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Competence-based Education and Training

A Case Study on Foreign Language Teaching and Learning in the Italian lower - and upper-secondary schools

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LIST OF CONTENTS

Abstract **5**
Acknowledgments **6**
Introduction **9**
1. LITERATURE REVIEW **12**
1.1. Informal education in the "Knowledge Society" **12**
1.1.1. Formal, informal, non-formal learning 13
1.1.2. The role of informal learning in the lifelong learning 15
1.1.3. Lifelong learning and competences: the European Scenario 16
1.1.4. Communication in foreign languages and the CEFR 21
1.2. The competence-based didactic approach **27**
1.2.1. Autonomous learning 27
1.2.2. Metacognition and Learning Strategies 30
1.2.3. Flexibility to enhance individual differences 32
1.2.3.1. Cognitive styles 34
1.2.3.2. Types of intelligence 36
1.2.4. Motivation and the relevance of the authentic task 38
1.2.5. Grammar teaching and learning: deductive or inductive approach? ... 41
1.2.6. Social learning and cooperative learning 43
1.2.6.1. Principles of cooperative learning 43
1.2.7. Methodological cohesion: methodological sequence and the Acquisition Unit 47
2. RESEARCH PROJECT **50**
2.1. The Research Hypotheses and the Research Questions **50**
2.2. The Subjects **52**
2.2.1. The students 52
2.2.2. The teachers 54
2.3. Methodology of the Research **56**
2.4. Materials **57**
2.4.1. Student's questionnaires 57
2.4.2. Teacher's questionnaires 62

2.5. Method of Data Analysis 67

2.6. Research Ethics 68

3. RESULTS 69

3.1. Students' questionnaires 69

3.2. Teachers' questionnaires 106

4. DISCUSSION 132

4.1. Discussion of Research Questions 132

4.1.1. Comments on student's questionnaires 132

4.1.1.1. Research Question 1 133

4.1.1.2. Research Question 2 135

4.1.1.3. Research Question 3 136

4.1.2. Comments on teacher's questionnaires 142

4.1.2.1. Research Question 1 143

4.1.2.2. Research Question 2 143

4.1.2.3. Research Question 3 144

4.1.2.4. Research Question 4 145

4.1.3. Covid-19 emergency: comparison between the students' and teachers' perceptions about distance learning 149

4.1.4. Limitations of the study 150

Conclusions 153

Bibliography 156

APPENDIX A: Students' Questionnaire 162

APPENDIX B: Teachers' Questionnaire 178

APPENDIX C: Students'open answers on Item 25 194

APPENDIX D: Teachers' open answers on Item 19 200

Abstract

Since the second half of the 1990s, the curricula of several European and non-European countries have started considering the Competence-based approach as the structural core for the training of active citizens in the contemporary society and ongoing globalisation processes. The European Reference Framework expressly declares the levels of competence to be achieved and orients teachers towards an open, certifiable and structured competence-based teaching approach. The first purpose of the study is to investigate how competency-based language teaching is perceived and put into practice by foreign language teachers, and how this approach, if adequately used, may positively affect the perception of the L2 among students. For this purpose, the present case study aims to explore middle and secondary school teachers' attitudes towards Competency-based didactic approach, particularly in terms of classroom management, instructional design and assessment. Furthermore, the objective of this research is to examine the degree of FL students' learning satisfaction according to the didactic style implemented by their teachers. Lastly, the study wants to explore the extracurricular learning activities in which students are involved.

Keywords: Competence-based approach, Lower and upper - secondary school students, Foreign language learning, Foreign language teaching.

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"So let us wage a glorious struggle against illiteracy, poverty and terrorism, let us pick up our books and our pens, they are the most powerful weapons. One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world. Education is the only solution"

M. Yousafzai

Introduction

Language learning, and knowledge of English in particular, are of fundamental importance in contemporary society. In the past decades, the European institutions, including the Council of Europe, have promoted the study of foreign languages in schools and provided citizens with tools enabling them to move towards the foreign language *competence*. Furthermore, the European Commission has recommended the formal validation of informal learning, whose main goal is the expansion of competences, which have to be developed starting from school. In fact, in such a complex society, affected by rapid and unpredictable changes in culture, science and technology, young people need not only theoretical knowledge and technical skills, but above all attitudes of openness to new things, willingness to learn continuously, to take autonomous initiatives, responsibility and flexibility. The school must therefore ensure that the younger generation develops competences, that is a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. Within this framework, the figure of the teacher should be able to activate competence-based teaching strategies, namely a way of teaching which aims at the competences acquisition. This approach no longer simply transmits notions, data, formulas and definitions to be learned by heart: instead, it is a way of "schooling" so that students can learn in a *meaningful*, *autonomous* and *responsible* way.

Before analysing the structure of this work, I would like to introduce the reader with the reasons that led me to conduct the present research. Two years ago I participated in the Erasmus Programme in Germany, driven by the fact that I have somehow always been fascinated by this land and its hostile language. As soon as I started attending seminars at the University of Tübingen, I realized that I was experiencing a completely different academic system where students actively joined and run the class (sometimes by extending it over fifteen minutes), while the teacher monitored comments, gave feedback to students' comments, raised questions and managed the general order of the class. This new teaching approach was mostly unknown to me. Soon I had the opportunity to talk with German students who could not but confirm that that was the normality. Curious to go deeper into the matter, once back in Italy I questioned the

students to whom I give private lessons about their teacher's approaches and teaching habits. Unluckily, it seemed like I ascertained my presentiment: little or nothing had changed since my middle - and high - school years. The vast majority of my students complained about the tedious way in which the teachers conducted their classes, with their "classic systematic and transmissive way of teaching". Of course, this does not only regard the foreign languages teaching, although they will be the subject of this research. In any case, this was where my question arose: are the several recommendations drafted by the European institutions about the competence-based teaching which puts the learner at the centre of the learning process just theory? Or are they put into practice by teachers? If so, how? It is from these questions that my work was born and developed and I hope with all my heart that it will somehow satiate and fill your desire to know a bit more about this issue, at least a little.

As you can imagine at this point, this research is intended to explore the general aspects of the competence-based education and training, involving a heterogeneous group of 106 students attending the lower- and upper- secondary schools and 146 foreign language teachers teaching at the middle and high schools.

The first chapter will primarily illustrate the theoretical fundaments regarding the different learning contexts and the concept of Lifelong Learning. Subsequently, it will outline the concept of competences and its implications in the psychology of language education, with a special focus of the role of the teacher and the numerous facets of their students.

The second chapter will analyse the main structure of the present case study, including the research hypotheses and the research questions. It will also provide the reader with some information about the participants and the structure of the questionnaires. Finally, it will outline the method of data analysis and the ethical issues.

In the third chapter the data retrieved from students' and teachers' questionnaires will be reported. The results will be presented with the support of graphs in order to make them visibly clearer.

The fourth chapter will be concerned with the discussion of both student's and teachers' questionnaires, with the primary objective of answering the research questions. Furthermore, reflections will be raised on the salient issues that will emerge from the findings. In addition, the limits of the present study will be shortly illustrated together with some suggestions for future research.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The first part of this work presents a general overview of the Competence-based didactic approach, with a special focus on foreign language teaching and learning. The core of the first chapter concerns the concept of competences and its implications in the Psychology of Language Education. For this purpose, it is necessary first of all to analyse the different learning contexts and the concept of lifelong learning. The ultimate goal of the latter is the expansion of competences, which have to be developed starting from school. To this effect, a detailed analysis of the figure of the learner in all their facets will be outlined along with the relevance of the role of the teacher who guides him towards autonomy and responsibility.

The first chapter aims to provide the reader with the theoretical fundaments which are to be considered important to adequately comprehend the purpose, the outcomes and the discussion of the case study (see Chapters 2, 3, 4, respectively).

1.1. Informal education in the "Knowledge Society"

Europe today is facing a transformation on a scale which is comparable to that of the Industrial Revolution. Modern life offers individuals more opportunities and prospects, but it also presents greater risks and uncertainties. In this type of social universe, the updating of information, knowledge and skills is crucial. In the "knowledge society" the individuals need to play a leading role and become active citizens. In order to accomplish this, learning is the best way to meet the challenge of change.

The school is an important and consolidated reality whose very concept embodies the learning of the different disciplines by an organized institution. However, the school does not constitute the only educational experience. In fact, learning takes place in different contexts, at any age and even involuntarily.

The following section outlines the different types of learning contexts, among which informal learning seems to have reflected an increased interest among researchers.

1.1.1. Formal, informal, non-formal learning

It is possible to classify education and learning into three distinct "categories" in accordance with the criteria that determine it: formal, non-formal and informal. Since different meanings and interpretations of this classification have been formulated at European and national level, it may be useful to recall what has been formally stated in numerous European sources in this regard. As Bjornavolt (2004) states, the nature of learning is defined according to four essentials dimensions:

- the context in which learning takes place;
- the existence of the learning intentionality;
- the existence of planning and/or structuring of learning processes;
- the certification of learning itself.

All European documents that refer to the above mentioned tripartition of learning types present an explicit reference to such dimensions. A well detailed definition of each category has been provided by The European Commission on the Official Journal of the European Union (2012) as follows:

- "Formal learning means learning which takes place in an organised and structured environment, specifically dedicated to learning, and typically leads to the award of a qualification, usually in the form of a certificate or a diploma; it includes systems of general education, initial vocational training and higher education.

- Non-formal learning means learning which takes place through planned activities (in terms of learning objectives, learning time) where some form of learning support is present (e.g. student-teacher relationships); it may cover programmes to impart work skills, adult literacy and basic education for early school leavers; very common cases of non-formal learning include incompany training, through which companies update and improve the skills of their workers such as ICT [i.e. Information and Communication Technologies] skills, structured on-line learning (e.g. by making use

of open educational resources1), and courses organised by civil society organisations for their members, their target group or the general public.

- Informal learning means learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure and is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support; it may be unintentional from the learner's perspective; examples of learning outcomes acquired through informal learning are skills acquired through life and work experiences, project management skills or ICT skills acquired at work, languages learned and intercultural skills acquired during a stay in another country, ICT skills acquired outside work, skills acquired through volunteering, cultural activities, sports, youth work and through activities at home (e.g. taking care of a child)." (p.5).

From the definitions issued by the European Commission, it can be observed that formal learning is a type of learning which is structured and organized by training objectives, time and resources dedicated to it. It takes place within educational and training institutions, is intentional from the learner's point of view and involves the issue of official certifications. In the implementation of the training process, formal learning can include the use of moments of internal training. This situation is carried out within training facilities and include learning objectives and rules that are traditionally formalized and institutionalized within the institutions. Formal learning may also occur in on-the-job trainings that are carried out outside the training facilities and whose objectives and learning rules are semi-structured and adapted to the context. Both internal training and on-the-job training methods compose the institutional training path and release official certifications.

Non-formal learning, on the other hand, can be defined as a semi-structured learning and develops through planned activities in relation to an organised context. It is carried out outside of educational and training institutions, is intentional from the learner's point of view and usually does not provide for the release of a certification.

Finally, informal learning takes place in everyday activities related to work, family and leisure. It is neither intentional, nor structured or organised by training objectives, time and resources. As with non-formal learning, informal learning does not usually entail the issue of a certificate.

