children were asked to produce some simple sentences, using the subject written on a little card they had to pick from a box and one of the actions of daily routine represented on a poster. During this operation, they also had to underline the subject of each sentence and circle the corresponding morpheme of verbal agreement with the same colour. Then, they reflected on the relation that exists between the subject and the predicate of a sentence, both in Italian (after which they filled in “La MIA regola!”) and in their L1s. Finally, since the children had already practised the rule in the first part of the unit, at the end of it they carried out an activity on alien languages.

What were, then, the strong points of learning units 9 and 8, and how did 6 and 7 differ from them? The efficacy of the first two units is the result of a combination of rigorous organisation, appropriate choice of language features and use of enhancement techniques.

In fact, focus on form-friendly learning units should always deal with phenomena with which pupils already are familiar; otherwise their novelty would risk to catch the children’s complete attention, distracting them from their tasks. The selected language features should also grant the possibility of observing something without too much effort, to prevent learners from being discouraged. This was the problem of learning unit 7, whose central theme was not particularly suitable for focusing activities for young children with little experience reflecting on languages.

Moreover, enhancement techniques should be used during both focusing activities and the final exercise, in order to make the cognitive processes of comparison and analysis more explicit. And the final exercise should give learners the chance not only to practise the rule, but also to perfect their comprehension of it.

Finally, as regards the importance of how each learning unit is organised, the varying amount of LREs suggests that the above presented structure should be respected carefully. Actually, the cause of the partial failure of learning unit 6 was probably the change in the lesson’s structure: in fact, the first exercise of this unit should have been carried out at the end of it, in order to allow the pupils to practise and better understand the rule on verbal agreement, whose discovery, on the contrary, it preceded. Moreover,

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this exercise was probably too long and demanding, since the children were quite tired when they completed it. The focusing activity was therefore postponed (with respect to the original structure of the learning units), with the result that the learners were too tired to notice and reflect on the salient language features, in spite of their suitability for the task. These observations confirm the appropriateness of our decision to partially modify the structure of the teaching unit originally elaborated by Freddi (see paragraph 5.2.4) by anticipating the reflection before practising activities, in order to have the pupils' full attention and energy to carry out such complex cognitive operations.

7.4 An analysis of the project using FREPA descriptors

In the previous paragraphs, we evaluated the efficacy of our project on the basis of internal research instruments (questionnaire on attitude towards languages and language learning, tests on metalinguistic aptitude, metalinguistic observation grid and teacher's journal). Now we would like to analyse the effectiveness of our teaching project with the use of an external instrument, namely the Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches.

FREPA (also known in French as CARAP, *Cadre de référence pour les approches plurielles*) is an instrument, created by the Council of Europe, which presents "a comprehensive list of descriptors (Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes) considered necessary within the perspective of a plurilingual and intercultural education"⁷⁶. Since our teaching project was inspired to one of the four pluralistic approaches described in chapter 3 (namely, *éveil aux langues*), it seems interesting to use this instrument in order to verify which of the skills, attitudes and types of knowledge pluralistic approaches should promote were actually enhanced by our project. Our analysis is based on what were the aims of the implemented project and, consequently, the observed reactions of the pupils to the learning units.

Below we present a complete list of the descriptors and subdescriptors that describe the effect of our unit (the complete list of descriptors and subdescriptors can be consulted on the website whose link is reported in note 76).

⁷⁶ This quotation is taken from the homepage of the website of FREPA, where complete information about this instrument can be found: <<http://carap.ecml.at/CARAP/tabid/2332/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>>. Last consultation 11.05.2012

7. Discussion: results, potentials and limits of the research project

The first aspect of the teaching experience that is analysed by the framework concerns the types of knowledge promoted by the teaching project:

FREPA descriptor	Description
<i>K 1.2.2</i>	Knows that two words which may have the same form/look alike in different languages do not automatically mean the same
<i>K 1.4</i>	Knows that languages work in accordance with rules/norms
<i>K 1.7</i>	Possesses knowledge of a linguistic nature about a particular language (the mother tongue / the language of schooling / foreign languages...)
<i>K 3.1</i>	Knows that apart from linguistic communication, there are other forms of communication [that linguistic communication is but one of the possible forms communication can take]
<i>K 3.1.2</i>	Knows some examples of human non-linguistic communication (sign language, braille, gestures ...)
<i>K 5.1</i>	Knows that there are very many languages in the world
<i>K 5.3</i>	Knows that there are many different kinds of script
<i>K 5.4</i>	Knows that multilingual/plurilingual situations vary according to countries/regions {number/status of languages, attitudes towards languages...}
<i>K 5.6.1.1</i>	Knows that one must not confuse country with language
<i>K 5.7</i>	Is aware of the existence of situations of multilingualism/plurilingualism in one's own environment and in other places, near or far
<i>K 6.1</i>	Knows that each language has its own system
<i>K 6.1.1</i>	Knows that the system which makes up one's own language is only one possibility among others
<i>K 6.3</i>	Knows that categories used to describe the workings of a language (the mother tongue/the language of education) may not necessarily exist in others {number, gender, the article...}
<i>K 6.4</i>	Knows that even when these categories can be found in another language, they are not necessarily organised in the same way
<i>K 6.8</i>	Knows that the organisation of an utterance may vary from one language to another
<i>K 6.8.1</i>	Knows that the order of words may differ from one language to another
<i>K 6.8.2</i>	Knows that the relationships between the elements of an utterance (groups of words/word) may be expressed differently from one language to another {through the word order, through endings, through prepositions/postpositions...}
<i>K 6.9</i>	Knows that systems of script may function in different ways
<i>K 6.9.1</i>	Is aware of the existence of different forms of script {phonograms, ideograms, pictograms}
<i>K 6.10</i>	Knows that there are similarities and differences between verbal/non-verbal communication systems from one language to another

Focus on form in the L2 class

K 7.2	Knows that one can rely on the (structural/discursive/pragmatic) similarities between languages in order to learn languages
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92: FREPA descriptors: Knowledge

This group of descriptors mainly refers to the cognitive, metalinguistic dimension of our teaching project, especially for what concerns the awareness of the fact that languages differ from one another and are governed by internal rules that build a complex system (this is particularly evident in descriptors K 6.8, K 6.8.1 and K 6.8.2).

Moreover, the effectiveness of our project in fulfilling some of the above presented subdescriptors was confirmed by some specific episodes that occurred during our experience. For example, subdescriptor K 1.2.2 refers to those occasions in which some of the children recognised a similarity between the strings of sounds used in Italian and their L1s to convey different meanings:

Dopo aver scritto nel quaderno la parola inglese “hobby” ha spontaneamente osservato che la stessa parola (quasi omofona) in arabo significa “amore”. (LRE D7a, S)

K 3.1 and K3.1.2, on the other hand, are the result of specific activities about non verbal communication that were carried out during learning unit 14, in order to sensitise the children about this kind of communication they are unconsciously used to using every day.

Subdescriptors K 5.3, K 6.9 and K 6.9.1 are particularly interesting because, although exploring different possibilities of script was not one of the goals of our unit, it was the pupils themselves who, probably encouraged by the climate of interest in language diversity, proudly volunteered to show how their languages were written (of course, this was only possible for those learners who had received some schooling in their L1).

Something similar happened with K 5.4 and K 5.7, since both the Chinese and some of the Moroccan pupils spontaneously explained that, in their countries, various dialects of the same language are spoken in different areas. This awareness was probably strengthened and extended to other sociolinguistic contexts over the course of the unit.

The second aspect of the teaching experience that is analysed by FREPA is the set of attitudes enhanced in the learners:

FREPA descriptor	Description
A 1.1.1	Attention to verbal and nonverbal signs of communication

A 1.1.2	Considering/apprehending linguistic/cultural phenomena as an object of observation/reflexion
A 1.1.3	Attention to [paying attention to] the formal aspects of language in general/particular languages/cultures
A 2.1	Sensitivity towards one's own language/culture and other languages/cultures
A 2.2	Sensitivity to linguistic/cultural differences
A 2.2.1	Being aware of different aspects of language/culture which may vary from language to language/from culture to culture
A 2.2.1.1	Being aware of the diversity of linguistic universes {sounds, graphisms, syntactic organisations, etc.}/cultural universes {table manners, traffic laws, etc.}
A 2.2.2	Being aware of the (local/regional/social/generational) variants of a same language (dialects ...)/culture
A 2.3	Being aware of traces of otherness in a language (for example in loan words) / a culture
A 2.4	Being sensitive both to differences and to similarities between different languages/cultures
A 2.5	Sensitivity to plurilingualism and to pluriculturalism in the immediate or remote environment
A 2.5.1	Being aware of the linguistic/cultural diversity of society
A 2.5.2	Being aware of the linguistic/cultural diversity of the classroom
A 2.5.2.1	Being aware of the diversity of languages/cultures present in the classroom (when these are set side by side with one's own linguistic/cultural practices/knowledge)
A 2.6	Sensitivity to the relativity of linguistic/cultural customs
A 3.2	Curiosity about discovering how (one's own/other) language(s)/culture(s) work(s)
A 3.2.1	Being curious about (and wishing) to understand the similarities and differences between one's own language/culture and the target language/culture
A 4.2	Accepting the fact that another language/culture may function differently from one's language/culture
A 4.2.1	Accepting the fact that another language can organise the construction of meaning on phonological and semantic distinctions/syntactic constructions which differ from those of one's own language
A 4.3	Accepting the fact that another language/culture may include elements which differ from those of one's own language
A 4.3.1	Accepting the existence of sounds <phonemes>/prosodic and accentual forms which differ from those of one's own language
A 4.5	Acceptance [Recognition] of the importance of all languages/cultures and the different places they occupy

Focus on form in the L2 class

<i>A 4.5.1</i>	Acceptance [Recognition]/Taking into account of the value of all the languages/cultures in the classroom
<i>A 4.5.1.1</i>	Positive acceptance of minority languages/cultures in the classroom
<i>A 5.1</i>	Empathy [Openness] to alterity
<i>A 5.2</i>	Openness to allophonic speakers (and their languages)
<i>A 5.3</i>	Openness to languages/cultures
<i>A 5.3.1</i>	Openness towards languages/cultures which are viewed with less regard {minority languages/cultures, languages/cultures belonging to migrants...}
<i>A 5.3.2</i>	Openness towards foreign languages/cultures taught at school
<i>A 5.3.3</i>	Openness towards the unfamiliar (linguistic or cultural)
<i>A 5.3.3.1</i>	Being open (and mastering one's own eventual resistances) to what seems incomprehensible and different
<i>A 6.1</i>	Respect for differences and diversity (in a plurilingual and pluricultural environment)
<i>A 6.2</i>	Valuing [appreciating] linguistic/cultural contacts
<i>A 6.4</i>	Considering all languages as equal in dignity
<i>A 6.5.1</i>	Respecting [valuing] each individual's language and culture
<i>A 7.4</i>	Disposition to share one's linguistic/cultural knowledge with others
<i>A 7.5</i>	Motivation to study/compare the functioning of different languages {structures, vocabulary, systems of writing ...}/cultures
<i>A 7.5.1</i>	Motivation for the observation and analysis of more or less unfamiliar linguistic/cultural phenomena
<i>A 8.1</i>	A will to take up the challenge of linguistic/cultural diversity (going beyond simple tolerance, towards deeper levels of understanding and respect, towards acceptance)
<i>A 8.2</i>	Participating consciously in the construction of one's own plurilingual/pluricultural competence/Voluntary involvement in the development of the process of plurilingual/pluricultural socialisation
<i>A 8.5</i>	A wish to discover other languages/other cultures/other peoples
<i>A 8.5.1</i>	A wish to encounter other languages/other cultures/other peoples linked to the personal or familiar history of persons one knows
<i>A 8.6</i>	A will/A wish to be involved in communication with persons from different cultures/to come into contact with others
<i>A 8.6.3.2</i>	Accepting help from persons of another culture/language
<i>A 8.8</i>	A will to learn from others (their language/their culture)
<i>A 9.1</i>	A will to ask questions relative to languages / cultures