Although these subdivisions appear to be well defined, they may sometimes encounter situations where the boundaries become less marked. As McGivney (1990) argues, in fact, informal learning can actually take place in a formal context and vice versa. For example, students in a classroom at school might find themselves working on a group project and share ideas and experiences. This represents a clear situation where formal learning meets informal learning. In the same way, a well determined learner can plan their study in an informal learning situation. And here the opposite process takes place. For the two above-mentioned situations, some scholars find it more appropriate to use a hybrid definition that allows the two concepts to be incorporated. True enough, Crane et al. (1994) argue that "informal learning activities also may serve as a supplement to formal learning or even be used in schools or by teachers".
It is on the basis of this claim that this research work begins and develops.

1.1.2. The role of informal learning in the lifelong learning

Being aware of the existence of different types of learning is an essential condition to make people comprehend how the concept of learning has changed in the last thirty years. It is therefore of crucial importance to recognize the opportunities that promote knowledge so that every individual can take advantage of them.
In this context, the concept of Lifelong Learning (LLL) becomes relevant since it represents the overcoming of a defined temporal dimension that once constituted the only period of life dedicated to learning and coincided with school education.
Since the 1990s the Commission of the European Communities (1995) has made clear the importance of LLL as a solution to unemployment and technological upheavals. However, only in 2000, when the Memorandum sull'Istruzione e la formazione permanente was published, the two concepts of LLL and Lifewide Learning have been announced in a structured way. Both terms take inspiration from a more general principle, that is the need to bring the European society towards the autonomy of knowledge, which requires the parallel development of a lifelong learning system. This establishes that socially recognisable learning processes cannot be limited only to those explicitly promoted through the official school, but they take place throughout the course of the phases of existence, even in less formalized contexts, but equally significant and decisive for the growth and professionalization of citizens. The

complete expression then becomes Lifelong Lifewide learning, with which the times and spaces of learning expand to include every sphere of life and every moment of the subject's existence.

The Framework of the European Learning Guidelines clearly states the recognition and validation of acquired learning in informal and non-formal contexts as strategic priorities for the competitiveness and development. It is evident that school and extra-school learning do not pose as alternatives, but rather as complementary realities. Nevertheless, formal contexts still do not seem to have taken this issue into consideration (Council of Europe, 2011). This suggests that the school needs to consider the curriculum as part of a much broader learning process and not only as a mere formal procedure.

It can be inferred that informal learning and LLL are then two closely related concepts. Along the same line, language learning, which represents the focus of this research, is above all a lifelong learning process. As the Council of Europe (2001) claims, teachers and educators are supposed to explicit the resources and opportunities so that learners can take advantage of also outside the formal contexts.

1.1.3. Lifelong learning and competences: the European Scenario

Once the timing, modalities and contexts of learning have been outlined, it is necessary to identify what it is here intended by competence, one of the key terms on which the literature of education sciences still continues to focus.

Along with the concept of Lifelong learning, the work on the European Framework around the notion of competence has significantly accelerated over the last thirty years, and both the legislative changes and the Recommendation have multiplied at European level and at the level of the individual member states. Although different approaches and definitions of the term have been framed, they all share an important consideration around the notion of competence, which the Council of European Union has defined as “a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes, where:

- **knowledge** is composed of the facts and figures, concepts, ideas and theories which are already established and support the understanding of a certain area or subject;
- **skills** are defined as the ability and capacity to carry out processes and use the existing knowledge to achieve results;
- **attitudes** describe the disposition and mind-sets to act or react to ideas, persons or situations" (The Council of European Union, 2018, p. 7).

Having said that, the analysis can move toward the various steps which have affected the European scenario in recent years on this issue. As previously mentioned, since the mid-1990s, the European Union has become increasingly interested in competences, considering them central to education, lifelong learning and work, with the goal of enhancing "human capital" as a primary factor for development. One of the first significant steps in this direction was taken in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of the 28th May 2004, where the issue of the recognition of non-formal and informal learning has been further emphasised, stating that they rightly help build competences, like formal learning does.

It is only in 2006, however, when the eight key competences for European citizenship have been set out in a definitive manner. The drafting of a recommendation by the European Commission was born out of the need to invest in the basic skills of European citizens as enshrined in the European pillar of social rights. This affirms as an absolute principle the right to education, training and lifelong learning, as already declared in the previous official document. Promoting the development of skills in an ever-changing Europe is therefore one of the main objectives for the development of active citizenship and the efficient management of labour market transitions.

The essential matrix for the achievement of these objectives is identified by the European Union through the key competences "which everyone needs for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment" (Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, 2006). Such competences are all interconnected and each time the emphasis is on "transversal competences", such as critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem solving, risk assessment, decision making and

constructive management of emotions (Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, 2006).
Key competences have been identified with reference to eight areas:

- Communication in the mother tongue
- Communication in foreign languages
- Mathematical competence and competence in science and technology
- Digital competence
- Learning to learn
- Social and civic competences
- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
- Cultural awareness and expression.

Special attention must be given to the fifth competence "Learning to learn", which emphasises the importance of which Parliament and the European Council attribute to the lifelong dimension on a par with other competences traditionally considered important, such as Linguistics and Mathematics. Paragraph 1.2.1. illustrates the learning to learn competence in Language Education which is closely related to the learner's autonomy.

A few years later, in 2008, the European Commission, concerned to find an instrument of dialogue between the university and the vocational training, proposes the European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) with the aim of building a device to facilitate the clarity of national qualifications in Europe and to promote the mobility of workers and those on their own learning path.
The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2006), and the EQF (2008), on the other hand, become a direct call to school policies to contribute to the development of quality education, directing teaching action towards the achievement of appropriate skills to prepare young people for adult life and to create the conditions for further learning opportunities. At the same time they can also provide special support for those who are at an educational disadvantage due to personal, social, cultural or economic circumstances, so that they too can fulfil their educational potential.

Nearly ten years later, in 2017, the Recommendation has undergone a major change to reflect the important political, economic and social developments that Europe has undergone in twenty years. In fact, the revision could not fail to take account of the major migratory flows that have affected the continent and which have significantly altered the social fabric. In addition to this, surveys conducted by the *OECD PIAAC* and *PISA* had shown that the European population still had an insufficient level of basic and digital skills. Particularly in young people under fifteen years of age, there were large gaps in reading, Science and Mathematics (European Commission, 2017). Furthermore, in view of the increasing supply of jobs requiring e-skills, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) competences and transversal competences, changes to the Framework were undoubtedly necessary. In light of this, the update of the 2006 Key Competence Framework has set itself the goal of promoting the Competence-based teaching and learning across Europe. This should ultimately result in:

- "Better support to education and training systems, institutions and educators for development of competence-based education, training and learning;
- Increase in the number of people equipped with basic skills and key competences (European Commission, 2017)",

which in practice result in the implementation of a series of "good practices" for the enrichment of the learning. Among them, different approaches and learning contexts are highly suggested, as well as the employment of several learning methodologies and strategies that put the learner at the centre of the learning process. The section 1.2 will address this in detail.

As can be seen from the above paragraph, the documents issued by the European Council and the concrete actions taken over the last twenty years in this regard have been numerous.

Table 1 aims to summarize and help the reader better comprehend the most important steps taken by the European Commission over the last twenty years.

Table 1. **The steps of the European answer to Globalization and to the shift toward knowledge-based economies**

WHEN	WHO	WHAT
March 2000	European Council	**Lisbon Strategy:** need for a European Framework for the definition of basic competences that must be guaranteed along the permanent education. (For the first time the economic development is explicitly linked to the investments in education)
June 2002	European Council	Adoption of the **resolution on lifelong learning** and need for development of global strategies and concrete actions to employ an European space for LLL
May 2004	European Council and Parliament	Declaration of need of identification and **validation of non-formal and informal learning** for competences development.
December 2006	European Commission	Adoption of a **Recommendation on Key Competences** for LLL to provide the European citizens with the opportunity to become active citizens in the «knowledge society».
February 2008	European Commission	Development of the **EQF** (European Qualifications Framework) for the comparison of professional qualifications of European citizens
May 2017	European Commission	**Update of the 2006 Reccomendation** on Key Competences for LLL: strenghten basic competences, STEM competences and e-skills

The Italian context deserves a dedicated analysis which, compared to the European trend, has important historical gaps to fill, including a low level of schooling, a high unemployment rate and a labour market that seems not to require high qualifications. Besides this, a significant fact that makes us understand the unawareness of Italians about learning opportunities beyond the compulsory school age is provided by the Research Institution ISFOL (2014), which states that in 2013 Italian citizens in the 25-64 age group who participated in education activities were around 6.2%, a number that was below the European average of 10,5% (Balboni et al., 2017, p. 105). It can be inferred that in Italy, on the one hand, there seems to be a lack of awareness of training demand, and on the other, insufficient supply of models of training itself. Italy has therefore an even more important purpose: it consists of building a cultural proposal that goes far beyond the opening of new structures and the implementation of new teaching methods. Therefore, the changes that we are experiencing involve a profound revision of the models that have been valid and consolidated so far. These changes require that training is given new purposes that go beyond a tool with which to master knowledge, but rather become a way to improve one's self. The challenge is by no means simple.

1.1.4. Communication in foreign languages and the CEFR

The concept of communication in foreign languages has seen changes in its interpretation and implementation as the years passed. Until the Seventies, the main tasks of the so-called language experts were essentially three: reading, translating and rewriting texts. Hence, it follows that grammar and vocabulary were the only compulsory aspects that teachers had to be proficient with in order to be considered language-professionals. Increasing globalization, Erasmus programmes, and the growth of travel leisure market, however, have brought the need of these figures (including teachers and students) to be much more skilled in direct communication, thus going beyond the mere grammar and vocabulary.

What does it mean then to be able to communicate in foreign languages?

Several studies have been conducted on this subject. In 1972, the anthropologist and linguist Hymes argued that communicative competence is what empowers us to

convey and decipher a message and to define meanings interpersonally within particular settings. Hymes rejected the historical Chomsky's theory on the "rule-governed creativity", which would spontaneously spread from the third year of age. In other words, Chomsky believed in the creativity of language use, i.e. starting from a fixed form of language, the human being can freely express individual thought using the tools provided by the language itself. Chomsky's view focused on the formal aspects of languages, that is on all the principles and rules that govern human languages, irrespective of the way such languages are implied. Conversely, Hymes argued that this grammar learning theory did not fulfil the social and functional aspects of language. According to him, the notion of communicative competence extends to all human pragmatic-communicative components the unilateral Chomskian meaning of linguistic competence. Communicative competence is meant by Hymes as the ability of the speaker to use the language in the most appropriate way and depending on the circumstances, and so does a child (1972).

Again this background, Canale and Swain (1980) proposed a model, which is currently the most widely used and where four interdependent and complementary components of the Communicative Competence have been identified:

- *Linguistic competence*, i.e. the knowledge and correct use of grammar – phonetics and phonology, orthography, lexicon, morpho-syntax and textuality;
- *Discourse competence*, i.e. the ability to form coherent, cohesive, thus meaningful sentences
- *Sociolinguistic competence*, i.e. the knowledge of the mechanisms of the social contexts in which the language is used
- *Strategic competence* i.e. the use of verbal and/or non-verbal strategies that compensate for the difficulties in communication.

Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) elaborated a second model in which the sociocultural aspect is further emphasized. By Socio-cultural Competence is meant the ability to employ the multicultural knowledge and skills during intercultural communicative situations.

The enlargement of the notion of Communicative Competence to all human pragmatic-communicative components that go beyond the grammatical function would emerge as an important theme in the development of the Council of Europe projects, and

Hymes' view, revised in later models of communicative competence, such as Canale and Swain and Celce-Murcia et al., undoubtedly reverberates on the language activities of the CEFR and on the concept of "Communication in foreign languages". In this regard, the Council of Europe and the European Parliament (2006) provided a clear-cut analysis in their first Recommendation on Key Competence for Lifelong Learning by claiming that:

> "Communication in foreign languages broadly shares the main skill dimensions of communication in the mother tongue: it is based on the ability to understand, express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in an appropriate range of societal and cultural contexts (in education and training, work, home and leisure) according to one's wants or needs. Communication in foreign languages also calls for skills such as mediation and intercultural understanding. An individual's level of proficiency will vary between the four dimensions (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and between the different languages, and according to that individual's social and cultural background, environment, needs and/or interests".

To put it more simply, the European Council emphasizes the ability to understand and express thoughts, opinions and facts in both written and oral form and in different contexts. In addition, aspects such as interculture and understanding mediation are an integral part of such competence, albeit often not properly considered. As it is evident from the upper explanation, its essence resonates the works conducted by the aforementioned scholars.

The most important document of language policies, and one of the most well-known and used by the European Council, is represented by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR). Although the first provisional version dates back to 1996 and the official version to 2001, the CEFR is still very popular today.
As it can be derived from its name, the main purpose of this instrument is to provide teaching, learning, and evaluation methods valid for all languages.

This validation system, which is now widely adopted in Europe as a standard, is structured in three parts, each one containing two levels for a total of six levels of evaluations:

- **A – basic user:**
  A1 “beginner
  A2 “elementary user”:

- **B – independent user:**
  B1 “thre99shold”
  B2 “upper intermediate”:

- **C – proficient user:**
  C1 “advanced”
  C2 “proficiency”.

As highly recommended by the European Commission, schools in the EU are supposed to use this tool as a reference framework to evaluate learners and mostly to provide a common basis for the design of educational programmes, diplomas and certificates. The latter are aimed to facilitate people to continue their studies abroad or to enter the working environment more easily.

In the most of European Union, each educational level expects a specific level of foreign language acquisition. In general, for what concerns the first foreign language, a level between A2 and B1 is supposed to be reached at the end of the middle school, whereas the B2 level is expected at the end of upper secondary school. For what regards the second foreign language, a lower level is required, since less time is dedicated to studying the language. Specifically, a level between A1 and B1 is required at the end of the middle school, while a level between A2 and B2 should be reached at the end of upper secondary school. Despite the EU recommended guidelines, the English knowledge of Italian students at the end of the upper secondary school seems to be considerably lower than B2, as it can be seen from the graph below.

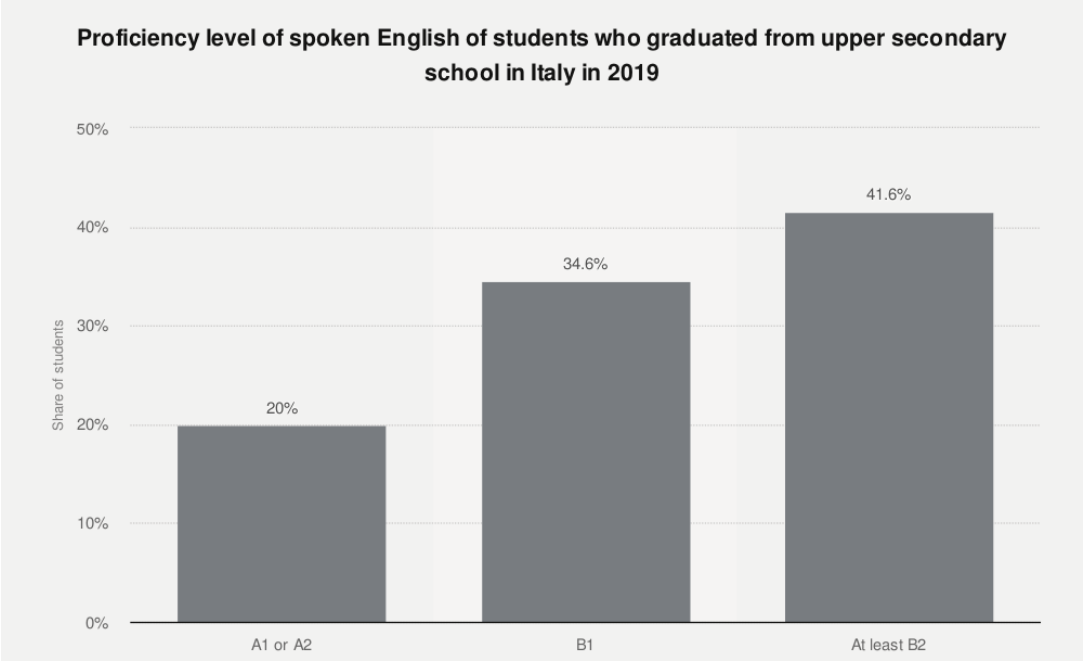


Figure 1.1 (Source: Consorzio Interuniversitario Almalaurea, Statista 2020).

The data collected by *Consorzio Interuniversitario AlmaLaurea* proofs among 46.000 respondents that only the 41,6 % of them have reached the required level i.e. B2 in 2019. The rest of the respondents were split respectively into 34,6 % B1 and 20% A1 or A2 (2019). Among the most accreditable reasons are the excess of frontal classes and written exercises at the expense of interactive oral activities. Conversely, in several European countries the oral method is preferred without even considering that teachers are mostly native speakers.
Among its objectives, the Competence-oriented approach aims to compensate this lacking.

The European Framework pays particular attention to the concept of *plurilingualism*, whose essence revolves around integration. Multilingualism, on the other hand, namely consists of the mere existence of languages in a society. In turn, plurilingualism must be considered within the context of pluriculturalism. In such a perspective, communicative competence then becomes plurilingual, i.e. composed of all the linguistic knowledge and experience learned in any context and throughout life, by interacting with each other. This suggests a change in the aims of language

education, that is not the mastery of different languages taken in isolation and having as a final model for each one the ideal native speaker, but rather the development of a linguistic repertoire in which the learner's abilities are put into play. In concrete terms, this means that the learner "does not start from scratch" when learning a language, but already has linguistic knowledge in other languages (e.g. vocabulary, syntactic structures, study and communication strategies). Through such a teaching model, which aims to activate this pre-knowledge, the learner is therefore stimulated to draw on their linguistic and strategic resources, using them for the learning of a subsequent language.

In its implementation, the document favours an *action-oriented approach*, since "it views users and learners of a language primarily as 'social agents', i.e. members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action" (CEFR,section 2.1, p.9).

To summarize, the upper paragraph has outlined how the concept of Communicative Competence has evolved throughout the years leaving more and more room to abilities that surpass the mere grammar knowledge and that revolve around the social, psychological and pragmatic spheres. The definition of Communicative Competence that is found today in the document "Key Competences for Lifelong Learning" is partly the outcome of studies conducted by Hymes and his successors and is illustrated in detail in the CEFR among its policy suggestions. Italy today is among the EU countries with the lowest linguistic competence level, aided by a content-based approach rather than a Competence-oriented one. The question therefore is: in practical terms, what changes must be done by a teacher who wants to upgrade his/her didactic approach from the traditional content-based to the competence-based one? The answer is not immediate, since it requires time and a revolution in the didactic programming and microplanning. The following paragraphs of this chapter aim to outline the guidelines for a Competency-based language approach

1.2. The competence-based didactic approach

The previous paragraphs outlined the various measures taken by the EU to adapt its citizens to the demands of the knowledge society. One of the first important steps was the classification of different learning contexts and in particular the validation of informal and non-formal learning for lifelong learning as strategic priorities for the competitiveness and self-development.

The Council of Europe's identification of the 8 key competences was a further step to direct teaching action towards the achievement of appropriate skills in order to become active citizens. It has also been noted that the CEFR is to date the most important tool for teaching, learning, and evaluation, and is valid for all languages. At the basis of the CEFR is the conception of linguistic competence as the ability to solve a given communicative task in a given situation mobilizing cognitive, volitive and affective resources (knowledge, skills, attitudes).

In order to acquire competences, the student must be faced with more articulated, significant situations, for which the use of knowledge and skills is necessary. Such knowledge and skills are not only of a linguistic nature: using languages in different contexts implies the need for the learner to find strategies to solve a task. They must possess meta-cognitive strategies that guide certain processes, such as planning, evaluation and review strategies. In addition to these, there are also learning strategies by which learners can best manage their own learning.

The following is an analysis of all those fundamental elements to be considered in the design of a path for the competences acquisition, starting from the motivational and emotional dimension and moving on to operational models, curriculum design and competences assessment.

1.2.1. Autonomous learning

In recent decades there has been increasing emphasis on the importance of affective, socio-cultural and psychological factors related to foreign language learning. This shifted the focus of attention to the learner and their peculiarities as the central subject

of the acquisition process. The concept of "autonomous learning" has gradually entered the sphere of interest of researchers and teachers, thus becoming a substantial part of the various curricula of all levels of schooling. Obviously, it should be noticed that autonomy is a general educational aim and is not only attributable to the language field but is rather considered a relevant part of the “learning to learn” competence. What is autonomous learning in the language field and how should it be understood? To this end, an attempt has been made to illustrate both the concept of “learner autonomy” and the various aspects that teachers have to consider in order to boost the learner’s achievement of autonomy and the management of one’s own learning. In fact, the teacher plays a fundamental role as a guide to the learner’ metacognitive and metalinguistic processes. In addition, some practical measures to be applied in foreign language lessons are outlined at the end of the paragraph.

In the last twenty years a large number of learner-centred approaches have appeared, and each of them predicated among the main objectives the obtainment of autonomy in language learning. Among these, the most widely recognized ones are learner-based teaching, the learner-centred curriculum, the learner training, and the learner-based teaching (Benson, Voller 1997).

In these approaches the learner is set as the sole owner of the whole learning process. Little (1991) defines the autonomy “a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action”. According to Holec (1981), autonomy requires “the ability to take charge of one's own learning”. Taking charge of one’s own learning requires, however, strong motivation, as claimed by Dörnyei (1998) who affirms that it is “the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process”.

Nunan (1997) further suggests that autonomy is necessary to become an “effective language user” and the road to becoming fully autonomous and independent from the teacher, the books and the classroom, is not smooth nor simple. In 1995, Nunan identifies five stages of autonomy achievement which can grow the involvement of learners in language lessons:

1) “*awareness*”: the learner is expected to identify and recognize their own preferences on teaching strategies and styles. The teacher will promote the autonomous thinking through stimuli;

2) "*involvement*": following the guidance of the teacher, the learner will contribute in the selection of objectives and activities;
3) "*intervention*": through a negotiation with the teacher, who becomes a task facilitator, the learner will be able to adapt or modify the way an activity is done;
4) "*creation*": the learner prepares and creates their own lessons, supervised by the teacher who will boost students' creativity;
5) "*transcendence*" in this last stage, when the learner is required to work on authentic tasks, the autonomy reaches new peaks, the teacher becomes a mere advisor and the students control the majority of the aspects of the teaching.