7. Discussion: results, potentials and limits of the research project

<i>A 9.2</i>	Considering languages/cultures/linguistic/cultural diversity/linguistic/cultural “mixes”/the learning of languages/their importance/their utility... as issues about which questions and discussions may arise
<i>A 9.2.1</i>	Considering the way languages and their different units {phonemes/words/sentences/texts} function as an object of analysis and reflection
<i>A 11.1</i>	Being disposed to distance oneself from one’s own language/culture/look at one’s own language from the outside
<i>A 12.2.1</i>	Being ready to decentre oneself relative to the maternal language and culture/the language and culture of the school
<i>A 12.3</i>	Disposition to go beyond evidence developed in relation with the mother language/culture in order to comprehend languages/cultures, whichever these may be {better understanding the way they function}
<i>A 12.4</i>	Disposition to reflect upon the differences between languages/cultures and upon the relative nature of one’s own linguistic/cultural system
<i>A 12.4.1</i>	Readiness to distance oneself from formal similarities
<i>A 14.3</i>	Having confidence in one’s own abilities in relation to languages (their study/their use)
<i>A 14.3.1</i>	Confidence in one’s capacities of observation/of analysis of little known or unknown languages
<i>A 15.1</i>	A feeling of familiarity linked to similarities/proximities between languages/between cultures
<i>A 15.2</i>	Considering every language/culture as “something” accessible (some aspects of which are already known)
<i>A 15.2.1</i>	A (progressive) feeling of familiarity with new characteristics/practices of a linguistic or cultural order {new sound systems, new ways of writing, new behaviours ...}
<i>A 16.2.2</i>	Accepting a bi/plurilingual/bi/pluricultural identity
<i>A 16.3</i>	Considering one’s own historical identity with confidence/pride but also while respecting other identities
<i>A 16.3.1</i>	Respect of oneself, irrespective of which language(s)/culture(s) {minority/denigrated language(s)/culture(s)} one belongs to
<i>A 17.1</i>	Being sensitive to the extent/the value/the interest of one’s own linguistic/cultural competences
<i>A 17.2</i>	According value to linguistic knowledge/skills, irrespective of the context in which they have been acquired {within school/outside school}
<i>A 17.3</i>	Being ready to learn from one’s errors
<i>A 17.4</i>	Having confidence in one’s own abilities at language learning/in one’s

	abilities to extend one's own linguistic competences
<i>A 18.1</i>	A positive attitude towards the learning of languages (and the speakers who speak them)
<i>A 18.1.1</i>	Interest in the learning of language/languages of schooling <especially for allophone learners>
<i>A 18.1.2</i>	A wish to perfect one's mastery of the maternal language/the language of schooling
<i>A 18.1.3</i>	A desire to learn other languages
<i>A 18.1.4</i>	An interest in the learning of languages other than those for which teaching is actually available
<i>A 18.1.5</i>	An interest in the learning of languages less or little taught in formal schooling
<i>A 18.4</i>	Disposition to learn languages throughout one's life
<i>A 19.1</i>	Disposition to modify one's own knowledge/representations of the learning of languages when these appear to be unfavourable to learning (negative prejudice)

93: FREPA descriptors: Attitudes

First of all, we should specify that in our project the linguistic dimension prevailed over the cultural one, for the reasons that were explained in 7.2.1 Therefore, all the above reported descriptors should be interpreted accordingly.

This second group of descriptors and subdescriptors refers to the plurilingual and socio-affective component of our project. The pupils were helped to get used to language diversity and become interested in it, without showing prejudice against any type of language: during various activities they were asked to show a curious attitude towards their languages (A 5.3.1), the foreign languages taught at school (namely English, A 5.3.2) and also the ones that are not learnt there and might look unfamiliar and incomprehensible (the L1s of their classmates, Spanish, German or even alien languages, A 5.3.3 and 5.3.3.1).

As regards descriptors A 4.2, A 4.2.1, A 4.3, A 4.3.1, A 4.5, A 4.5.1 and A 4.5.1.1, it should be noted that in the case of L2 speakers, who represent a minority group in the Italian school system and society, the challenge was not enhancing the value of languages different than the pupils' L1s, but rather rehabilitating in the eyes of the children the dignity of their own languages, which they perceived as sociolinguistically penalising, due to their lack of prestige. In other words, they should be educated to accept their own language repertoire as a surplus value (A 16.2.2, A 16.3, A 16.3.1, A

17.1 and A 17.2) rather than something to be hidden away, as the pupils tended to do before the implementation of the teaching unit (and, to some extent, also after it).

Once accepted the value of all languages, descriptors A 7.5 and A 7.5.1 could be put into practice to promote in the learners a curious attitude towards the language diversity that surrounds them. This led to the realisation of descriptor A 8.5: as we can read in the Teacher's journal,

i bambini sembrano entusiasti di poter esplorare le proprie L1 in classe, come testimonia la domanda posta prima della lezione dallo studente albanese (lo stesso che la lezione precedente si rifiutava di parlare nella propria L1): "Maestra, che lingue impariamo oggi?". (Teacher's journal: class 3, 02.11.2011)⁷⁷

In spite of the initial reluctance of some children to open the lessons to languages other than Italian, after the first learning unit the pupils have already started to overcome their feeling of unease by replacing it with curiosity.

The choice of descriptor A 15.2.1 was motivated by some interesting episodes that spontaneously took place in more than one group: in fact, the learners' progressive familiarisation with their classmates' L1s gave rise to some attempts to produce sentences in such languages on the base of the imitation of what the children perceived to be their sound: in fact, when a child was asked to translate a sentence in his/her L1, speakers of a different language sometimes tried to answer in his/her place. The attitude of these learners was not a mocking one, although they seemed excited by what they were doing. Such episodes reveal an extension of the children's curiosity towards their friends' L1s (no longer limited to the single words or structures that were analysed), as well as the absence of any prejudice against other non-prestigious minority languages.

The third group of descriptors is concerned with the skills whose development in the learners was promoted by the teaching project.

Also in this case, the linguistic dimension prevails over the cultural one. Moreover, it should be noted that every child developed these skills to varying degrees, according to their pre-existing aptitude (as revealed by the learners' different results in the tests).

⁷⁷ "The children seem to be enthusiastic about having the chance to explore their own L1s in class, as shown by a question asked before the beginning of the lesson by an Albanian child (the same who the previous lesson refused to speak in his L1): "Teacher, what languages are we going to learn today?"

FREPA descriptor	Description
<i>S 1.1</i>	Can make use of/master processes of observation/analysis (breaking down into elements/classifying/establishing relationships between them)
<i>S 1.1.1</i>	Can use inductive approaches in the analysis of linguistic/cultural phenomena
<i>S 1.1.2</i>	Can formulate hypotheses in view of an analysis of linguistic/cultural phenomena
<i>S 1.1.3</i>	Can resort to a known language/culture with a view to development of analysis of another language/culture
<i>S 1.1.4</i>	Can observe different languages/cultures simultaneously in order to formulate hypotheses analysing phenomena in a particular language/culture
<i>S 1.4</i>	Can observe/analyse syntactic and/or morphological structures
<i>S 3.1</i>	Can apply procedures for making comparisons
<i>S 3.1.1</i>	Can establish similarity and difference between languages/cultures from observation/analysis/identification/recognition of some of their components
<i>S 3.7</i>	Can compare the grammatical functioning of different languages
<i>S 3.8</i>	Can compare grammatical functions of different languages
<i>S 4.1</i>	Can construct explanations meant for a foreign interlocutor about a feature of one's own culture/meant for an interlocutor from one's own culture about a feature of another culture
<i>S 4.3</i>	Can explain one's own knowledge of languages
<i>S 5.1</i>	Can construct a set of hypotheses/a «hypothetical grammar» about affinities or differences between languages
<i>S 5.3.3</i>	Can establish grammatical regularities in an unfamiliar language on the basis of grammatical regularities in a familiar language/can carry out transfers at grammatical level (transfers of function)
<i>S 7.3.2</i>	Can use knowledge and skills acquired in one language to learn another
<i>S 7.3.3</i>	Can use knowledge and skills acquired in one language to develop his/her knowledge and skills in that same language (through intralingual comparison, induction, deduction...)
<i>S 7.5</i>	Can get ownership of a system for identifying correspondences and non-correspondences between languages known to varying degrees

94: FREPA descriptors: Skills

Most of the operations that are referred to by the above quoted descriptors and subdescriptors concerning skills were stimulated by the teacher through specifically

created activities. However, this seemed to produce some results also in relation to the children's capacity to spontaneously carry out these operations of reflection and comparison, as revealed by the metalinguistic observation grid:

Ha osservato spontaneamente che in spagnolo il plurale si forma aggiungendo la -s finale, e che lo stesso succede in inglese. (E4c, E4d, both spontaneous)⁷⁸

Durante l'attività di riordino delle espressioni di frequenza in albanese, osservando le espressioni equivalenti a "sempre" e "mai", ha spontaneamente affermato: 'Ho capito come funziona! "here" (= volta) rimane, cambia solo la prima parte!'. (D7d, S)⁷⁹

Finally, as regards the pupils ability to use the skills acquired during the teaching unit to learn new languages or perfect their competence in the ones they already know (S 7.3.2 and S 7.3.3), we can only hypothesise that this will be possible, although a more prolonged learning experience of this kind would increase the likelihood of this to happen.

The analysis of our project through the descriptors of FREPA reveals that it was effective in promoting the attitudes, skills and types of knowledge that are usually enhanced by pluralistic approaches, although this only concerns the purely linguistic dimension. In fact, the cultural dimension found little space in our teaching experience.

7.5 Suggestions for further research

With our research, we have tried to contribute to the development of new effective methodologies for L2 teaching, by planning and verifying the efficacy of a teaching project that combined purely linguistic objectives with socio-cultural, affective and cognitive, metalinguistic ones. However, the teaching experience and the use of various research instruments highlighted some problems, which should be taken into consideration by other teachers or researchers, if they decided to repeat this experience in the future.

⁷⁸ "The child has spontaneously observed that in Spanish the plural is formed by adding a final -s, and that the same happens in English."

⁷⁹ "During the activity of ordering of expressions of frequency in Albanian, observing the expressions that are equivalent to 'always' and 'never', the child spontaneously observed: 'I understand how it works! "here" (= time) stays the same, while only the first part changes!'"

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First of all, as was explained in chapter 6, some of our research instruments turned out to be imperfect. For example, three of the 5 tests on metalinguistic aptitude should be corrected in order for their results to be more trustworthy:

- test MA 1 (word length evaluation) should contain only Italian words and, for it to be effective in verifying the pupils' capacity to separate form and meaning, at least some of the words should present a contrast between their length and the dimensions of their referent (as in "butterfly" – long word, little referent – or "sky" – big referent, short word);
- test MA 2 (lexical segmentation) should be carried out only in Italian for the children to be able to identify word boundaries;
- test MA 5 (morphological manipulation) should be longer, given its importance to determine the learners' ability to notice formal aspects of language, hypothesise rules and apply them, and should contain two examples for each rule in order to facilitate the task.

As regards the questionnaire, the vague and confusing expression "other languages" should be substituted by examples of other more or less common languages the pupils' might want to learn in the future, and the layout of statements AL 1-4 (that concerned the learners' evaluation of languages) should be modified to visually signal the necessity of choosing two different answers for each statement (about the difficulty and the perceived "beauty" of each language). Finally, the children's wish to learn new languages should be verified through a specific statement.

On the other hand, some modifications should be applied to the teaching project as well. In fact, although it turned out to be effective in developing its original goals and in harmonising the two main dimensions (the affective and the cognitive one, which stimulated curiosity for each other), it also manifested a certain margin for improvement. In addition to the integration of the various types of changes that have been suggested in this chapter (some of which were already applied over the course of our teaching experience in order to adapt the lessons to the learners' needs), some other measures should be taken to increase the efficacy of the teaching unit.

For example, we already stressed the need to deal with the cultural dimension in a more systematic and exhaustive way. For this to be possible, it seems necessary to increase the length of the teaching project: this would allow for a higher effectiveness of the learning experience and a widening of the variety of topics that could be treated in class. In fact, by doing so the teacher would have the chance to dedicate some learning

units to the analysis and intercultural comparison of cultural phenomena, thus facilitating the pupils' integration in the local community (although, as we stressed in 7.3.1, their long stay in Italy already caused a certain degree of cultural assimilation). Moreover, it would also be possible to include in the focusing activities other dimensions of communicative competence (like the phonetic, the graphemic or the pragmatic one, as well as analysis of the mechanisms of word formation, for example), even though we still think that the morpho-syntactic level is the most suitable one for a focus on form that involves more than one (unknown) language.

As regards the plurilingual focusing activities that were carried out in each learning unit, it would be desirable for the linguistic facilitator (i.e., the teacher of L2 workshops, as we explained in chapter 1) to actively cooperate over the course of the whole teaching project with the cultural mediators who speak the languages of the learners, given the importance, for a better outcome of the activities, of accurately choosing language phenomena and examples. Such cooperation might also include the totality of the teachers of the school, since it was demonstrated by our experience that if teachers show an open and curious attitude towards languages in general and, more specifically, towards the children's L1s, the pupils are naturally led to imitate such curiosity.

Finally, some suggestions should also be made for further research on the topics we have been dealing with. We have identified two main directions in which our research might be further developed. The first one would be the completion of our project through an analysis of the attitude towards cultural diversity of L2 pupils who live between at least two cultures, and who constantly face the possibility of cultural assimilation.

The second one, on the other hand, might be an attempt to extend the positive experience of promotion of a more open and curious attitude about languages and a better understanding of how they work also to the rest of the pupils who do not take part in L2 workshops. This might be done through regular *veill aux langues* lessons that, in addition to the already presented positive repercussions on the learners' attitude and aptitude, would also promote a better integration between L1 and L2 speakers of the same language.

CONCLUSIONS

Our research project was meant to contribute to the development of innovative methodologies for the teaching of second languages. The teaching project we elaborated, implemented and whose efficacy we assessed through our research instruments has shown to be effective not only in promoting the pupils' acquisition of the language. In fact, as was demonstrated by the analysis of our data presented in chapter 6, the project also successfully reached three main objectives:

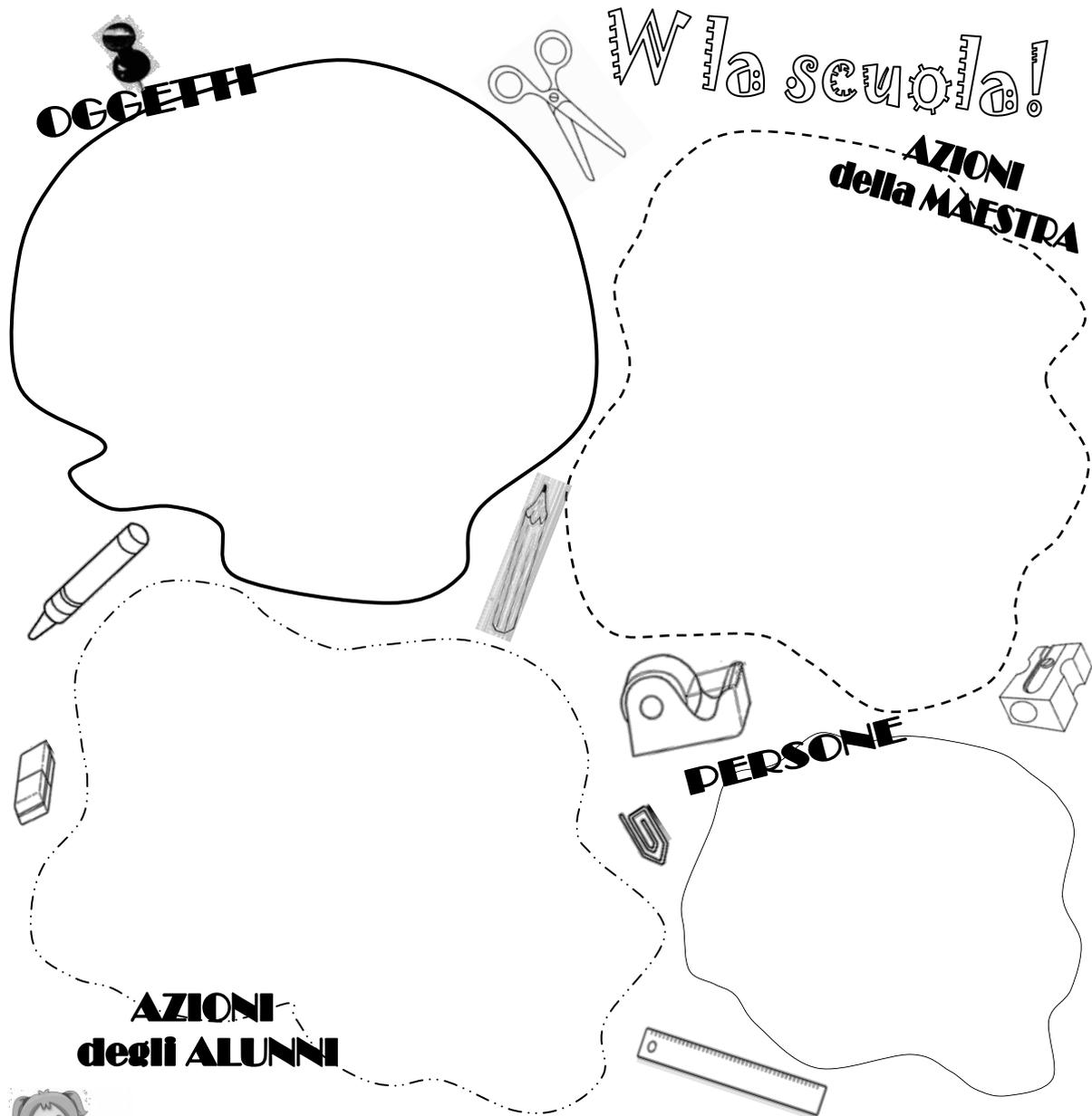
- it created occasions for the enhancement of the learners' autonomy in language learning (through the development of metalinguistic abilities),
- it promoted their motivation and curiosity to discover new communication systems and, above all,
- it generated new opportunities for them to serenely build their plurilingual identity by recognising the value of their language background, a conquest from which all the aspects of the children's lives will benefit.

In spite of the difficulties that we encountered while implementing the teaching unit and investigating the results of the research (and which were previously presented, together with some suggestions for their solution), we think that such an experience should be enriched, prolonged and extended to other schools. By doing so, we hope that the L2 workshop might cease to be considered a sort of remedial course for children with linguistic gaps that need to be plugged (as might be the case in some schools), and finally be conceived as a stimulating environment that is actually successful in promoting the learners' global growth.

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Appendix 1: Teaching materials (examples)



La MIA regola!

In italiano:

Esistono modi diversi per dire:

- cosa faccio di solito (ad es. _____)
- e cosa sto facendo adesso (ad es. _____ che si forma usando _____ + _____)

Questa distinzione esiste anche in ...

... ARABO?

... ALBANESE?





○○○

MEDIA

○○○



	NOME DI PERSONA	CAPITALE	BANDIERA	CIBO TIPICO
IRLANDESE	Lorcan		verde, bianco, arancione	
PORTOGHESE		Lisbona		baccalà
TEDESCO	Franz		nero, rosso e giallo	
ARGENTINO		Buenos Aires		tortilla di patate
SVEDESE	Astrid		blu e giallo	
RUSSO		Mosca		minestra di cavoli
EGIZIANO	Zahira		rosso, bianco e nero	
UNGHERESE		Budapest		gulasch
SLOVENO	Vladislav		bianco, blu e rosso	
GIAPPONESE		Tokyo		sashimi








Appendix 2: Research instruments

Questionnaire about attitude towards languages and language learning

Per me ...

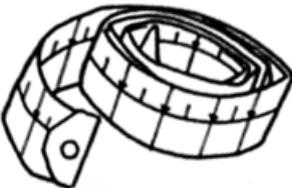
<p>La mia lingua è ...</p> <p>facile</p> <p>difficile</p> <p>bella</p> <p>brutta</p> <p>serena</p>		<p>Imparare la mia lingua è stato ...</p> <p>facilissimo</p> <p>facile</p> <p>difficile</p> <p>impossibile</p>
<p>L'italiano è ...</p> <p>facile</p> <p>difficile</p> <p>bello</p> <p>brutto</p> <p>sereno</p>		<p>Imparare l'italiano è ...</p> <p>facilissimo</p> <p>facile</p> <p>difficile</p> <p>impossibile</p>
<p>L'inglese è ...</p> <p>facile</p> <p>difficile</p> <p>bello</p> <p>brutto</p> <p>sereno</p>		<p>Imparare l'inglese è ...</p> <p>facilissimo</p> <p>facile</p> <p>difficile</p> <p>impossibile</p>
<p>Le altre lingue sono ...</p> <p>facili</p> <p>difficili</p> <p>belle</p> <p>brutte</p> <p>serene</p>		<p>Imparare altre lingue è ...</p> <p>facilissimo</p> <p>facile</p> <p>difficile</p> <p>impossibile</p>

Tests on metalinguistic aptitude

Lunga o corta?!

Scrivi se secondo te le parole che senti sono lunghe o corte!

1.	<input type="checkbox"/> lunga	<input type="checkbox"/> corta
2.	<input type="checkbox"/> lunga	<input type="checkbox"/> corta
3.	<input type="checkbox"/> lunga	<input type="checkbox"/> corta
4.	<input type="checkbox"/> lunga	<input type="checkbox"/> corta
5.	<input type="checkbox"/> lunga	<input type="checkbox"/> corta
6.	<input type="checkbox"/> lunga	<input type="checkbox"/> corta
7.	<input type="checkbox"/> lunga	<input type="checkbox"/> corta
8.	<input type="checkbox"/> lunga	<input type="checkbox"/> corta




Quanti?!

Quante parole senti?

1.	_____
2.	_____
3.	_____
4.	_____
5.	_____
6.	_____
7.	_____
8.	_____



I

Viva la rima!

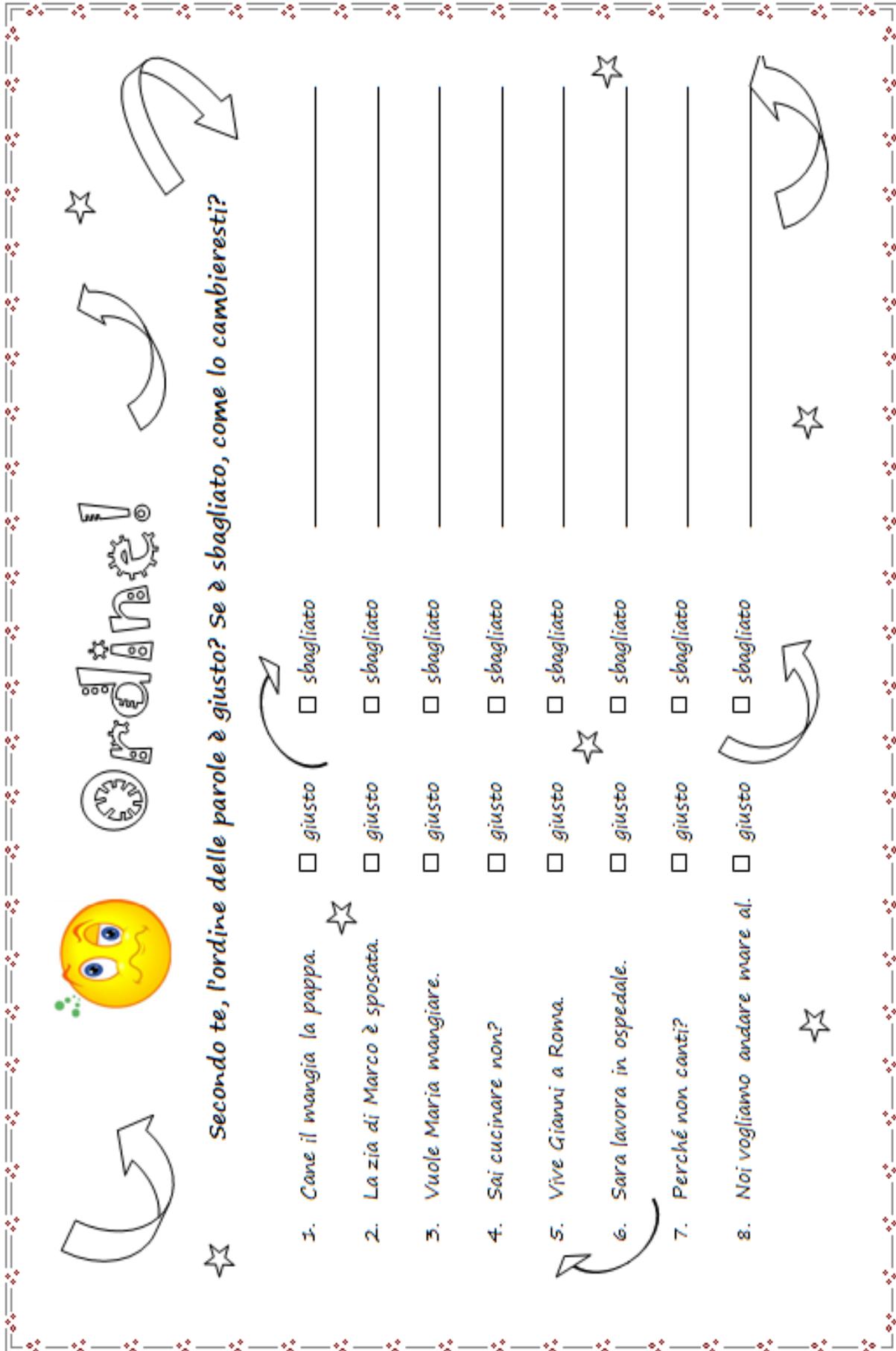
Secondo te, queste coppie di parole hanno lo stesso finale?