According to Nunan, the best way to promote autonomy is to frequently include the above-mentioned steps within the curriculum. That is the only way for the learner to gain experience of techniques and strategies and reflect on them, increasing the awareness of their strengths and weaknesses.

Furthermore, language resources outside the school environment are of fundamental importance in this context. From here it can also be deduced the growing importance of informal and non-formal learning in the European scenario.

Another aspect that the teacher has to consider in the classroom concerns the relevance of communication, as suggested by Cotterall (2006). In this regard, for almost a century the data collected by numerous researchers confirms that the teacher's speaking time is significantly superior to the student's interaction one, not to mention the fact that student's interventions are mostly demonstrative and thus do not require cognitive effort (Menegale, 2008). These premises obviously contrast with a potential growth of autonomy.

On the contrary, in order to embark on a path on learning autonomy one must pay attention both to the activities that are proposed in the classroom and to the way they are presented, including the explanation of the objectives to be pursued. Little (2005) points out that language is the means and the instrument through which knowledge is built, because it is thanks to the constant contact with society through continuous linguistic interactions that we increase our knowledge. Therefore, language is closely linked to autonomous learning and vice versa. With regard to the foreign language, it is fundamental that the foreign language is used in the classroom as the vehicular

language to the largest extend possible. Consequently, the student is not only focused on learning the language in its formal aspects but is also able to think about the foreign language and describe the learning process. In addition, the teacher must continuously involve the learners in the progress evaluation and encourage self-evaluation. This is in fact a fundamental step in the process of acquiring autonomy because without it the learner cannot plan or monitor their own cognitive process.

In conclusion, despite the known limitations of educational policy and didactic training hinder the implementation of a structured and continuous path towards autonomy and plurilingualism, teachers are highly recommended to follow the aforementioned measures in an attempt to bring out, develop and improve the potential of each student.

1.2.2. Metacognition and Learning Strategies

The term "metacognition" was coined at the beginning of the 1970s following the studies conducted by the American evolutionary psychologist John H. Flavell on “metamemory”, namely the knowledge of memory and memorization activities. Today, the concept indicates the ability to reflect on one's own way of learning and on one's own mental habits. Metacognitive activity allows us to control our thoughts, know and direct our learning processes. Therefore, learner autonomy and metacognition are integral outcomes for students, as supported by several educators and scholars, e.g., Holec and Little.

As already seen, learning autonomy is a set of different factors: cognitive, metacognitive, psychological and social. Practically, the whole literature on learning autonomy agrees on the need to increase the learner's awareness. The objective is the development of a "strategic competence” which, according to O'Malley et al. (1985), is based on the use of socio-affective strategies (which the learner uses to interact with others and to control their emotions), cognitive strategies (used to intervene directly on the material being learned) and metacognitive strategies (aimed at controlling the process and reflecting on it). A number of studies related to this field have resulted in instruments to measure the strategies that the learner utilizes, whether consciously or

not. One of the greatest examples is provided by Oxford (1994) who elaborated a questionnaire in order to investigate the frequency of use of learner strategies, including those of metacognition. Among their purposes, such tools are widely used in classroom for awareness-raising in strategy instruction.

In 1998, Yang conducted a research on forty students who were asked to write a proposal on what they would like to learn and to keep a diary where they could note down their motivation and aptitude for language study. As the project progressed, Yang was able to demonstrate how important is the guiding role of the teacher in the classroom in view of the development of the learner's metacognitive awareness. Yang's study highlighted the need for the teacher to play a facilitator role, to guide and encourage students in identifying realistic and achievable language learning objectives, based also on the constant reading of their diaries. The study also showed that it is fundamental that the teacher helps students to reconsider some attitudes towards Learning Strategies and learning that might be wrong and to encourage peer teaching and self-learning activities.

Also Riley (1997) argued that teachers need to help the learner to learn, stimulating a sort of reflection that helps them to be more aware of his own opinions, feelings and behaviour, to understand their causes and evaluate their effects, and thus to become more "self-effective" and autonomous. The case study presented in Chapter 2 investigates, among other things, the metacognitive awareness of the participating subjects.

What are, then, the measures to adopt in the classroom in order to stimulate the metacognitive competence and the autonomy of the learner? Firstly, as suggested by Sharle e Szabó (2000), the questionnaire seems to be a useful tool (for both the teacher and the learner) to analyse and comprehend the student’s behaviour towards the language learning, the strengths and weaknesses, the different learning styles (for the latter, see paragraph 1.2.3.1.). The scholars also recommend teachers to often question students in order to further investigate why certain thoughts, attitudes and/or results emerge. In fact, providing an answer to these questions helps learners further reflect on themselves and on their learning process. Another aspect to consider is the frequent recall of previous knowledge in order to: a) increase the student’s awareness and b) encourage a knowledge exchanges within the class. Moreover, the use of assessment

tools, such as the diary and the *portfolio* are considered of supreme significance. While the diary keeps trace of the activities done in class, the vocabulary acquired and the objectives to reach, the portfolio registers the explicit reflections on each one's learning and the whole cognitive process. In particular, the *ELP* (European Language Portfolio) is the official document recognized by the Council of Europe and spread in Italy since 2002 in all school orders. In simple terms, the ELP can be defined as a metacognitive tool for planning, monitoring and self-evaluation. According to Little (2003), the educational and didactic value of the portfolio is indisputable, especially if linked to the concept of learning autonomy. Moreover, compared to questionnaires, the portfolio further makes the learning outcomes more "visible", thus allowing a more conscious reflection on objectives and results (Kohonen 2001).

Finally, Coonan (2006) mentions the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) as a valid opportunity to help the student reorganize their mental representations of the foreign language and look at the learning process in a more active way.

1.2.3. Flexibility to enhance individual differences

For long time the main concern with people delivering programs for teaching a foreign language was the content of teaching. Gradually, Language Education experts came to the realization that the learner and their psychological-related aspects needed to be equally consider. Before going into the learner's psychology in detail, it is appropriate to outline a brief and concise summary of the most important events that took place in the world of language education in the last century.

Between the 1940s and 1960s of the last Century the Psychology set foot in the language learning field with Behaviourism, e.g., an American psychological view of learning which considered repetition the key concept to create verbal habits or automatism in the learner. The behaviourists eliminated the cognitive dimension and for this reason such approach was soon criticised by numerous scholars, among them Chomsky. During the second World War the Audio-Lingual Method developed, based on the principles of behaviourism. Both approaches were united by the assumption that

the grammar dimension of the language was what attracted the interest of learners. It was in the 70s when a change in the field of educational Linguistics happened, namely the Audio-lingual Method gave way to the “Situational approach”. According to the Situational Approach, in order to ensure that the content that is being taught is realistic, language must be embedded in some real situations or imagined real situations. In this way, learners experience several language dimensions, among them the social-linguistic and pragmatic ones. In 1985 the Communicative Approach finally came out in line with the indications provided by the Council of Europe about *meaningful communication.*

As previously mentioned, the key principle of the Competence-based didactic approach is the learner at the centre of the learning process. Such approach surpasses the mere grammar knowledge and revolves around the social, psychological and pragmatic spheres of the learner. As a consequence, in order to effectively offer students useful opportunities to both build their competences on the one hand, and enhance individual differences on the other, scholars highly recommend teachers to provide different tools, techniques and strategies in the classroom. Teachers and educators are thus required to learn about and vary the activities according to the students' strategies and learning styles. The flexible and versatile use of teaching techniques is indeed considered indispensable in order to leave room for the different ways of learning and to consolidate what has been learnt by everyone.

It is well known that every person is different in cognitive styles, ways of approaching the task, abstraction skills, attribution styles, types of thinking and intelligence. Since it is quite impossible to put strictly individualized strategies into practice, the variation and/or alternation of the teaching techniques to meet the individual differences finds great approval.

The next paragraph depicts the various learning-related aspects that differentiates students and that every educator should know and consider.

1.2.3.1. Cognitive styles

Together with learning strategies, learning styles are one of the major aspects that influence the student's ability to learn a second or foreign language. A style can be defined as an individual's stead tendency or preference. When dealing with learning, Cornett (1983) define a learning style "the overall pattern that give general direction to learning behaviour", namely the approaches that learner uses in learning a language or any other subject. An important aspect to underline concerns the fact that learning strategies and styles may or may not be winning depending on the activities and teaching materials used in the classroom. In particular, if a given instructional methodology is in line with the individual's learning styles it is very likely that the student is motivated, feels comfortable and achieves good results. Conversely, if the learning style and the methodologies adopted in the classroom are not in harmony, it is more likely that the learner will be unmotivated, even anxious and their performance will be poor. It becomes clear that one of the reasons why a student appears to be in conflict with the teacher is not necessarily related to an insufficient knowledge of the teacher, but rather to methodologies or teaching tools that do not meet the student's pleasure.

Although learning styles are numerous, Ehrman and Oxford (1990) delineated those which seem to be more influential to the second/foreign language learning. These can be grouped into four spheres: sensory preferences, personality types, desired degree of generality and biological differences.

- *Sensory Preferences.*

  These are divided according to the "physical, perceptual learning channels with which the student is the most comfortable" (Ehrman and Oxford, 1990) as follows: visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile. While visual students generally perform well from visual stimulation such as drawings and tables, auditory students tend to remember more content of a conversation or a message from the radio. They usually enjoy interacting and more than writing tasks. Kinesthetic and tactile students enjoy moving and learning by constructing and/or working with objects.

Particularly interesting is the tendency of some cultures to favour a particular learning style, as it has been demonstrated by Reid (1987). For instance, Asian people tend to appreciate visual stimulation, as opposed to the Hispanics who are more likely to be auditory.

- *Personality Types.*
  - *a)* Extraverted vs. Introverted*:* extraverted enjoy interact more that introverted, who tend to be shy and work on their own. When working in groups, teachers should rotate the "leader" role so that both categories can equally participate in class activities.
  - *b)* Intuitive- Random vs. Sensing-Sequential: the first category tends to think abstractly, the latter need specific instructions and look for concreteness. In this case varying activities is the key to everyone's needs.
  - *c)* Thinking vs. Feeling. Thinking learners tend to be very rational and prefer reasoned thinking over impulsive and feeling-dictated decision-making, as opposed to Feeling learners. Teachers are supposed to suggest these two types of students to smoothen their personalities when working together.
  - *d)* Closure-oriented/Judging vs. Open/Perceiving. The first are hard-workers and respect deadlines, while the latter are generally less serious and rigorous and know "how to have fun". These two poles obtain great success when working together, for this reason teachers tend to include these two personalities when creating cooperative groups.

- *Desired Degree of Generality.*

  Global or holistic vs Analytic. Global students are generally good guesser, tend to get and emphasize the main idea from the context. Conversely, analytic students tend to be extremely precise, concentrate on details and do not usually guess if not really sure to e accurate. A balance of these two polarities is very useful when learning a language.

- *Biological Differences.*

  Beyond each one's natural style preference, some biological factors may differ the second/foreign language learning. *Biorhythms* tells what time of the day a learner performs well. Some students can study better in the morning while others may feel more concentrated after dinner. By *sustenance* it is meant the need to drink and eat while learning. Also the *location* influences the way of learning: lighting, temperature and noise contribute to whether improve or worsen the quality of learning.

  These aspects are as undervalued as important and teachers should ensure to provide students with an adequate accommodation when in class.