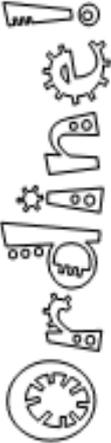
cane

pane

1. sì no
2. sì no
3. sì no
4. sì no
5. sì no
6. sì no
7. sì no
8. sì no





★ Secondo te, l'ordine delle parole è giusto? Se è sbagliato, come lo cambieresti?

1. Cane il mangia la pappa. giusto sbagliato 

2. La zia di Marco è sposata. giusto sbagliato

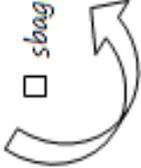
3. Vuole Maria mangiare. giusto sbagliato

4. Sai cucinare non? giusto sbagliato

5. Vive Gianni a Roma. giusto sbagliato

6. Sara lavora in ospedale. giusto sbagliato 

7. Perché non canti? giusto sbagliato

8. Noi vogliamo andare mare al. giusto sbagliato 

Arrivano gli alieni!!!

Prova a indovinare come si parlano queste lingue aliene!



Lingua URKA

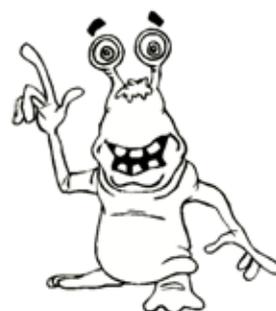
birku = bambino birki = bambina

dirku = ragazzo _____ = ragazza

Lingua ANDI

pandi = gatto **g**ipandi = gatta

_____ = cavallo **g**iranti = cavalla



Lingua KINT

prati **nu** = cantiamo prati **vu** = cantate

_____ = balliamo kangi **vu** = ballate

Lingua RAG

mi zagu = io mangio **di** zagur = tu mangi

mi bracu = io bevo _____ = tu bevi



Test sull'attitudine metalinguistica (in entrata)

GUIDA DOCENTE

A) Secondo te queste parole sono lunghe o corte? (ripetere 2 volte)

(viene testata la capacità di analizzare separatamente la forma e il contenuto in relazione a lingue diverse dalla L1 dei discenti)

Ad esempio:

camminerò?

vino?

1. skyscraper

2. sole

3. sassolino

4. cucaracha

5. bill

6. gigante

7. Kugelschreiber

8. mar

B) Quante parole senti? (ripetere 2 volte)

(viene testata la capacità di analizzare separatamente la forma e il contenuto in relazione a lingue diverse dalla L1 dei discenti)

Ad esempio:

Ho mangiato tre mele.

Pienso que eres guapa.

1. Mio cugino lavora in città.

2. I can play tennis.

3. Te quiero.

4. I gatti corrono sempre in cortile.

5. No me gusta tu nuevo coche.

6. Ich liebe Tomas.

7. Jack comes from Italy.

8. Guardo spesso la televisione.

C) Secondo te queste parole hanno lo stesso suono finale? (ripetere 2 volte)

(viene testata la sensibilità fonologica)

Ad esempio:

culla – cura

caja – baja

1. gatto – matto

2. fiore – paura

3. house – mouse

4. bill – kill

5. cuerda – cuerpo

6. Stunde – Kunde

7. rana – geranio

8. Spitze – Pizza

D) Secondo te l'ordine delle parole è giusto? (ripetere 2 volte)

(viene testata la sensibilità morfosintattica, anche se l'età dei discenti e il fatto che la lingua oggetto di analisi è la loro L2 non permettono di ottenere giudizi elaborati)

Ad esempio:

La mamma lavora in ufficio.

Ti non piace la frutta?

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Cane il mangia la pappa. | 5. Vive Gianni a Roma. |
| 2. La zia di Marco è sposata. | 6. Sara lavora in ospedale. |
| 3. Vuole Maria mangiare. | 7. Perché non canti? |
| 4. Sai cucinare non? | 8. Noi vogliamo andare mare al! |

E) Ora prova a indovinare come funzionano queste lingue marziane ...

(viene testata la sensibilità morfologica)

Ad esempio:

Lingua TINKI

“spad” vuol dire “cane” e “spadik” vuol dire “cani”,

“crad” vuol dire “topo”... come si dirà “topi”?

1.Lingua URKA

“birku” vuol dire “bambino” e “birki” vuol dire “bambina”,

“dirku” vuol dire “ragazzo” ... come si dirà “ragazza”

2.Lingua ANDI

“pandi” vuol dire “gatto” e “gipandi” vuol dire “gatta”,

“giranti” vuol dire “cavalla” ... come si dirà “cavallo”?

3.Lingua RAG

“mi zagu” vuol dire “io mangio” e “di zagur” vuol dire “tu mangi”,

“mi bracu” vuol dire “io bevo” ... come si dirà “tu bevi”?

4.Lingua KINT

“prati nu” vuol dire “cantiamo” e “prati vu” vuol dire “cantate”,

“kangi vu” vuol dire “ballate” ... come si dirà “balliamo”?

Test sull'attitudine metalinguistica (in uscita)

GUIDA DOCENTE

A) Secondo te queste parole sono lunghe o corte? (ripetere 2 volte)

(viene testata la capacità di analizzare separatamente la forma e il contenuto in relazione a lingue diverse dalla L1 dei discenti)

Ad esempio:

camminerò?

vino?

1. sightseeing

2. rosa

3. attaccapanni

4. ordenador

5. cup

6. mariposa

7. Taschentuch

8. Mond

B) Quante parole senti? (ripetere 2 volte)

(viene testata la capacità di analizzare separatamente la forma e il contenuto in relazione a lingue diverse dalla L1 dei discenti)

Ad esempio:

Ho mangiato tre mele.

Pienso que eres guapa.

1. Quanti anni ha tua sorella?

2. My name is Mary.

3. Tú cantas.

4. Vado a scuola tutte le mattine.

5. Luca non parla la mia lingua.

6. Du bist traurig.

7. Vuoi giocare con me?

8. Ho studiato tre ore.

C) Secondo te queste parole hanno lo stesso suono finale? (ripetere 2 volte)

(viene testata la sensibilità fonologica)

Ad esempio:

culla – cura

caja – baja

1. porta – storta

2. pesce – testa

3. sun – fun

4. big – pig

5. puerta – muerta

6. Natur – Kultur

7. foglia – moglie

8. suerte – sueño

D) Secondo te l'ordine delle parole è giusto? (ripetere 2 volte)

(viene testata la sensibilità morfosintattica, anche se l'età dei discenti e il fatto che la lingua oggetto di analisi è la loro L2 non permettono di ottenere giudizi elaborati)

Ad esempio:

La mamma lavora in ufficio.

Ti non piace la frutta?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Piace mi mangiare la pizza. | 5. Vuole Maria vederti. |
| 2. Hai finito di fare i compiti? | 6. Anna ha perso borsa la. |
| 3. Gioco sempre a calcio. | 7. Dove da vieni? |
| 4. Vuoi venire con me? | 8. Tu anche studi matematica. |

E) Ora prova a indovinare come funzionano queste lingue marziane ...

(viene testata la sensibilità morfologica)

Ad esempio:

Lingua TINKI

“spad” vuol dire “cane” e “spadik” vuol dire “cani”,

“crad” vuol dire “topo”... come si dirà “topi”?

5.Lingua URKA

“spuk” vuol dire “cagnolino” e “spukin” vuol dire “cagnolina”,

“trak” vuol dire “ballerino” ... come si dirà “ballerina”

6.Lingua ANDI

“mandi” vuol dire “porta” e “rimandi” vuol dire “porte”,

“risant” vuol dire “finestre” ... come si dirà “finestra”?

7.Lingua RAG

“dromi” vuol dire “corro” e “droti” vuol dire “corri”,

“grati” vuol dire “salti” ... come si dirà “salto”?

8.Lingua KINT

“am kant” vuol dire “parliamo” e “at kant” vuol dire “parlate”,

“am fat” vuol dire “giochiamo” ... come si dirà “giocate”?

Appendix 3: Language Related Episodes

KEY: **I/S** : Induced or spontaneous LRE **m.b.** : Meaning based
s.b. : Sound based **f.b.** : Form based
g./u. : Grammatical vs Ungrammatical **u.b.** : Use based

PUPIL	LESSON	LRE	Content of the LRE	TYPE	I/S
A	2	a	Alla richiesta di confrontare gli aggettivi "francese" e "italiano" al maschile e femminile ha osservato la differenza tra -o e -a in quelli a 4 uscite,	f.b.	I
		b	e tra -e ed -o al maschile.	f.b.	I
		c	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra gli aggettivi prearticolati maschili e femminili dell'albanese ha indicato la presenza di "i"	f.b.	I
		d	ed "e" davanti agli aggettivi (invariati) di diverso genere.	f.b.	I
		e	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra gli aggettivi maschili e femminili dell'arabo ha suggerito che tutti gli aggettivi maschili terminassero in -d.	f.b.	I
	3	a	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra frasi dichiarative e interrogative si/no in arabo ha indicato l'inserimento di "wech"	f.b.	I
		b	e la caduta di "nti" come elementi discriminanti.	f.b.	I
	5	a	Alla richiesta di osservare cosa cambiava tra una serie di frasi identiche se non per il soggetto (e conseguentemente la coniugazione verbale) ha risposto che cambia la finale di parole come "lavoro", "lavora", ecc.	f.b.	I
		b	All'osservazione della compagna "Non si può dire *noi lavorate" ha risposto "Sì, si dice "voi lavorate"".	g./u.	S
		c	Su richiesta della docente, ha riconosciuto il cambio di soggetto in alcune frasi dell'arabo.	f.b.	I
		d	Su richiesta della docente, ha riconosciuto il cambio di verbo in alcune frasi dell'arabo.	f.b.	I
		e	Alla richiesta di osservare cosa cambiasse tra frasi arabe contenenti "nti" e "nta" (delle quali era stata data spiegazione/contextualizzazione identificando "nti" con "tu, Fatima" e "nta" con "tu, Adam") ha indicato un cambiamento nella parte finale della parola.	f.b.	I
	6	a	Ha osservato una differenza di terminazione tra la 3° persona singolare all'indicativo presente di verbi in -are ed -ere.	f.b.	S
	7	a	Alla richiesta di indicare la funzione degli indicatori di frequenza ha osservato che si usano per dire quando le azioni sono state compiute.	m.b.	I
	8	a	Ha spontaneamente osservato che le parole scritte nel riquadro "Azioni" (verbi all'infinito) finiscono con -e.	f.b.	S
		b	Di fronte a una serie di esempi posti per stimolare l'identificazione della terminazione -ndo (sto mangiando, sto bevendo, sto dormendo, sto uscendo...) ha osservato che "sta" nella seconda frase "non va bene".	g./u.	I
		c	Alla domanda "Quando?" (posta per indirizzare correttamente le generalizzazioni delle bambine) ha risposto che la seconda frase	m.b.	I

		si riferisce ad adesso,			
	d	mentre la prima a qualcosa di "già passato".	m.b.	I	
	9	a	Alla richiesta di individuare i meccanismi di formazione del plurale nei sostantivi italiani ha osservato che -o diventa -i,	f.b.	I
		b	-e diventa -i	f.b.	I
		c	e -a diventa -e,	f.b.	I
		d	cioè cambiano sempre le vocali.	f.b.	I
		e	Alla richiesta di individuare i meccanismi di formazione del plurale nei sostantivi spagnoli ha osservato che il plurale si forma aggiungendo -s alla fine delle parole.	f.b.	I
	10	a	Su richiesta della docente ha osservato che anche in arabo esistono meccanismi di accordo nominale.	f.b.	I
	12	a	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione dell'articolo italiano "la" ha osservato che si usa con le parole femminili.	f.b.	I
		b	Alla richiesta di indicare gli articoli usati con le parole maschili ha risposto "il"	f.b.	I
		c	e "lo".	f.b.	I
		d	Alla richiesta di spiegare la distribuzione dell'articolo "lo", ha indicato che si utilizza con le parole che iniziano con "z",	f.b.	I
		e	y,	f.b.	I
		f	e "s+consonante" (grazie agli esempi posti dall'insegnante).	f.b.	I
		g	Durante l'osservazione degli esempi "sole", "sacco", "squalo" e "specchio" ha osservato che tutte le parole iniziano con s-.	f.b.	I
		h	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione degli articoli in arabo, ha osservato che l'articolo rimane invariato.	f.b.	I
B	2	a	Ha osservato la coincidenza tra l'aggettivo usato per indicare nazionalità e il sostantivo relativo alla lingua per l'albanese.	s.b.	S
	3	a	Alla richiesta di identificare la differenza tra frasi interrogative si/no e a costituenti in italiano ha subito notato la differenza nelle risposte.	u.b.	I
		b	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra frasi dichiarative e interrogative si/no in italiano ha osservato che alla fine delle frasi interrogative si verifica un allungamento dell'ultima parola.	s.b.	I
	4	a	Alla richiesta di identificare i criteri in base ai quali scegliere che possessivo utilizzare in un sintagma ha indicato la necessità di modificare la morfologia della parola in base al genere.	f.b.	I
		b	Durante il completamento de "La mia regola" ha osservato che il possessivo di 3° p. plur. è invariabile.	f.b.	S
		c	Alla richiesta di osservare la forma dei possessivi in spagnolo ha notato che maschile è caratterizzato dalla terminazione in -o	f.b.	I
		d	ed il femminile da quella in -a.	f.b.	I
		e	Alla richiesta di osservare la forma dei possessivi in inglese ha notato che sono invariabili.	f.b.	I
	5	a	Durante l'attività di brainstorming sul lessico dei mestieri, udita la parola "flautista" ha osservato "Viene fuori "autista"!"	s.b.	S
		b	Inoltre, alla richiesta di osservare come si formano parole come "pianista", "flautista", "batterista" ecc. ha osservato che basta aggiungere -sta.	f.b.	I
		c	Alla richiesta di osservare cosa cambiava tra una serie di frasi identiche se non per il soggetto (e conseguentemente la coniugazione verbale) ha risposto che cambiano "tu", "noi", "voi",	f.b.	I