Learning styles are not well defined as it can be perceived by the above-mentioned definitions, but rather intersect continuously and work together. For instance, a subject might be more introverted than extroverted or equally kinesthetic and visual.

After examining the styles and their polarities, it is clear that the use of mixed and flexible modes is preferable, thus providing a wider range of solving strategies for different problems. In addition, varying activities allows students to go beyond as well as wide their innate natural style preferences. A versatile teaching which relies on concrete tasks and uses different stimuli, can more easily achieve this goal. According to numerous scholars, the best way to assess learning styles is the survey.

1.2.3.2. Types of intelligence

Until the first half of the 20th century it was believed that intelligence was identifiable with a common monolithic capacity that could be measured in all individuals even through scientific tests. Today, thanks to the research in the psychological field, we know that people can also differentiate themselves in relation to the different types of intelligence they possess. In particular, the studies of the American psychologist Howard Gardner and the publication of his book Frames of Mind in 1983 helped undermine the initial common belief. Gardner proposed the so-called *Theory of Multiple Intelligence* according to which there is no common intelligence, but different forms of it and each independent of the others. These would

be genetic gifts, which develop in interaction with the social context. In 2004, Gardner identified nine different types of intelligence, namely:

- *Linguistic:* being highly skilled with abstract reasoning and symbolic thinking, linguistically intelligent people have a high sensibility for meanings and for the language functions.
- *Logical-mathematical:* being able to conduct long reasonings, logical-mathematical people have an ability in working with basic numerical properties, cause-effect relationships and find the connection between separated pieces of information.
- *Musical:* characterized by the ability of recognizing, recomposing and composing tunes on the basis of the tone and rhythm, musical intelligence is said to be one of the first talents to emerge in an individual.
- *Spatial:* thinking in images and in drawings, Spatially Intelligent people largely exploit this gift for memorising visually.
- *Bodily-kinaesthetic:* acquired through full-body experiences, Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligent people present both a high tactile and instinctive sensibility.
- *Naturalist:* focussing on Nature and on the outside world, the Naturalistically intelligent person easily identifies flora and fauna and are excellent navigators.
- *Interpersonal:* being able to build relationships and being empathetic, interpersonally Intelligent people can mediate disputes and adapts well to extra-school activities and works well in groups.
- *Intrapersonal:* also defined as "emotional intelligence", the Intrapersonal Intelligent person has a strong personality that is not put in relations with others, thus showing a sense of independence and opting for individual work.

An alternative theory to Gardner's one is provided by Robert Sternberg (1999) who formulates the three fundamental dimensions that can be combined to compose the human thought:

- *Analytic thought*: evaluating and deconstructing, making comparisons and highlighting details;
- *Creative thought*: imagining deducing and producing novelty;

- *Practical thought*: organizing, using tools, reaching concrete outcomes out of theoretical plans.

What strikes the most is that Sternberg believes that traditional didactics tends to favour analytic learners and penalize the creatives and the "practicals". Sternberg strongly claims that the differences of intelligence are not of a quantitative but of a qualitative nature and that any type of intelligence is precious and valuable for the society. Instead, it would be the traditional teaching approach that bears the greatest responsibility for the failure and ineffectiveness of creative and practical learners.

1.2.4. Motivation and the relevance of the authentic task

There is no doubt that emotions function as an accelerator or brake in the learning process. When we feel pathos while reading a poem or listening to our favourite song, we store information more quickly and with greater force. The American scholar Krashen with his "*affective filter hypothesis"* emphasizes how the affective component intervenes in the learning process (for more precise information, see Krashen (1982). Along with emotions, motivation drives all human behaviours and lies at the heart of language learning acquisition. In the last twenty years, several experts have been conducting research on the field of Psychology and Education. In the context of language learning, Garner (1985) defines motivation "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes toward learning the language". In the same year, Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan proposed the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), in which they differentiated motivation according to the reason, or more accurately, the *locus of causality* that leads one person to act in a specific way:

- *Extrinsic motivation:* the reasons that drive someone to act are given by an external reward. In other words, our behaviour is not dictated by our personal will to achieve something, but rather by the fact that by achieving a certain goal, we will be rewarded in some way. "If I get a good mark at the end, my dad will give me the moped" represents a good example of extrinsic motivation.

- *Intrinsic motivation:* the reasons the drive someone to an action come from within, that is directly from the person's desire to achieve a goal and to excel in any field of life. Learning for personal pleasure is an example of intrinsic motivation.

The Italian Linguist Balboni provided the Tripolar Model (1994) that specifies the three variables that allow the activation of motivation, namely:

- *Duty:* it is the most common factor in the traditional education system, and the less effective since it produces learning but not acquisition due to the aforementioned affective filter. Similar to the principle proposed by Krashen' external motivation ("I must study to pass the year"), it does not reveal a real interest coming from within, thus the object of study will end up being forgotten in short time.
- *Need:* the need motivation is connected with the rational side of the brain, that is the left one. In this case the learner is driven by the need of reaching a goal, e.g., getting the English B2 certification in order to get a better job. Once this has been achieved, however, the need disappears, thus constituting only a short term (and less effective) motivational factor.
- *Pleasure:* Balboni finds that this is the most influential driving force. This type of motivation is essentially related to the right hemisphere, but can also involve the left one, thus becoming extremely powerful. Studying a language simply because one feels pleasure and likes it represents fertile ground for meaningful learning and acquisition.

As it can be deduced, the most powerful driving force that leads a student to acquire language is the intrinsic motivation, that is equivalent to what Balboni means by the "pleasure state", namely the strong will to achieve a goal for the pure pleasure of doing it. In general, scholars have come to the idea that Krashen has summarized in his "i+1" theory (Krashen, 1985), e.g., students acquire when they comprehend language input that is slightly more advanced than their current level (i+1, indeed).

What are, then, the main implication for the language learning and teaching context of a foreign/second language? Fixing objectives, vary activities and resources are among the aspects that educators and teachers need to consider in order to raise student's

motivation. In particular, developing goals is a decisive factor for success at school and in life. It has already been said that this leads the learner to awareness, autonomy, identification of their limits and strengths. But above all, a learner who knows that what he is doing today has a purpose in the future, stimulates him to commit himself and acquire useful skills and competences for the future.

In this context, there is no doubt that the more authentic a performance task is, the more powerful it is. The general term *authentic task* refers to a task assigned to students, whose aim is to promote and evaluate the knowledge, skills and competences used to face and solve real and actual problems (Glatthorn, 1999). Specifically, authentic tasks are based on the constructivist approach according to which the subject produces knowledge in reflective action in real situations. Tasks are complex, open-ended problems that students face in order to learn how to use their personal knowledge, skills and abilities in real life, and to demonstrate their acquired competence (Glatthorn, 1999). In this way, the students mobilize themselves to build their knowledge. They are required to hypothesize, select, choose and decide, in favour of the development of the metacognitive competence as well as their responsibility and autonomy.

Nine properties of the authentic task were listed by J.P. Astolfi (1993) as follows:

1. The task presents itself as the overcoming of an obstacle that must be primarily well identified.
2. The study is organized around a concrete situation, so that students can effectively formulate hypotheses and control the outcome.
3. The students perceive the problem-situation as an enigma to be solved, and they are aware that they can give a try at it.
4. Students do not have the means for achieving the solution. It is precisely this sense of challenge that pushes students to elaborate or find together the intellectual and operational tools necessary for the construction of the solution.
5. Despite the challenging role that characterizes this kind of task, the solution should not be seen by students as something completely out of their reach. Here Krashen's i+1 hypothesis comes in handy.

6. The work for the solution of the situation-problem functions with the modalities of the scientific debate within the class, stimulating potential socio-cognitive conflicts.
7. The validation of the solution or its non-acceptance is not a task that relies on the teacher but derives from the way the situation is structured.
8. The common re-examination of the path taken provides the opportunity for a reflective, metacognitive return.
9. A single complex problem should be studied 'independently' by students.

1.2.5. Grammar teaching and learning: deductive or inductive approach?

At this point, a brief outline of the modalities of teaching grammar in the FL/SL is worth mentioning. Although grammar has progressively lost value in the process of FL/SL learning in favour of the development and improvement of oral skills, the exercise of grammar knowledge is still necessary for the fixation of the grammatical rules, especially when learning a FL. The countless debates that have resulted in this regard have seen a strong stance on the following question: "deductive or inductive teaching?". Before trying to provide a guideline to adopt in the Competence-based didactic approach, it is necessary to outline the difference between the two approaches. The *deductive approach* is part of the transmissive teaching model where grammar is perceived as a set of unalterable morphosyntactic rules. In this case the teacher explains the rules simply by showing them and the students are required to perform exercises to fix the rule. As it can been seen, theory is here the starting point of the language. The teacher's role is central as the custodian of the "syntactic truth of the L2". This model of grammar teaching is still widely used today among language teachers.

The steps of the deductive method can be summarized in:

1. *Deduction*: the grammar rule is explained;
2. *Fixation*: memorization of the rule and repetitive application of structured exercises ("turn the verb into the past"); memorization of list of words;

3. *Manipulation*: exercises (turn to...);
4. *Translation*: texts to be translated into the L1/L2/FL/; use of grammar rules.

On the contrary, the *inductive approach* consists in the discovery of the grammatical rules by the learner themselves. Such approach is generally structured in five stages:

1. *Concrete example* of a grammatical rule inserted in a sentence that works as a context;
2. *Hypothesis formulation* and subsequent substantiation of the hypothesis;
3. *Setting* the grammar rules;
4. *Re-use* of rules assumed, verified and established;
5. *Metalinguistic reflection*.

The vast majority of modern researchers agree in favouring the second model because, unlike the first, it places the learner in front of a whole series of situations and steps that lead their cognitive effort to observe, test and finally automate the structures of a given grammatical concept. Moreover, this type of approach, relevant both to the mother tongue and to the foreign languages, is clearly indicated and highlighted by the CEFR**,** which places it among the first available ways to develop grammatical competence:

"Learners may (be expected/required to) develop their grammatical competence:

a) inductively, by exposure to new grammatical material in authentic texts as encountered;

b) inductively, by incorporating new grammatical elements, categories, classes, structures, rules, etc. in texts specifically composed to demonstrate their form, function and meaning;

c) as b), but followed by explanations and formal exercises;

d) by the presentation of formal paradigms, tables of forms, etc. followed by explanations using an appropriate metalanguage in L2 or L1 and formal exercises;

e) by elicitation and, where necessary, reformulation of learners' hypotheses, etc." (CEFR, paragraph 6.4.7.7, p. 152).

Within this context, however, it should be born in mind that grammar teaching still should be offered in the widest varied range of approaches so as to create the necessary preconditions to accommodate as many of the learners' own cognitive styles as possible. In practical terms, the deductive approach is ideal for students who have an analytical learning style, whereas the creative ones tend to prefer the inductive approach because they feel challenged, thus more motivated. However, because starting from the experience is more accessible and motivating, the inductive model also works well for students with analytical thinking.

1.2.6. Social learning and cooperative learning

The social dimension is one of the most powerful engines of learning. Comparison, exchange and sharing enrich knowledge and cognitive skills and provide opportunities for the exercise of social, civic and communicative competences. The ability to work in groups is among the most sought after today, as social interactions are constantly required at all levels. Cooperative learning fits well in this context. Some theoretical elements that characterize it are outlined below.

1.2.6.1. Principles of cooperative learning

It is already widely argued that in Competence-based didactic teaching the teacher has to provides opportunities for students to carry out tasks both independently and responsibly, individually and in groups.

Cooperative learning seems to originate from the studies of the Johnson brothers around the 1960s in the USA, following two important considerations that, at that time, were beginning to gain a foothold in the panorama of education: on the one hand, there was a need to respond to a demand for socialization and education in civil co-existence, and on the other, there was a growing awareness of how the classroom context is a fully-fledged social context. The concept of *Cooperative Learning* refers to a method of learning and teaching in which the significant variable concerns the cooperation

among students (Comoglio, Cardoso, 1996). It therefore represents a teaching strategy that uses small and heterogeneous groups through which it is possible to acquire and improve social relations. The basic idea is that the group is considered a set of resources (viewed both as knowledge and skills), and learners are not considered as “containers” to be filled with notions or skills, but rather as resources to be activated. What teachers really need to consider is that creating groups in class does not imply that students will cooperate effectively. In order for a group to become cooperative, five essential elements must be structured into the situation, namely:

- *Positive interdependence*

  Each student within the group is aware that the work of each one can benefit or damage the whole group. It concretely takes place when the teacher randomly questions a group member and assigns a grade to the whole group for the answer provided individually. Interdependence is a systemic concept that helps the student overcome the tendency to blame others and stimulates learners to consider the many interconnections that exist within a system.

  Positive interdependence can be achieved through common goals (purpose interdependence), task division (task interdependence), sharing of materials, resources and information (resource interdependence), assignment of different roles (role interdependence), and group rewards (reward interdependence).

- *Individual and Group Accountability*

  If one manages to create a good level of interdependence between group members, one also ensures a certain degree of individual responsibility that helps the work to be done and the task to be completed. in addition, responsibility towards others increases motivation and improves school performance because it creates a sense of mutual responsibility, belonging and solidarity.

- *Promotive Interaction*

  The "physical" possibility of interaction within the group is highly recommended to be created, so it is very useful that the groups are composed of no more than four or five people. The continuous interactions favour the

possibility to develop a more and more articulated language in order to be able to express one's own thoughts in the best way. Moreover, the exchange of ideas favours an opportunity to get to know different life experiences.

- *Appropriate use of social skills*

  As Feuerstein claims, working in group involves continuous interaction and this inevitably creates conflicts that must be mediated with assertiveness and sharing and without passivity or aggression. (Feuerstein, 2008). Thanks to the support and mediation of the teacher, the members of each group must be able to effectively support the role of leadership, decision making, confidence building, communication and conflict management (Johnson et al., 1996).

- *Group Processing*

  At the end of the activity the cooperative group has to evaluate the outcome of its work. During the review of the processes, each member of the group receives a feedback both on his contribution and attitude. This ultimately allows a progressive improvement of the sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem, encouraging enthusiasm and the mastery of increasingly complex content.

Johnson (1996) argued that in Cooperative Learning the principle of interdependence and other significant variables in the learning process have been interpreted differently, giving rise to different currents or modalities of the method, and each current differs in relation to the principles to which one chooses to give priority. Among these the most widely known include Learning Together (Johnson & Johnson), Student Team Learning (Slavin), Group Investigation (Sharan & Sharan), Structural Approach (Kagan & Kagan), Complex Instruction (Lotan, Cohen & Morphew).

Thanks to its rigour and its way of responding comprehensively to the educational needs of several learners with SEN (Special Educational Needs), Cooperative Learning also represents a valid didactic strategy capable of creating a solid inclusive environment. This is because the principle is that each member of a group, with its peculiar and special characteristics, can contribute to the learning and each one can become a resource (and compensatory tool) for the others.

The final moment of the task is probably the most important planning phase because it represents the link between the actions carried out by all the members of the group and what has been learned from the experience. It is therefore possible to recognize, with regard to what has been outlined, that the cooperative approach is undoubtedly one of the compensatory teaching strategies that best manages to activate the resource-others, and that allows to build a positive and inclusive climate for all students in the classroom context.

Considering the aforementioned descriptions, a clear differentiation can now be provided between cooperative learning and Work Group.
First of all, while Cooperative learning focuses more on the learning experience of the participants, group work pays attention to the results of the activities.
Secondly, in cooperative learning the work is pre-planned and groups are carefully trained, unlike the group work. Thirdly, the leader is responsible for group work, while cooperative learning promotes individual responsibility. Each member has a leader role. Last but not least, teamwork can pave the way for competition, while cooperative learning promotes equal opportunities and learning for its participants.

As it can be seen, learning ensures better individual, interpersonal and social skills for participants.
In this context, the role of the teacher as moderator and facilitator is crucial. According to Sgambelluri (2016), the tasks of the teacher can be summarized as follows:

- encourage direct constructive interaction: during the activities, teachers have to ensure that students are supporting each other and helping each other in moments of difficulty and without prevarication;
- monitor students' behaviour: teachers need to carefully observe student’s way of working, intervening and helping them only if explicitly requested by the group, and recording the significant data. Any help provided by the teacher mustn’t influence the choices or decisions of the group;
- close the lesson: teachers should encourage students to conclude the work, highlighting again the main points of the activity and conducting a metacognitive reflection on what has been learned.

1.2.7. Methodological cohesion: methodological sequence and the Acquisition Unit

As it has already been mentioned, experts started to consider the psychological aspects of Language Education only fifty years ago. Following the numerous researchers in the field of Psycholinguistics, and the consequent discovery of all the neurobiological factors that contribute learners to acquire - or not acquire - a language (cognitive learning styles, multiple intelligences, etc.), innovative teaching methods began to establish in the school landscape. As a result, two design models have been inherited from tradition: the lesson, which has dominated for centuries, and the Teaching Unit, which entered the teaching of foreign languages around the 1960s. This paragraph will not deal with the lesson, that is a typical model of religious education where the priest (or the teacher in the case of the school) reads and comments on a religious text (the collection of grammar rules and the lexical repertoire, in the grammar-translational tradition).

In Glottodidactics the teaching unit is usually identified with the term of *Didactic Unit*, thus emphasizing the teaching process. Since it is an implicit curriculum that programs the UDs (Didactic Units), these are claimed not to be flexible, nor they can be modified, they are extremely rigid. The DU is composed of a series of Acquisition Units. A single *Acquisition Unit* (also called "Learning Unit", without considering the difference between acquisition and learning provided by Krashen), represents the starting point in the perspective of a humanistic-affective Glottodidactics that puts the student and their acquisition processes at the centre. As opposed to the Acquisition Unit, the DU focuses on the learning process and the teacher is a directive/guideline figure.

The Acquisition Unit became widespread starting from the 90s and is defined on the basis of the Gestalt Theory. This describes perception as a sequence of three phases: *globality, analysis, synthesis*, where the latter may be spontaneous or even conscious. This sequence transforms what is perceived into elements received by our mind, and also acquired if the conditions are met (Balboni, 2012).

Before analysing the phases of each single unit of acquisition, it is necessary to remember that motivation is at the bases of acquisition, as Balboni claims (2013). For this reason, learners need to be stimulated before starting an activity, that is, they have to find a positive reason to start the demanding process of language acquisition. Presenting a song, a video or a picture may reveal a powerful strategy to helps students arise their curiosity and promote their skills. Also the Brainstorming technique encourages people to come up with thought and ideas, thus increasing students 'interest towards the upcoming activity.

In the Gestalt model it is assumed that there is first of all a global perception of a communicative event or text. Essentially, in the *Globality* phase the teacher makes students listen to a text and read it the same text which is preceded, accompanied and followed by activities aimed at guiding global understanding, for example with a skimming reading (by skimming is meant reading something quickly so as to note only the important points). In any case, the proposed text must be authentic because language needs to be inserted into a real context. This phase mainly involves the right hemisphere of the brain and is based on a number of strategies such as:

a. the maximum exploitation of redundancy
b. the supplement of contextual information;
c. the formation of socio-pragmatic hypotheses based on our previous knowledge of the world;
d. the elaboration of linguistic hypotheses on the basis of our grammatical knowledge;
d. the verification in the text of the aforementioned hypotheses;
e. the search for analogies with known events.

In the following phase, *analysis*, the student activates a deep understanding of the text. This phase is usually guided by a series of activities, such as *scanning* reading technique, e.g., the search for specific information. These activities involve the left hemisphere and focus on specific aspects that the teacher aims students to acquire, such as communicative acts, grammatical aspects or non-verbal language.

In order to analyse the structure of the language, a reflection on language is highly suggested through the already mentioned inductive approach.

In the third phase, *reflection*, the student is required to work autonomously using several techniques which aims at fixating and reutilizing the previously explained structures. Finally, a moment of reflection deepens the topic and the communicative acts. The abovementioned phases imitate the natural acquisition process and facilitate the act of learning.

To summarize, ss Balboni (2013) states, the didactic unit consists of a complex linguistic tranche realized by putting together events, acts and linguistic structures. It is rigid, focused on the teaching and conducted mainly through a deductive method. On the contrary, the Acquisition Unit is built from the point of view of acquisition and is conducted through an inductive approach. It is flexible and in this case the teacher acts more like a guide and support.

In conclusion, one can states that the traditional approach, which is based on the acquisition of knowledge and concepts and at most on its practical application, creates mostly estrangement and demotivation on students. Furthermore, and most importantly, the product of their study stays in the short-term memory and will soon be forgotten with every probability.
On the contrary, the learning unit aims at the development of skills and knowledge. Unlike the traditional approach of language acquisition, the added value is provided by the contextualized skills and knowledge. These are "put at the service of a problem", acted upon, and thus acquire meaning in the eyes of the learner and have a greater opportunity to be remembered and consolidated.

Competence-based teaching is undoubtedly more complex than knowledge-based teaching in terms of time and planning, but at the same time it provides a level of learning that is better suited to the student's integration into adult society. In this context, only the Acquisition Unit represents an efficient basic organisational structure for the planning of the Competence-based Teaching.

2. RESEARCH PROJECT

This section will describe the main steps of the case study, among them the research hypotheses and the research questions. It will also provide the reader with some information about the participants and the structure of the questionnaires. Finally, it will outline the method of data analysis and the ethical issues.

2.1. The Research Hypotheses and the Research Questions

In this paragraph, the research hypotheses and the research questions of this case study will be outlined.

As already discussed in the previous chapter, several studies have been carried out on the psychological aspects of Language Education, and numerous are the implications in the educational field where the competence-based approach seems to be the appropriate solution for future citizens in today's society. Yet, despite the numerous studies conducted and the publication of the guidelines in the CEFR to be adopted in the classroom, the use of this manual seems to be distorted compared to the spirit and meaning of the initial document.

In my school experience I was able to see first-hand how mostly of the principles regulating the competence-based teaching approach were unknown to me. With a few rare exceptions, I can strongly affirm that my secondary-school experience has been based on strongly traditional transmissive didactics where the only real concern of the teacher was to finish the curriculum. In addition, I have been taking private lessons in English and German for more than four years in which I constantly have the chance to interact with students ranging between 13 and 19 years old. Most of them claim that grammar learning in the classroom is highly deductive, group activities are almost non-existent and that most of the time spent in the classroom is based on learning grammar rules and translation exercises. Hence my curiosity about this topic and the consequent investigation.