Focus on form in the L2 class

		"loro",		
	d	ma anche "lavoro", "lavori", "lavorano"...	f.b.	I
	e	Durante la riflessione sul rapporto tra soggetto e verbo ha confermato di aver compreso che un cambio di soggetto implica un cambiamento nella flessione verbale osservando "Non si può dire *noi lavorate".	g./u.	S
6	a	Alla richiesta di osservare cosa accomunasse alcuni verbi alla 3° persona singolare ha indicato la terminazione -a.	f.b.	I
	b	Alla richiesta di osservare cosa accomunasse alcuni verbi alla 1° persona plurale ha indicato la terminazione -o,	f.b.	I
	c	successivamente corretta in -mo.	f.b.	I
	d	Ha osservato spontaneamente che nella coniugazione al presente indicativo di "cantare" nelle prime 3 persone del paradigma ciò che cambia alla fine della parola è la vocale.	f.b.	S
8	a	Durante l'attività sul lessico ha spontaneamente osservato che "professoressa finisce con -essa".	f.b.	S
	b	Ha corretto la compagna osservando che le parole scritte nel riquadro "Azioni" (verbi all'infinito) finiscono con -re, e non solo con -e.	f.b.	S
	c	Alla richiesta di osservare quale differenza di significato esistesse tra le frasi "La maestra corregge i compiti" e "La maestra sta correggendo i compiti" ha osservato che in una era presente il verbo "scrive" mentre nell'altra "sta scrivendo".	f.b.	I
	d	Di fronte a una serie di esempi posti per stimolare l'identificazione della terminazione -ndo (sto mangiando, sto bevendo, sto dormendo, sto uscendo...) ha osservato che le parole terminavano in -do,	f.b.	I
	e	perfezionando poi la generalizzazione (aggiungendo <n>) dopo l'esposizione ad altri esempi pronunciati in maniera marcata.	f.b.	I
9	a	Alla richiesta di individuare i meccanismi di formazione del plurale nei sostantivi italiani ha osservato che "al singolare le parole (degli esempi) finiscono quasi tutte con -o	f.b.	I
	b	e -a,	f.b.	I
	c	al plurale quasi tutte con -i".	f.b.	I
	d	Ha inoltre notato che la terminazione -a diventa -e al plurale,	f.b.	I
	e	osservando che "a" ed "e" si succedono anche nell'ordine delle vocali.	f.b.	S
10	a	Alla richiesta di identificare i meccanismi di accordo nominale, osservando la declinazione dell'aggettivo "grigio" ha osservato che ciò che cambia è l'ultima lettera della parola,	f.b.	I
	b	che cambia 4 volte (nelle 4 combinazioni di numero e genere).	f.b.	I
	c	Alla richiesta di identificare i meccanismi di accordo nominale, osservando la declinazione dell'aggettivo "arancione" ha osservato che la terminazione della parola cambia solo 2 volte.	f.b.	I
	d	Alla richiesta di identificare, nell'aggettivo "rosso", la parte della parola che indica che si tratta di una parola maschile singolare ha subito indicato la -o.	f.b.	I
	e	Su richiesta della docente, ha osservato che anche in albanese esistono meccanismi di accordo nominale.	f.b.	I
12	a	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione dell'articolo italiano "la" ha osservato che si usa con le parole femminili.	f.b.	I

		b	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione dell'articolo italiano "lo" ha osservato che si usa con le parole maschili.	f.b.	I
		c	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione dell'articolo italiano "il" ha osservato che si usa con le parole maschili.	f.b.	I
		d	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione dell'articolo italiano "l'" ha osservato che si usa con le parole che iniziano con vocale.	f.b.	I
		e	Osservando alcuni esempi di parole maschili che iniziano con "s" (sotto la guida della docente) ha notato che solo quelle che iniziano con "s + consonante" prendono come articolo "lo".	f.b.	I
C	2	a	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra aggettivi a 2 e 4 uscite ha osservato che gli aggettivi a 2 uscite terminano in -e.	f.b.	I
		b	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra gli aggettivi prearticolati maschili e femminili dell'albanese ha indicato la presenza di "i"	f.b.	I
		c	ed "e" davanti agli aggettivi di diverso genere.	f.b.	I
	3	a	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra frasi dichiarative e interrogative si/no in albanese ha osservato il cambiamento di tono nella parte finale delle domande.	s.b.	I
	4	a	Durante il completamento de "La mia regola" ha osservato che la forma del pronome personale di 3°p. plur. (loro) e del rispettivo possessivo coincidono.	f.b.	S
		b	Alla richiesta di identificare i criteri in base ai quali scegliere che possessivo utilizzare in un sintagma ha indicato la necessità di osservare la parola successiva.	f.b.	I
	5	a	Alla richiesta di osservare cosa cambiava tra una serie di frasi identiche se non per il soggetto (e conseguentemente la coniugazione verbale) ha risposto che "tu, lei, noi, voi, loro non sono uguali".	f.b.	I
		b	Su richiesta della docente, ha riconosciuto il cambio di soggetto in alcune frasi dell'arabo.	f.b.	I
		c	Su richiesta della docente, ha riconosciuto il cambio di verbo in alcune frasi dell'arabo.	f.b.	I
		d	Alla richiesta di osservare cosa cambiasse tra frasi arabe contenenti "nti" e "nta" (delle quali era stata data spiegazione/contextualizzazione identificando "nti" con "tu, Fatima" e "nta" con "tu, Adam") ha indicato una differenza tra maschile e femminile.	m.b.	I
		e	Su richiesta della docente, ha riconosciuto il cambio di soggetto in alcune frasi dell'albanese.	f.b.	I
		f	Su richiesta della docente, ha riconosciuto il cambio di verbo in alcune frasi dell'albanese.	f.b.	I
	8	a	Dopo l'esposizione ad altri esempi pronunciati in maniera marcata, assieme a una compagna ha corretto la generalizzazione dell'altra compagna relativamente alla terminazione -do, aggiungendo la <n>.	f.b.	I
		b	Alla richiesta di osservare quale differenza di significato esistesse tra le frasi "La maestra corregge i compiti" e "La maestra sta correggendo i compiti" (dopo la domanda "Quando?" posta per stimolare la risposta corretta) ha osservato che la	m.b.	I

Focus on form in the L2 class

			prima frase fa riferimento a domani.		
9	a	Alla richiesta di individuare i meccanismi di formazione del plurale nei sostantivi italiani ha osservato che “in gatto cambia la -i,	f.b.	I	
	b	in cane si passa da -e a -i,	f.b.	I	
	c	in lepre da -e a -i	f.b.	I	
	d	e in giraffa da -a a -e”.	f.b.	I	
12	a	Alla richiesta di indicare perché nella scheda della lezione fossero presenti due diversi “ l ’ ” (uno associato a “lo”, l’altro associato a “la”) ha risposto che “arancia è femmina” (dimostrando di avere intuito la distinzione tra maschile e femminile).	f.b.	I	
	b	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione dell’articolo “lo”, osservando gli esempi “il sacco”, “il sole”, “lo squalo” e “il secchio” ha indicato che “tutte finiscono con -o”.	f.b.	I	
	c	Leggendo la scritta “UN ARANCIA” ha esclamato: “Maestra, ma ci va l’apostrofo, perché è femminile!”.	f.b.	S	
	d	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione degli articoli in arabo, ha osservato che l’articolo rimane invariato.	f.b.	I	
	e	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione degli articoli in albanese, ha osservato che “një” è uguale a “një”,	f.b.	I	
	f	e “sa” è uguale a “sa”.	f.b.	I	
D	2	a	Alla richiesta di confrontare sintagmi contenenti gli aggettivi “francese” e “italiano” al maschile e femminile ha osservato che “un” -o si usano per indicare il maschile,	f.b.	I
		b	mentre “una” e -a si usano per indicare il femminile.	f.b.	I
		c	Inoltre, ha osservato che mentre “francese” rimane invariato al maschile e al femminile,	f.b.	I
		d	“italiano” cambia.	f.b.	I
		e	Alla richiesta di identificare l’elemento di differenziazione tra gli aggettivi maschili e femminili dell’arabo ha indicato l’aggiunta della -a per derivare il femminile.	f.b.	I
		f	Precedentemente aveva suggerito che tutti gli aggettivi maschili terminassero in -d.	f.b.	I
	3	a	Alla richiesta di identificare l’elemento caratteristico delle frasi interrogative a costituenti ha segnalato la presenza del punto di domanda,	f.b.	I
		b	la presenza di parole come “come”, “cosa” ecc.	f.b.	I
		c	e il fatto che tutti gli esempi proposti iniziavano con la lettera <c>.	f.b.	I
		d	Alla richiesta di identificare l’elemento di differenziazione tra domande si/no e domande a costituenti ha indicato che al primo tipo di domande si risponde sì o no,	u.b.	I
		e	mentre al secondo tipo si rispondono “parole”.	u.b.	I
		f	Alla richiesta di identificare l’elemento di differenziazione tra frasi dichiarative e interrogative si/no in arabo ha indicato un cambio di intonazione come elemento discriminante.	s.b.	I
		g	Alla richiesta della docente di identificare l’elemento caratteristico delle domande a costituenti in arabo ha osservato	f.b.	I

		la presenza di parole specifiche (con valore interrogativo) all'inizio della frase.		
	h	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra frasi dichiarative e interrogative si/no in albanese ha indicato un cambio di intonazione come elemento discriminante.	s.b.	I
	i	Alla richiesta della docente di identificare l'elemento caratteristico delle domande a costituenti in albanese ha osservato la presenza di parole specifiche (con valore interrogativo) all'inizio della frase.	f.b.	I
4	a	Alla richiesta di identificare i criteri in base ai quali scegliere che possessivo utilizzare in un sintagma ha indicato la necessità di osservare la parola successiva al possessivo.	f.b.	I
	b	Inoltre, ha indicato la necessità di osservare il numero (singolare o plurale) della parola successiva.	f.b.	I
	c	Alla richiesta di identificare la regola in base alla quale modificare la morfologia dei possessivi in spagnolo ha indicato la terminazione -o per il maschile singolare,	f.b.	I
	d	-os per il maschile plurale,	f.b.	I
	e	-a per il femminile singolare	f.b.	I
	f	e -as per il femminile plurale.	f.b.	I
	g	Osservando i sostantivi inglesi "brother", "sister", "brothers" e "sisters" ha ipotizzato una generalizzazione in base alla quale il plurale si forma aggiungendo la -s finale (regola già vista in classe con il maestro di inglese)	f.b.	I
	h	mentre il singolare sarebbe caratterizzato dalla -r finale.	f.b.	I
5	a	Durante il brainstorming sul lessico dei mestieri ha spontaneamente osservato che sostantivi come "musicista", "violinista", "pianista" si formano aggiungendo il suffisso -ista a parole già esistenti.	f.b.	S
	b	Alla richiesta di osservare cosa cambiava tra una serie di frasi identiche se non per il soggetto (e conseguentemente la coniugazione verbale) ha indicato il cambiamento della persona.	f.b.	I
	c	Alla richiesta di tradurre in arabo il pronome personale "tu" rivolto a un maschio e a una femmina ha osservato che nella lingua in questione la seconda persona distingue i due generi al singolare.	f.b.	I
	d	Alla richiesta di confrontare l'ordine delle parole in italiano e in arabo ha osservato l'uguaglianza di tale ordine.	f.b.	I
7	a	Dopo aver scritto nel quaderno la parola inglese "hobby" ha spontaneamente osservato che la stessa parola (quasi omofona) in arabo significa "amore".	s.b.	S
	b	Alla richiesta di definire la funzione delle espressioni indicatrici di frequenza ha osservato che "indicano quando si svolgono i fatti".	m.b.	I
	d	Guidato dalla docente, ha poi perfezionato la risposta sottolineando che le suddette espressioni indicano quante volte le situazioni si verificano.	m.b.	I
	d	Durante l'attività di riordino delle espressioni di frequenza in albanese, osservando le espressioni equivalenti a "sempre" e "mai" in albanese, ha spontaneamente osservato: "Ho capito come funziona! "here" (= volta) rimane, cambia solo la prima parte!".	f.b.	S