Although a large amount of research has been carried out on the competence-based teaching approach, there is no previous study that has collected data from Italian lower and upper-secondary school students about their experience of learning the foreign language in the school and extra-school context. Moreover there is also no prior study in the same kind of institutions about teachers and their teaching approach, combined with the students' one. Therefore, this study tries to fill this gap also providing a comparison of data among teachers and students in order to have a wider view of the whole issue.

The main purpose of the student's questionnaire is to explore the English language learning with competence-based didactic approach. Among the various research questions, the student's questionnaire is intended to verify:

a) the level of satisfaction of English learning;
b) the level of student's autonomy in the English learning process;
c) whether foreign language learning is developed through competence-based teaching where the teacher combines planning, programming and assessment activities with motivation, class management and classroom gratification;
d) the student's perception and use of informal learning of English, which presupposes a control of learning entirely in the hands of the learner.

Furthermore, the data collected in this section is intended to be a source of inspiration for:

- Students: for a greater awareness of extracurricular learning opportunities;
- Foreign language teachers: so that they can try to adapt their teaching method by increasing "playful learning" activities. These activities have in fact proved to be effective for the development of different competences, among which social and transversal competences, that are key objectives of Competence Based Learning.

On the other side, the foreign language teacher' questionnaire will allow to collect data about the habits, strategies, methodologies and behaviours adopted by language teachers. In particular, it aims to verify whether teachers plan and organize their class today according to the logic of the competence-based didactic approach.

Lastly, the questionnaire can be a useful self-assessment tool of the teacher themselves, a subsequent self-questioning and a stimulus to improve the way they teach as well as to search for valid and engaging teaching alternatives in line with a teaching method that puts the student at the centre of the learning process.

The general research hypothesis of my research project is that Italian lower – and upper secondary school students feel that they are not very autonomous and unable to manage their learning. This would be in part due to the fact that most of the teachers still conduct a traditional transmissive didactic aimed at learning knowledge rather than acquiring competences.

2.2. The Subjects

In the next two paragraphs the subjects of the study will be described. The participants were both students and teachers, and the research was carried out in February and March 2020.

2.2.1. The students

111 students attending Italian schools completed the questionnaire. Among them, 5 students did not respond in a pertinent way to the answers, so that 106 questionnaires are considered valid to the research purposes. As the questionnaire was administered online via Google Modules©, it has been possible to interview a heterogeneous group of students ranging from 11 to 19 years old and attending different types of school. The following graphs help better comprehend the characteristics of the participants.

Item 41 – Percentage of Students in lower - and upper secondary school

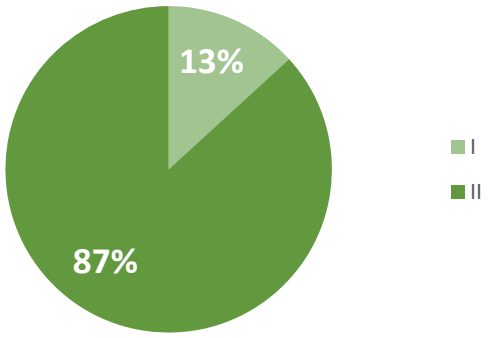


Figure 2.1

As it can be seen in figure 2.1, the 87% of the subjects (92 students) attend the upper-secondary school, whereas the 13% (14 students) attend the lower-secondary school.

Item 41 – N° of participants per type of school and year of attendance

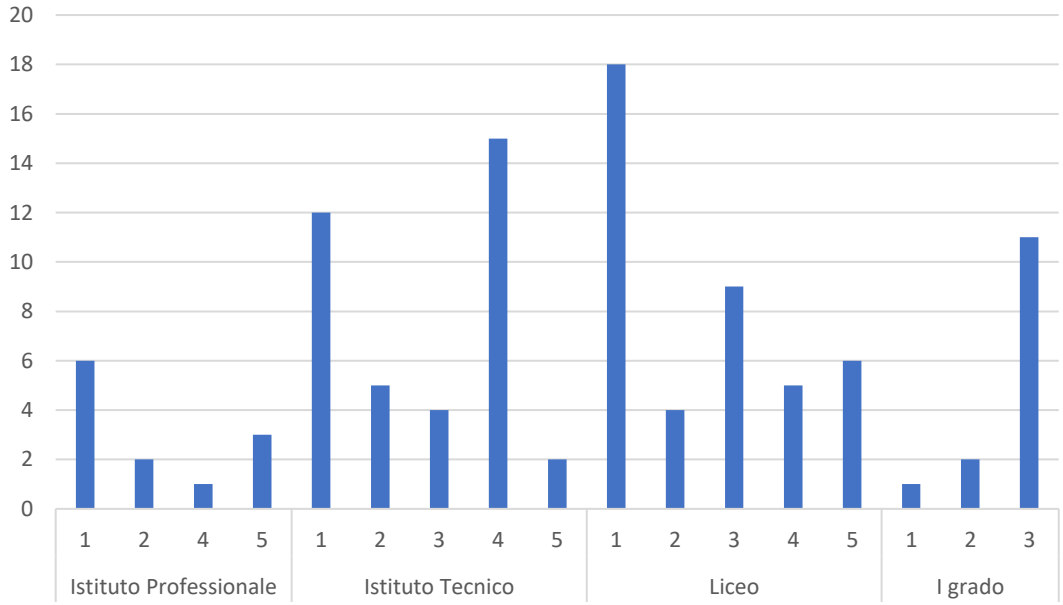


Figure 2.2

Moreover, as shown in figure 2.2, among the participants attending the upper – secondary school, there are:

- 12 students attending the “Istituto Professionale” (vocational school);
- 38 students attending the “Istituto Tecnico” (technical school);
- 42 students attending the “Liceo” (high school or lyceum).

The graph also shows the year of attendance of each student, namely from the first grade of the lower – secondary school to the fifth year of the high school.

2.2.2. The teachers

The target group chosen for this research and for which the questionnaire was intended is foreign and second language teachers from both the lower – and upper secondary schools. The reason why the researcher has decided to include not only English teachers, but L2/FL teachers in general is because she wanted to collect a great number of data given that the general purpose of the research is the competence-based didactic approach in language education. Since the Competence-didactic approach can be applied for any type of language, the questionnaire could thus be fulfilled by any L2/FL teacher. Instead, students were required to provide their experience related to the English language only because in Italy English is the one necessary learning language. In this way, the widest sample for each respective category has been obtained.

As for the student’s questionnaire, this was administered online via Google modules©, so that it has been possible to interview a heterogeneous group of teachers. A total of 146 teachers have completed the questionnaire.

Item 2 – Qualification

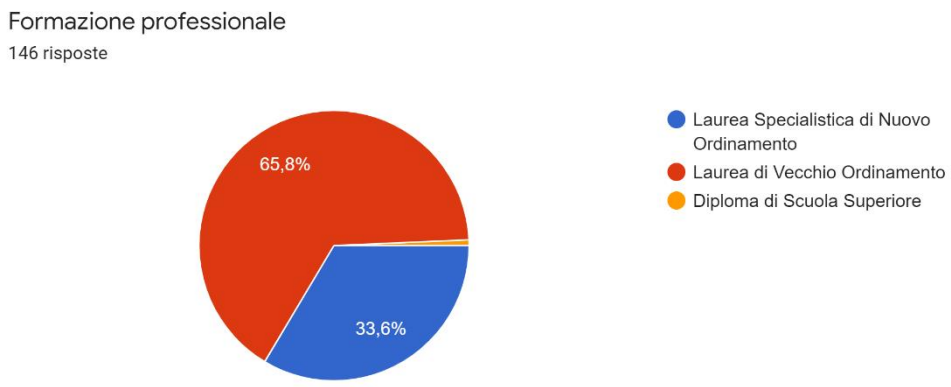


Figure 2.3

As concerns the qualification of the respondents, out of 146 teachers 65,8% (96) possess a Certificate of Degree according to the old rule, while the remaining part holds a degree of "new order". Finally, one teacher declares to possess a high school diploma.

Item 3 – Years of teaching experience

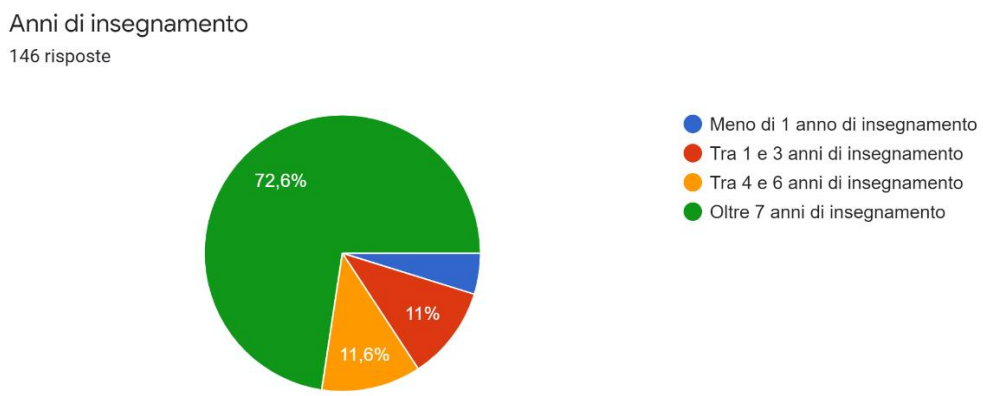


Figure 2.4

As it can be seen from the graph above, most of the teachers have been teaching for over seven years, namely the 72,6% (106 respondents). To follow, the 11,6 % of the teachers (17 teachers) have been teaching for over four years, the 11% (16 teachers)

have between one and three years of teaching experience, whereas for the 4,8% of the respondents (7 teachers) this one represents the first year of teaching. As can be seen from figure 2.3, the majority of the participants thus possess several years' experience in teaching.

Item 4 – Type of school in which the teachers are employed

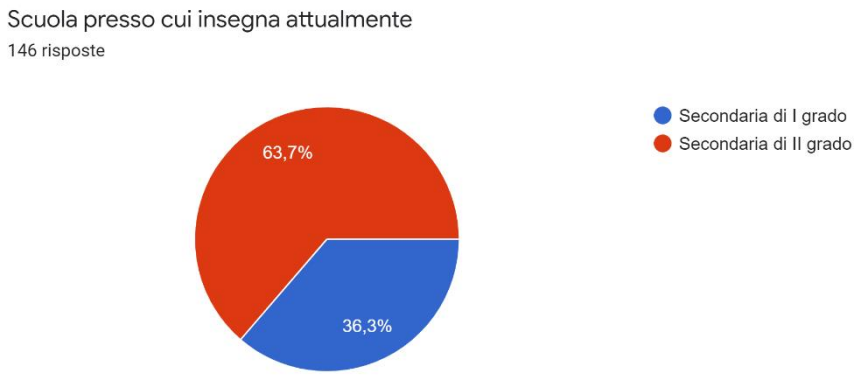


Figure 2.5

Furthermore, 36,3% of the respondents teaches at the middle school (namely, 53 teachers), while the 63,7% (93 teachers) teaches at the high school.
Finally, as concerns the language of teaching, English is the most taught language among the participants, followed by Italian as a foreign language, French, Spanish and German, respectively.