Focus on form in the L2 class

	8	a	Alla richiesta di osservare quale differenza di significato esistesse tra le frasi "La maestra corregge i compiti" e "La maestra sta correggendo i compiti" ha risposto che nel primo caso "la maestra li sta correggendo in un momento che può cambiare",	m.b.	I
		b	mentre nel secondo l'azione sta avvenendo ora.	m.b.	I
		c	Inoltre, ha osservato che tra le due frasi cambia la parola "sta"	f.b.	I
		d	e la parola "correggere".	f.b.	I
	9	a	Alla richiesta di individuare i meccanismi di formazione del plurale nei sostantivi italiani ha osservato che "ape" resta sempre femminile sia al singolare che al plurale,	m.b.	I
		b	così come "asino" rimane sempre maschile.	m.b.	I
		c	Successivamente, ha formalizzato la regola del plurale in italiano dicendo che "la -o diventa -i,	f.b.	I
		d	la -a diventa -e	f.b.	I
		e	e la -e diventa -i".	f.b.	I
		f	Osservando alcuni esempi di formazione del plurale in spagnolo ha notato che al singolare la parole terminavano con -a	f.b.	I
		g	e con -o,	f.b.	I
		h	mentre al plurale terminavano sempre con -s.	f.b.	I
	i	Durante l'osservazione di alcuni esempi presi dall'inglese sulla formazione del plurale ha osservato che il plurale si forma aggiungendo una -s alla fine della parola.	f.b.	I	
	10	a	Durante l'attività di ripasso del lessico ha spontaneamente osservato che "braccialetto è un derivato di braccio".	s.b.	I
		b	Durante la riflessione linguistica ha suggerito che l'aggettivo deve cambiare per adattarsi al nome.	f.b.	I
		c	Ha inoltre osservato spontaneamente (prima che l'attenzione dei bambini venisse posta sull'argomento) che l'aggettivo "blu" rimane invariato.	f.b.	S
		d	Alla richiesta di identificare i meccanismi di accordo nominale, osservando la declinazione dell'aggettivo "marrone" ha notato che la desinenza del singolare è -e,	f.b.	I
		e	mentre -i è quella del plurale.	f.b.	I
		f	Successivamente, una volta identificati (con l'aiuto dei bambini) altri esempi analoghi, ha osservato che questa regola è applicabile agli aggettivi che terminano con -e.	f.b.	I
	13	a	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione dell'articolo "la" in italiano ha osservato che si usa con i nomi femminili singolari.	f.b.	I
		b	Ha inoltre osservato che "l'articolo deve andare d'accordo col nome".	f.b.	I
		c	Ha osservato che "l" si utilizza con le parole che iniziano per vocale.	f.b.	I
	14	a	Alla richiesta di osservare il comportamento degli articoli in arabo ha notato che l'articolo "al" rimane invariato al maschile e al femminile.	f.b.	I
		b	Ha osservato che in albanese per formare il plurale dei sostantivi si aggiunge -a alla fine della parola.	f.b.	I
E	3	a	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra frasi dichiarative e interrogative si/no ha affermato che il finale delle frasi interrogative si pronuncia allungato.	s.b.	I
	4	a	Alla richiesta di identificare i criteri in base ai quali scegliere che	f.b.	I

		possessivo utilizzare in un sintagma ha indicato la necessità di modificare la morfologia in base al genere.		
	b	Alla richiesta di identificare la parola il cui genere va osservato ha detto che si tratta di quella che precede il possessivo.	f.b.	I
	c	Ha osservato spontaneamente che in spagnolo il plurale si forma aggiungendo la -s finale,	f.b.	S
	d	e che lo stesso succede in inglese.	f.b.	S
	e	Ha inoltre osservato che lo spagnolo si comporta come l'italiano poiché in entrambe le lingue è necessario modificare la morfologia del possessivo in base a genere e numero.	f.b.	I
6	a	Alla richiesta di identificare cosa cambiasse nei verbi al variare del soggetto ha indicato la parte finale.	f.b.	I
8	a	Alla richiesta di osservare quale differenza di significato esistesse tra le frasi "La maestra corregge i compiti" e "La maestra sta correggendo i compiti" ha risposto che nella prima si fa riferimento a un fatto già accaduto,	m.b.	I
	b	mentre la seconda è riferita a qualcosa che sta succedendo adesso.	m.b.	I
	c	Alla richiesta di osservare come si forma il secondo tipo di frase ha indicato la necessità di includere un protagonista	m.b.	I
	d	e un'azione da esso compiuta.	m.b.	I
9	a	Alla richiesta di individuare i meccanismi di formazione del plurale nei sostantivi italiani ha osservato che "balena" è un nome,	f.b.	I
	b	e che deve andare d'accordo con l'articolo, per questo si dice "la balena" e "le balene.	f.b.	I
	c	Ha inoltre aggiunto che, per quanto riguarda il maschile, per formare il plurale è necessario aggiungere una -i alla fine,	f.b.	I
	d	specificando poi (dietro sollecitazione da parte dell'insegnate) che la -i non viene aggiunta, bensì sostituisce la -o del singolare.	f.b.	I
	e	Allo stesso modo, al femminile: in parole come "balena" si toglie la -a e si aggiunge la -e,	f.b.	I
	f	mentre nel caso di "ape" si toglie la -e e si aggiunge la -i.	f.b.	I
	g	Ha poi osservato che il meccanismo non può essere alterato: ad esempio, non si può trasformare "ape" in "apa" poiché non esiste.	g./u.	I
	h	Durante l'osservazione di alcuni esempi presi dall'inglese sulla formazione del plurale ha notato che il plurale si forma aggiungendo -s alla fine della parola.	f.b.	I
	i	Durante l'osservazione di alcuni esempi presi dallo spagnolo sulla formazione del plurale ha notato che il plurale si forma aggiungendo -s alla fine della parola.	f.b.	I
10	a	Alla richiesta di identificare i meccanismi di accordo nominale ha notato che gli aggettivi cambiano anche in base al genere.	f.b.	I
	b	Ha poi osservato che la radice dell'aggettivo rimane sempre uguale..	f.b.	I
	c	Ha osservato che "rosso" e "rossi" sono entrambi maschili,	f.b.	I
	d	ma cambiano in base al numero.	f.b.	I
	e	Ha proposto come esempio l'agrammaticalità del sintagma "*bello macchina" per dimostrare che aggettivo e nome devono concordare.	g./u.	S
	f	Su richiesta della docente ha riconosciuto l'esistenza di meccanismi di accordo nominale in arabo.	f.b.	I

Focus on form in the L2 class

	13	a	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione dell'articolo "la" in italiano ha osservato che si usa con i nomi femminili singolari.	f.b.	I
	14	a	Ha osservato che in arabo ciò che cambia tra le parole "bint" (bambina) e "dri" (bambino) non è solamente il suffisso (come in italiano) bensì l'intera parola.	f.b.	I
		b	Alla richiesta di osservare il comportamento degli articoli in albanese ha notato che al singolare si usa "një",	f.b.	I
		c	mentre al plurale si usa "sa".	f.b.	I
		d	Ha inoltre osservato che non c'è distinzione tra maschile e femminile,	f.b.	I
		e	ma solo tra singolare a plurale.	f.b.	I
F	2	a	Alla richiesta di confrontare gli aggettivi "francese" e "italiano" al maschile e femminile ha osservato che mentre il primo mantiene la stessa terminazione al maschile e al femminile,	f.b.	I
		b	il secondo cambia in base al genere.	f.b.	I
	3	a	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra frasi dichiarative e interrogative si/no ha indicato un cambio di tono come responsabile della trasformazione.	s.b.	I
		b	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento caratteristico delle frasi interrogative a costituenti ha segnalato la presenza di parole come "cosa", "come", ecc.	f.b.	I
	4	a	Alla richiesta di osservare la morfologia dei possessivi in inglese ha notato che i possessivi rimangono invariabili.	f.b.	I
	5	a	Alla richiesta di spiegare in che modo possono cambiare i soggetti in italiano ha indicato la possibilità di distinguere soggetti singolari e plurali.	m.b.	I
	8	a	Alla richiesta di osservare quale differenza di significato esistesse tra le frasi "La maestra corregge i compiti" e "La maestra sta correggendo i compiti" ha risposto che nel secondo caso l'azione sta avvenendo ora,	m.b.	I
		b	mentre nel primo "non li ha ancora corretti ma li correggerà".	m.b.	I
	9	a	Alla richiesta di individuare i meccanismi di formazione del plurale nei sostantivi italiani ha osservato che "anatra" è il singolare, "anatre" è il plurale, quindi la parola cambia.	f.b.	I
		b	Durante l'osservazione di alcuni esempi presi dallo spagnolo sulla formazione del plurale ha notato che il plurale si forma aggiungendo un -s alla fine della parola.	f.b.	I
		c	Di fronte a esempi come "rosa", "casa" e "perro" ha detto che al singolare terminavano tutti con -a.	f.b.	I
	13	a	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione degli articoli maschili "il" e "lo" ha notato che è necessario osservare la parola successiva.	f.b.	I
	14	a	Ha osservato che in albanese l'articolo "një" si usa indipendentemente dal genere del sostantivo.	f.b.	I
G	2	a	Alla richiesta di confrontare sintagmi contenenti gli aggettivi "francese" e "italiano" al maschile e femminile ha osservato la differenza tra le coppie uno/una	f.b.	I
		b	e bambino/bambina.	f.b.	I
	3	a	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra frasi dichiarative e interrogative si/no ha affermato che in quelle interrogative "si fa così" mentre tracciava col dito una curva (dimostrando l'intuizione dell'importanza della dimensione	s.b.	I

		soprasegmentale intontiva).		
4	a	Durante il completamento di una tabella sui possessivi ha osservato “Ah, la -o è per il maschile	f.b.	S
	b	e la -a è per il femminile!”	f.b.	S
5	a	Durante l’attività di brainstorming sul lessico dei mestieri ha osservato che la parola “insegnante” è invariabile al maschile e femminile.	f.b.	S
6	a	Alla richiesta di osservare cosa accomunasse alcuni verbi alla 2° persona plurale ha osservato che finivano tutti con -te.	f.b.	I
	b	Alla richiesta di osservare cosa accomunasse alcuni verbi alla 3° persona plurale ha osservato che finivano tutti con -no.	f.b.	I
	c	Alla richiesta di osservare cosa accomunasse alcuni verbi alla 1° persona singolare ha osservato che finivano tutti con -o.	f.b.	I
7	a	Discussione spontanea: “Se in albanese ci sono 2 parole che si dicono uguali ma che hanno significati diversi, come fanno i suoi genitori (di un compagno albanese) a capire il significato giusto?”.	m.b.	S
8	a	Alla richiesta di osservare quale differenza di significato esistesse tra le frasi “La maestra corregge i compiti” e “La maestra sta correggendo i compiti” ha risposto che la parola “correggere” è cambiata,	f.b.	I
	b	che una frase si riferisce a quello che sta succedendo adesso,	m.b.	I
	c	l’altra a qualcosa che succederà dopo.	m.b.	I
	d	Alla richiesta di osservare differenze formali tra le due frasi ha indicato la terminazione in “-endo”	f.b.	I
	e	e la presenza di “stare”.	f.b.	I
9	a	Alla richiesta di individuare i meccanismi di formazione del plurale nei sostantivi italiani ha osservato che al plurale cambiano gli articoli che accompagnano i sostantivi, come nel caso di “gli asini”.	f.b.	I
	b	Per questo, articolo e nome devono concordare terminando entrambi con -i, come l’articolo stesso.	f.b.	I
	c	Quindi la -i indica il plurale.	f.b.	I
	d	Durante la riflessione sul numero dei sostantivi, ha osservato che per quanto riguarda il genere a volte alcune parole cambiano completamente, come nel caso di “mucca” e “toro”.	f.b.	S
	e	Durante l’osservazione di alcuni esempi presi dall’inglese sulla formazione del plurale ha affermato che il plurale si forma aggiungendo -s alla fine della parola.	f.b.	I
	f	Durante l’osservazione di alcuni esempi presi dallo spagnolo sulla formazione del plurale ha affermato che il plurale si forma aggiungendo -s alla fine della parola.	f.b.	I
10	a	Alla richiesta di identificare i meccanismi di accordo nominale ha osservato che gli aggettivi si modificano al singolare e al plurale.	f.b.	I
	b	Ha poi notato che il loro cambiamento è dovuto alla necessità di concordare con un’altra parola (ad es. se “borsa” diventa “borse”, “rossa” diventerà “rosse”).	f.b.	I
13	a	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione dell’articolo “la” in italiano ha osservato che si usa con i nomi femminili.	f.b.	I
	b	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione dell’articolo “lo” in italiano ha osservato che si usa con le parole che iniziano per “z”,	f.b.	I

Focus on form in the L2 class

	c	"y"	f.b.	I	
	d	e "s".	f.b.	I	
14	a	Alla richiesta di osservare il comportamento degli articoli in arabo ha notato che l'articolo "al" rimane invariato al maschile e al femminile.	f.b.	I	
	b	Ha inoltre osservato che in arabo ciò che cambia tra le parole "bint" (bambina) e "dri" (bambino) non è solamente il suffisso, bensì l'intera parola.	f.b.	I	
	c	Osservando gli esempi dall'albanese al singolare ha notato che gli articoli sono "tutti nië".	f.b.	I	
	d	Ha successivamente osservato che non c'è differenza tra maschile e femminile.	f.b.	I	
	e	Eseguendo un esercizio sulla corretta assegnazione dell'articolo maschile singolare ha osservato che "se dico "lo suono" è un'azione!".	m.b.	S	
H	2	a	Alla richiesta di confrontare sintagmi contenenti gli aggettivi "francese" e "italiano" al maschile e femminile ha osservato la differenza tra le coppie uno/una	f.b.	I
		b	e bambino/bambina.	f.b.	I
		c	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra gli aggettivi prearticolati maschili e femminili dell'albanese ha indicato correttamente la presenza di "i"	f.b.	I
		d	ed "e" davanti agli aggettivi di diverso genere.	f.b.	I
	3	a	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra frasi dichiarative e interrogative si/no ha indicato un cambio nella voce come responsabile della trasformazione.	s.b.	I
	5	a	Durante l'attività di brainstorming sul lessico dei mestieri ha osservato che la parola "Sita" e il suffisso -ista sono anagrammi l'una dell'altro.	s.b.	S
		b	Alla richiesta di indicare quale elemento di una frase cambia al variare del soggetto ha indicato il verbo.	f.b.	I
		c	Alla richiesta di osservare il funzionamento del soggetto in albanese ha osservato che al variare del soggetto cambia anche la forma del verbo.	f.b.	I
	8	a	Alla richiesta di osservare quale differenza di significato esistesse tra le frasi "La maestra corregge i compiti" e "La maestra sta correggendo i compiti" ha risposto che nella prima frase non compare la parole "sta",	f.b.	I
		b	che esiste una differenza tra "corregge" e "correggendo"	f.b.	I
		c	e che la prima frase indica un avvenimento che deve ancora avere luogo (avverrà dopo),	m.b.	I
		d	mentre la seconda indica qualcosa che sta succedendo adesso.	m.b.	I
	9	a	Alla richiesta di individuare i meccanismi di formazione del plurale nei sostantivi italiani ha osservato che i sostantivi maschili al singolare di solito finiscono con -o,	f.b.	I
		b	mentre al plurale con -i;	f.b.	I
		c	per quanto riguarda i femminili, invece, alcuni al singolare finiscono con -a,	f.b.	I
		d	mentre al plurale finiscono con -e.	f.b.	I
10	a	Alla richiesta di identificare i meccanismi di accordo nominale, osservando la declinazione dell'aggettivo "grigio" ha notato che cambia la desinenza della parola.	f.b.	I	

I	2	a	Alla richiesta di confrontare sintagmi contenenti gli aggettivi "francese" e "italiano" al maschile e femminile ha osservato la differenza tra bambino/bambina.	f.b.	I
		b	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra gli aggettivi prearticolati maschili e femminili dell'albanese ha indicato correttamente la presenza di "i"	f.b.	I
		c	ed "e" davanti agli aggettivi (invariati) di diverso genere.	f.b.	I
	3	a	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra frasi dichiarative e interrogative si/no in italiano ha indicato l'allungamento della parola finale come elemento distintivo.	s.b.	I
	4	a	Alla richiesta di identificare i criteri in base ai quali scegliere in italiano che possessivo utilizzare in un sintagma ha indicato la necessità di individuare la persona a cui fare riferimento.	f.b.	I
		b	Completando la tabella sulle diverse terminazioni morfologiche di genere e numero dei possessivi ha osservato che il possessivo di terza persona plurale rimane invariato ("loro, loro sempre loro!").	f.b.	S
	5	a	Durante il ripasso dei pronomi personali in italiano ha detto che in francese "tu" si dice "tois".	m.b.	I
	6	a	Durante l'attività di riconoscimento del soggetto ha improvvisamente esclamato "Adesso ho capito! Quando vedo "vi" so che è "voi"!".	f.b.	S
		b	Durante la produzione delle frasi ha spontaneamente commentato: "suoniamo' è il verbo!".	f.b.	S
		c	Durante l'attività di riconoscimento dei morfemi flessivi verbali ha improvvisamente esclamato "Adesso ho capito anche questo! Io alzo, tu alzi ... è la -i!".	f.b.	S
	8	a	Alla richiesta di osservare quale differenza di significato esistesse tra le frasi "La maestra corregge i compiti" e "La maestra sta correggendo i compiti" ha osservato la presenza, nella seconda frase, di "sta scrivendo".	f.b.	I
		b	Alla richiesta di individuarne le differenze formali ha osservato la presenza del morfema -do,	f.b.	I
		c	poi corretto in -ndo.	f.b.	I
		d	Osservando gli esempi in albanese corrispondenti alle frasi sopra citate ha osservato che nel secondo tipo di struttura avviene l'inserzione della parola "po", equivalente a "stare".	f.b.	I
	9	a	Alla richiesta di individuare i meccanismi di formazione del plurale nei sostantivi italiani ha osservato che "la -o vuole la -i,	f.b.	I
		b	la -e vuole la -i	f.b.	I
		c	e la -a diventa -e, come con gallina-galline" (esempio non presente alla lavagna).	f.b.	I
		d	Alla richiesta di individuare i meccanismi di formazione del plurale nei sostantivi spagnoli ha osservato che per formare il plurale bisogna aggiungere -s alla fine della parola.	f.b.	I
		e	Ha inoltre osservato che lo stesso succede in inglese.	f.b.	I
	10	a	Alla richiesta di identificare i meccanismi di accordo nominale, osservando la declinazione dell'aggettivo "rosso" ha notato che la parola rimane invariata nella parte iniziale ("ross-").	f.b.	I
b		Alla richiesta di identificare i meccanismi di accordo nominale, osservando la declinazione dell'aggettivo "marrone" ha notato	f.b.	I	

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			che la finale -i si utilizza al plurale,			
		c	e la -e al singolare.	f.b.	I	
		d	Alla richiesta di identificare i meccanismi di accordo nominale, osservando la declinazione dell'aggettivo "rosa" ha notato che rimane invariato.	f.b.	I	
		e	Alla richiesta di identificare i meccanismi di accordo nominale in albanese, ha osservato che gli aggettivi mostrano due terminazioni diverse.	f.b.	I	
	12	a	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione dell'articolo "lo" in italiano ha osservato che si utilizza con le parole maschili.	f.b.	I	
		b	Ha osservato che l'articolo "l'" si utilizza con le parole che iniziano per vocale.	f.b.	I	
		c	Alla richiesta di riflettere sull'uso degli articoli determinativi in arabo ha osservato che restano sempre uguali.	f.b.	I	
		d	Ha inoltre notato che per quest'aspetto italiano e arabo differiscono tra loro.	f.b.	I	
		e	Alla richiesta di riflettere sull'uso degli articoli determinativi in albanese ha osservato che l'articolo al singolare rimane invariato indipendentemente dal genere.	f.b.	I	
	14	a	Alla richiesta di riconoscere a quale tempo verbale sono "isomorfe" le forme verbali dell'imperativo in italiano ha indicato l'indicativo presente.	f.b.	I	
		b	Alla richiesta di riconoscere il meccanismo di formazione dell'imperativo in inglese ha osservato che "dalla frase spariscono alcune parole" (gli esempi erano "You sing a song" e "Sing!")	f.b.	I	
		c	e che il verbo resta uguale.	f.b.	I	
J	3	a	Durante l'analisi dei saluti in italiano ha osservato: "A quelli che conosci devi dire ciao, non arrivederci!".	u.b.	I	
	4	a	"'Tuo' non può andare con 'famiglia' perché finisce con la <a>" (durante un esercizio).	g./u.	S	
	9	a	Alla richiesta di individuare i meccanismi di formazione del plurale nei sostantivi italiani ha osservato che (nelle coppie di parole degli esempi) "cambiano -i e -o,	f.b.	I	
		b	-e e -i.	f.b.	I	
		c	La -a diventa -e, come in nuvola-nuvole" (esempio non presente alla lavagna).	f.b.	I	
		d	Ha spiegato il significato di "singolare" e "plurale".	m.b.	I	
	10	a	Alla richiesta di identificare i meccanismi di accordo nominale, osservando la declinazione dell'aggettivo "rosso" ha notato che cambia la vocale finale.	f.b.	I	
		b	Alla richiesta di identificare i meccanismi di accordo nominale in albanese, ha osservato che cambia la vocale che precede il sostantivo.	f.b.	I	
	12	a	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione dell'articolo "lo" in italiano ha osservato che si utilizza con i sostantivi maschili.	f.b.	I	
		b	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione dell'articolo "la" in italiano ha osservato che si utilizza con i sostantivi femminili.	f.b.	I	
	K	2	a	Alla richiesta della docente di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra aggettivi a 2 e 4 uscite ha correttamente osservato che gli aggettivi a 2 uscite terminano sempre in -e,	f.b.	I
			b	mentre quelli a 4 uscite terminano in -o	f.b.	I

	c	o -a a seconda del genere.	f.b.	I
	d	Alla richiesta di confrontare gli aggettivi "francese" e "italiano" al maschile e femminile ha osservato la differenza tra uno/una.	f.b.	I
	e	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento distintivo degli aggettivi a 2 uscite ha osservato che gli aggettivi a 2 uscite sono quelli che terminano con -e.	f.b.	I
	f	Alla richiesta della docente di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra gli aggettivi maschili e femminili dell'arabo ha identificato l'aggiunta della -a per derivare il femminile.	f.b.	I
3	a	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra frasi dichiarative e interrogative si/no in italiano ha indicato l'allungamento nella pronuncia della parola finale come elemento distintivo.	s.b.	I
	b	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra frasi dichiarative e interrogative si/no in arabo ha identificato l'inserimento della parola "wech" con valore interrogativo all'inizio della frase.	f.b.	I
	c	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra frasi dichiarative e interrogative si/no in albanese ha osservato l'inversione tra soggetto e predicato.	f.b.	I
4	a	Alla richiesta di identificare la regola in base alla quale modificare la morfologia dei possessivi in spagnolo ha osservato che le parole maschili singolari terminano con -o,	f.b.	I
	b	le femminili singolari con -a,	f.b.	I
	c	le maschili plurali con -os	f.b.	I
	d	e le femminili plurali con -as.	f.b.	I
	e	Alla richiesta di osservare la morfologia dei possessivi in inglese ha notato che sono invariabili.	f.b.	I
5	a	Alla richiesta di confrontare il comportamento di soggetto e verbo in italiano e arabo ha notato un comportamento analogo nelle due lingue.	f.b.	I
	b	Alla richiesta di confrontare il comportamento di soggetto e verbo in italiano e albanese ha notato un comportamento analogo nelle due lingue.	f.b.	I
	c	Durante l'osservazione di alcuni esempi in albanesi ha osservato che il sintagma albanese "han buc" (mangio mela) è omofono a un'espressione araba usata come rimprovero.	s.b.	S
6	a	Alla richiesta di individuare quali elementi nel verbo si modificano al variare del soggetto ha indicato le particelle riflessive ("si", "vi") per i verbi riflessivi	f.b.	I
	b	e la parte finale della parola per i verbi in generale.	f.b.	I
8	a	Alla richiesta di osservare quale differenza di significato esistesse tra le frasi "La maestra corregge i compiti" e "La maestra sta correggendo i compiti" ha osservato che il secondo tipo di frase si riferisce ad un'azione che si sta compiendo "adesso".	m.b.	I
9	a	Alla richiesta di individuare i meccanismi di formazione del plurale nei sostantivi italiani ha osservato che ciò che cambia è l'ultima lettera della parola.	f.b.	I
	b	Infatti, al singolare -o indica il maschile,	f.b.	I
	c	-e maschile e femminile	f.b.	I
	d	e -a il femminile,	f.b.	I

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	e	mentre al plurale si usano -i	f.b.	I	
	f	ed -e.	f.b.	I	
	g	Quindi -o vuole -i,	f.b.	I	
	h	-e vuole -i	f.b.	I	
	i	e -a vuole -e.	f.b.	I	
	l	Alla richiesta di individuare i meccanismi di formazione del plurale nei sostantivi inglesi ha osservato che il plurale si forma aggiungendo -s.	f.b.	I	
10	a	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento della frase responsabile dell'accordo nominale ha indicato il nome.	f.b.	I	
	b	Ha osservato (su richiesta dell'insegnante) che gli aggettivi del secondo gruppo ("marrone") terminano con -e.	f.b.	I	
12	a	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione dell'articolo "lo" in italiano ha notato la necessità di guardare la prima lettera della parola successiva.	f.b.	I	
	b	Alla richiesta di riflettere sull'uso degli articoli determinativi in albanese ha osservato che l'articolo al singolare rimane invariato indipendentemente dal genere del sostantivo.	f.b.	I	
	c	Ha successivamente osservato che in albanese esiste un solo articolo per il singolare	f.b.	I	
	d	e uno solo per il plurale.	f.b.	I	
L	2	a	Stimolata dalla docente, ha osservato la differenza tra -a e -o negli aggettivi a 4 uscite.	f.b.	I
	3	a	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra frasi dichiarative e interrogative si/no in cinese ha identificato come elemento discriminante l'inserimento della parola "ma".	f.b.	I
	5	a	Alla richiesta di osservare cosa cambiava tra una serie di frasi identiche se non per il soggetto (e conseguentemente la coniugazione verbale) ha risposto "tu, lei, noi, voi, loro".	f.b.	I
		b	Alla richiesta di osservare le differenze tra alcune frasi cinesi nelle quali variava solo il soggetto ha riconosciuto che il soggetto cambia.	f.b.	I
	8	a	Alla richiesta di osservare quale differenza di significato esistesse tra le frasi "La maestra corregge i compiti" e "La maestra sta correggendo i compiti" ha osservato che nella seconda frase compariva "sta".	f.b.	I
		b	Di fronte a una serie di esempi posti per stimolare l'identificazione della terminazione -ndo (sto mangiando, sto bevendo, sto dormendo, sto uscendo...) ha osservato la presenza in tutti i verbi di <d>.	f.b.	I
	9	a	Alla richiesta di individuare i meccanismi di formazione del plurale nei sostantivi italiani ha osservato che "cambia la -i alla fine della parola".	f.b.	I
	12	a	Alla richiesta di osservare la differenza tra gli articoli "lo" e "la" ha notato che ciò che cambia è "a".	f.b.	I
		b	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione degli articoli "il" e "lo" in italiano ha osservato che si usano con le parole maschili.	f.b.	I
		c	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione dell'articolo "l'" in italiano ha osservato che si usa con le parole che iniziano con vocale.	f.b.	I
	14	a	Alla richiesta di identificare le persone verbali nelle quali si possono coniugare i verbi all'imperativo ha indicato "il tu".	f.b.	I

		b	Alla richiesta di osservare la formazione dell'imperativo in inglese (confrontando una frase dichiarativa e la corrispondente imperativa) ha notato che il verbo rimane sempre uguale.	f.b.	I
M	2	a	Alla richiesta di confrontare gli aggettivi "francese" e "italiano" al maschile e femminile ha osservato la differenza tra -e e -o,	f.b.	I
		b	e tra -e e -a,	f.b.	I
		c	attribuendo tale differenza all'opposizione tra maschile e femminile.	f.b.	I
		d	Ha spontaneamente osservato che gli aggettivi a 2 uscite sono quelli che terminano con -e.	f.b.	S
		e	Ha inoltre osservato che gli aggettivi a 4 uscite terminano in -a	f.b.	S
		f	e -o.	f.b.	S
	3	a	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento caratteristico delle frasi interrogative a costituenti ha segnalato la presenza della stessa parola iniziale ("come")	f.b.	I
		b	e che tutte le domande sono rivolte ad un "tu".	m.b.	I
		c	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra frasi dichiarative e interrogative si/no in italiano ha osservato che nella formazione delle domande si mette in atto una variazione della velocità di pronuncia della frase.	s.b.	I
		d	Alla richiesta di identificare l'elemento di differenziazione tra frasi dichiarative e interrogative si/no in cinese ha identificato come elemento discriminante l'inserimento della parola "ma".	f.b.	I
	5	a	Alla richiesta di osservare cosa cambiava tra una serie di frasi identiche se non per il soggetto (e conseguentemente la coniugazione verbale) ha risposto che le frasi si riferiscono a tu, lei, noi, voi, loro, cioè cambia la persona.	f.b.	I
		b	Inoltre, su sollecitazione dell'insegnante ha osservato che cambia anche "quello che fa" (= verbo).	f.b.	I
		c	Alla richiesta di osservare le differenze tra alcune frasi cinesi nelle quali variava solo il soggetto l'ha indicato,	f.b.	I
		d	riconoscendo inoltre che il verbo rimane invariato.	f.b.	I
		e	Alla richiesta di osservare le differenze tra alcune frasi in arabo nelle quali variava solo il soggetto ha riconosciuto la variazione.	f.b.	I
		f	Ha inoltre riconosciuto che la differenza tra le seconde persone arabe "nti" e "nta" è attribuibile a una variazione di genere.	f.b.	I
	6	a	Alla richiesta di osservare cosa accomunasse alcuni verbi alla 1° persona plurale ha indicato la terminazione -iamo.	f.b.	I
		b	Successivamente ha esclamato: "Ah, ma tutte le parole con "noi" finiscono uguali?".	f.b.	S
		c	Alla richiesta di identificare quale parte del verbo si modifica al variare del soggetto ha indicato la parte finale.	f.b.	I
	8	a	Alla richiesta di osservare quale differenza di significato esistesse tra le frasi "La maestra corregge i compiti" e "La maestra sta correggendo i compiti" (dopo la domanda "Quando?" posta per stimolare la risposta corretta) ha osservato che la prima frase fa riferimento ad un'azione futura,	m.b.	I
		b	mentre la seconda ad un'azione che avviene adesso.	m.b.	I
		c	Alla richiesta di osservarne le differenze formali ha osservato la presenza di "sta" nella seconda ma non nella prima frase.	f.b.	I
		d	Di fronte a una serie di esempi posti per stimolare l'identificazione della terminazione -ndo (sto mangiando, sto	f.b.	I

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		bevendo, sto dormendo, sto uscendo...) ha osservato: "Sono tutte di io", individuando il soggetto sottinteso comune dei sintagmi verbali.		
	e	Successivamente ha identificato la terminazione -do,	f.b.	I
	f	osservazione perfezionata con l'aggiunta di <n> dopo l'esposizione ad altri esempi pronunciati in maniera marcata.	f.b.	I
9	a	Alla richiesta di individuare i meccanismi di formazione del plurale nei sostantivi italiani ha osservato che al singolare i sostantivi terminano sempre con -a	f.b.	I
	b	e con -o,	f.b.	I
	c	mentre al plurale con -e e con -i.	f.b.	I
	d	Inoltre, ha osservato che -i è la terminazione plurale per il maschile,	f.b.	I
	e	mentre -e lo è per il femminile.	f.b.	I
	f	Successivamente ha osservato che qualche volta anche il femminile plurale finisce con -i.	f.b.	I
	g	Dopo essere stata esposta ad una serie di esempi ulteriori ha osservato che ciò accade quando i sostantivi finiscono con -e.	f.b.	I
	h	Alla richiesta di individuare i meccanismi di formazione del plurale nei sostantivi spagnoli ha osservato che il plurale si forma aggiungendo una -s finale.	f.b.	I
	i	Alla richiesta di individuare i meccanismi di formazione del plurale nei sostantivi inglesi ha osservato che il plurale si forma aggiungendo una -s finale.	f.b.	I
10	a	Alla richiesta di identificare i meccanismi di accordo nominale, osservando la declinazione dell'aggettivo "rosso" ha notato che le 4 combinazioni di genere e numero finiscono tutte diversamente.	f.b.	I
	b	Alla richiesta di identificare i meccanismi di accordo nominale, osservando la declinazione dell'aggettivo "marrone" ha notato che gli aggettivi "finiscono un po' diversi, ma alcune sono proprio uguali"	f.b.	I
	c	e cambia solo che "e" diventa "i".	f.b.	I
	d	Alla richiesta di identificare i meccanismi di accordo nominale, osservando l'aggettivo "blu" prima di terminarne la declinazione ha notato che l'aggettivo non cambia mai	f.b.	I
	e	Alla richiesta di identificare i meccanismi di accordo nominale ha notato che la parte della parola che varia è quella finale,	f.b.	I
	f	che permette anche di capire il genere	f.b.	I
	g	e il numero dell'aggettivo.	f.b.	I
	h	Alla richiesta di determinare da cosa dipende la variazione morfologica degli aggettivi ha osservato che ciò dipende dal nome (a cui è associato l'aggettivo).	f.b.	I
12	a	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione dell'articolo "la" in italiano ha osservato che si usa con i nomi femminili.	f.b.	I
	b	Alla richiesta di osservare la differenza tra l'articolo " l' " associato a "lo" e "la" ha attribuito tale differenza all'opposizione tra maschile e femminile.	f.b.	I
	c	Alla richiesta di indicare la distribuzione dell'articolo "lo" in italiano ha osservato che si usa con le parole che iniziano con z-	f.b.	I
	d	e con s-.	f.b.	I
	e	Dopo che le era stato fatto notare (attraverso alcuni esempi) che alcune parole che iniziano con s- prendono come articolo "il", ha	f.b.	I

		osservato che era necessario guardare la seconda lettera.		
	f	Dopo aver confrontato gli esempi a sua disposizione ha concluso che “s+consonante” richiede “lo”,	f.b.	I
	g	mentre “s+vocale” richiede “il”.	f.b.	I
14	a	Alla richiesta di spiegare come le parole si trasformano dal singolare al plurale nella lingua aliena presentata negli esercizi svolti in classe ha osservato che cambia solo l’inizio della parola,	f.b.	I
	b	che per formare il plurale basta aggiungere “di”	f.b.	I
	c	e per formare il singolare basta togliere “di”.	f.b.	I
	d	Alla richiesta di identificare le persone verbali nelle quali si possono coniugare i verbi all’imperativo ha indicato “il voi”.	f.b.	I
	e	Alla richiesta di osservare a quale forma del presente indicativo corrisponde morfologicamente la 2° persona plurale dell’imperativo ha indicato la seconda persona plurale.	f.b.	I
	f	Alla richiesta di osservare a quale forma del presente indicativo corrisponde morfologicamente la 2° persona singolare dell’imperativo di verbi come “dormire” ha indicato la seconda persona singolare (“tu”).	f.b.	I
	g	Alla richiesta di osservare a quale forma del presente indicativo corrisponde morfologicamente la 2° persona singolare dell’imperativo di verbi come “dormire” e “scrivere” ha indicato la seconda persona singolare (“tu”).	f.b.	I
	h	Alla richiesta di osservare a quale forma del presente indicativo corrisponde morfologicamente la 2° persona singolare dell’imperativo di verbi come “mangiare” ha indicato la terza persona singolare (“egli”).	f.b.	I
	i	Alla richiesta di osservare come avviene la formazione dell’imperativo in cinese ha affermato che (il verbo) “resta uguale, ma si dice come da arrabbiato”.	f.b.	I
	j	Successivamente, parlando spontaneamente del funzionamento dei verbi in cinese, ha osservato che il verbo rimane invariato,	f.b.	S
	k	ciò che cambia “al plurale” è la particella che indica la persona.	f.b.	S

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