2.3. Methodology of the Research

For the purposes of this research, a quantitative method has been chosen. The peculiarity of quantitative research lies in providing an accurate measurement of the phenomenon under investigation. This type of research has in most cases a descriptive nature, i.e. it aims to shed light on the environment and the context in which the subject operates. In contrast to qualitative research, quantitative research is characterized by a low degree of interaction with the interviewee with a consequent lower risk of data

contamination by the researcher. Moreover, thanks to this methodology, the researcher is able to detect and store a large amount of information with highly standardized tools. The final objective is to quantify a phenomenon and to express its characteristics in the form of percentage data. On the other hand, however, it must be said that the description of the data that emerges is less rich than that relating to qualitative analysis, in addition to the fact that rare phenomena tend to be little considered. For this reason, a series of open questions has been inserted in the questionnaires in order to minimalize this gap.

Furthermore, the research is considered a case study since it provides 'an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system' (Heigham & Croker, 2009, p.307) and the unit of analysis is represented by a group of students coming from different backgrounds and who are not the researcher's students (i.e. action research) (Heigham & Croker, 2009).

2.4. Materials

In this paragraph, the materials used for the present research project will be presented, namely students' – and teachers' questionnaires (see appendixes A and B).

2.4.1. Student's questionnaires

For this research, an online questionnaire has been created to collect quantitative data. In order to structure the format of the questionnaire, the researcher has used Google Modules, a free online survey tool which allows to choose the type of answers among several layouts. The choice of the online questionnaire mostly depended on the fact that "results are collated by the programme used so that the researcher can immediately start to analyse the findings after the data collection phase (Katsirikou, Skiadas, 2009), without even considering that "online questionnaires obtain a higher number of respondents that paper based questionnaires" (ibid).

As for the administration of the questionnaire, this was spread online mostly by word of mouth and partly by using the social media Facebook and Whatsapp. The questionnaire could be easily fulfilled even through the mobile phone.
Considering that part of the subjects attends the lower – secondary school where students generally possess an A1 + / A2 level of English, the questionnaire has been administered in Italian. Only the title of the questionnaire was written in English. In this way, the comprehension was easier and possible misunderstandings have been avoided. In this work, the results and graphs show the original questions in Italian but the results and discussion of the data will be done in English. (The whole questionnaire can be found in the Appendix). Special attention has also been paid to the Italian language. In fact, an attempt has been made to use a simple vocabulary that is accessible to all students. In addition, before the official administration of the questionnaires to the participants, three middle school students were asked to fill in the form in order to obtain feedback on the comprehension of the text. Only after a series of changes made in order to improve the understanding of the questionnaire, this was it officially administered online.

The questionnaire deals with the topics that have been illustrated in chapter one concerning the competence-based didactic teaching, the student's psychology and the informal learning. The student's questionnaire has been subdivided into six sections, each one having a heading summarising the content of the questions within it:

1. **Do you like English?**
2. **Riesci bene in inglese? (Are you good at English?);**
3. **L'Inglese fra i banchi di scuola (English at school);**
4. **L'Inglese fuori da scuola (English outside school);**
5. **Emergenza Covid – 19: la didattica a distanza (Covid 19 – your distance learning experience);**
6. **…Abbiamo quasi finito! (We are almost ready!).**

The first section "Do you like English?" represents also the title of the questionnaire itself and consists of a presentation of the intent of the research, a description of the

formal characteristics of the questionnaire and the completion modalities. Specifically, the introduction firstly specifies the anonymity of the data collected, and then says:

"Hi! I am Silvia Bizzotto, a graduand of the University Cà Foscari in Venice. In this questionnaire I will ask you some questions about your English language learning experience. It will take a maximum of 15 minutes, but I ask you to answer honestly. Your cooperation will help me a lot! Are you ready? ...Let's get started!".

(In this part I decided not to mention the Competence-based didactic approach because students might not know its meaning and this could create frustration and renounce).
Subsequently, consent is requested for the processing of personal data and the confirmation of attendance at the lower – and upper secondary schools. These two are in fact the necessary requirements to be able to proceed with the completion of the questionnaire.

Section 2 involves a number of general questions around the perception of English and can be partly considered a warm-up activity. The first question "*How much do you like English?*" and "*How much is English important for you?"* involve rating scales from "absolutely" to "at all" and from "It's necessary" to "at all", respectively. Question 3 of this part was aimed at providing the researcher with the most important reasons to study English, thus giving the possibility to choose more than one answer. The questions *"Have you ever been in the UK or in an English- speaking country?*" and *"If yes, did you like it?"* are intended to determine whether there is a correlation between the student's experience abroad and the pleasure in learning the language and/or the success (or failure) in English. *"Are you completely satisfied with your English learning?"* is also correlated to the previous questions. In fact, the researcher attempts to find a link between the level of satisfaction and the here too.
The next question *"To whom do you attribute the merit (or demerit) of your English level?"* is interesting as it states how much the success of the student is influenced by the teacher. In this case, the scale ranges from "100% responsibility" to "100% teacher's responsibility".

The following three questions are meant to establish the level of autonomy of the student: *"Are you able to identify your own strong and weak points in English?", "Are you able to monitor your progress without the test and the mark?", "Are you willing to commit to improve you English level?*". These last three questions can be answered with a ranging scale from "absolutely" to "at all".

Section 3 concerns the learning of English in classroom and investigates the habits of the teacher. In particular, this part aims to get an idea of the way the foreign language teacher is used to develop their teaching lesson and whether their teaching pays attention to the students' personality. A number of factors which have been analysed in the first chapter are here investigated, thus helping the researcher establish whether the teacher conducts teaching practices that aims at the competences acquisition. Data collected in this section will be then compared to those collected in the teacher's questionnaires.

The first question is "*Has your teacher ever asked you what your preferred learning techniques and strategies are?* (For example, the fact that you remember the content of an image better instead of an audio or that you prefer to work alone instead of working in a group...)". This represents a closed-ended questions requiring a yes or no answer. If the answer is yes, the subject is supposed to specify the way their teacher investigates their learning preferences, either verbally or by means of a questionnaire.

The following two questions are about the ELP: "*Has your English teacher ever talked about the ELP (European Linguistic Porfolio)?*" and *"If yes, how often does they use it to reflect upon your learning progress and your achievements?"*. While the former is a closed- question, the latter presents a scale range of frequency and both are strictly related to the promotion of the concept of autonomy by the teacher, which, among other things, is fundamental from the perspective of informal learning.

The following three questions regard the explication of the objectives while dealing with a new topic, namely *"Before starting a new topic, does your teacher specifies the objectives, namely what you are going to do after that?", " Do you think that knowing the objectives of the activities done in class is useful to better comprehend the content?", " If so, why do you think that it is important?"*. The latter involves an open-question in order to get a deeper comprehension of the students, in a qualitative way.

As it was outlined in chapter one, the explanation of the objectives is of fundamental importance to increase both the motivation and the autonomy of the learner. This aspect can therefore have a certain influence on the perception of the foreign language.

The following questions aims at investigating in detail the profile of the teacher and their attitude which may affect the learning process. Specifically: *"Choose the situation that better represents your experience in class: your English teacher is…* (e.g., patient, available, comprehensive, anxious to finish the curriculum, etc.,)". The possible answers range from "Absolutely not" to "Absolutely yes".

The coming question attempts to investigate how grammar is taught in class (e,g., deductively or inductively): *"How does your English teacher usually explains a grammar rule?"* The possible answers are two: - They explain the rule, then we do exercises to see if we can apply; - They provide us with some tips (e.g., a sentence containing the grammatical rule) and we have to deduce it. Then we do exercises to fix the rule.). The third possible answer "Other" is open, so that the student has the possibility to qualitatively explain their own experience in detail.

It then follows a series of 26 items attempting to investigate the detailed habits of the teacher, e.g.., from the attention paid to the psychological aspects of the learners to the lesson design and planning and the students' assessment. These question all provide an answer with a ranking scale of frequency from "Always" to "Never". (For instance, *"Does your teacher encourage to evaluate yourself?"; "...talks English?", ...uses authentic material?"*).

The last is the open question "*Name five characteristics that the ideal English teacher should have".* This helps the researcher establish which are the most relevant aspects that students consider in a foreign language teacher.

The first chapter showed the relevance of the extracurricular activities done in English in order to improve the language. The purpose of the fourth section is to find out what extracurricular activities (informal learning) students do outside of school and whether the teacher encourages students to participate. The first question is of a general nature and is intended to check whether the student understands the importance of practicing English outside of school.

The following question "*Are you aware of the fact that there are many extracurricular activities in English that you could do?"* provides answers ranging from "Definitely yes" to "I've never been interested". Again, this shows the importance the student attaches to the foreign language and to putting it into practice outside of school.
Afterwards, a series of extracurricular activities are mentioned and the student is asked to specify the weekly frequency of these activities. Here the scale is between "Never" and "More than 6 times a week". These activities include watching films in English, conversations with foreign friends, reading English books, using language applications and so on.
The next two questions aim at understanding whether the teacher encourages students to participate in some of the activities mentioned above. If the answer is yes, an open-ended question allows them to specify which activities in a qualitative sense. The last two questions in this section aim to understand what the student thinks about the extracurricular activities*: "Do you think the extracurricular activities listed above are in some ways better than those you do in class?* If the answer is yes, the student must motivate his answer (for example, "Because I find them more interesting", "I need them to achieve goals" etc.).

The fifth section aims at investigating the changing following the teaching conditions required by the lockdown due to the spread of the Coronavirus in Italy between February and May. 2020 The questions try to give an idea about the management of distance learning conducted by the teacher and students' viewpoint on the topic with t the various problematics that have emerged etcetera.

Finally, in section six students' personal details of age, nationality, year and school of attendance are asked, in order to understand the composition of the sample.

2.4.2. Teacher's questionnaires

For this research, an online questionnaire has been created to collect quantitative data. As for the student's questionnaire, the teacher's questionnaire has been created using Google Moduli and was shared mostly through the Blog "Italiano L2 e molto altro"

and the Facebook page “Insegnanti di Inglese” and by word of mouth in smaller measure.

The structure of the questionnaire is similar to the one addressed to the students. Moreover, it has been administered in Italian.

The questionnaire deals with the topic that have been analysed in chapter one. In particular, it is about the teacher’s habits and the planning and designing of the lesson. It has been subdivided into four section, each one having a title summarising the content of the questions within it:

1. **La Didattica per Competenze nell’educazione linguistica (Competence-based teaching in Language Education);**
2. **La Didattica per Competenze nell’educazione linguistica 2 ((Competence-based teaching in Language Education 2);**
3. **Autovalutazione delle competenze professionali (Self-assessment of the professional skills);**
4. **Emergenza Covid-19: didattica a distanza (Covid-19 Emergency: distance learning).**

The first section “Competence-based teaching in language education” also represents the title of the questionnaire itself and consists of a presentation of the research, a description of the formal characteristics of the questionnaire and the completion modalities. Specifically, the introduction firstly specifies the anonymity of the data collected, and then says:

“Dear Teacher, I am Silvia Bizzotto, a graduate student at the Cà Foscari University of Venice. This questionnaire is part of the research of my Master thesis in Glottodidactics and wants to investigate if foreign language teachers adopt a didactic approach in line with the Competence-based didactic teaching. The target group chosen for this research and for which the questionnaire is intended is made up of foreign language teachers of the secondary school of first and second degree. Thank you for agreeing to collaborate in the data collection. For any information or clarification please do not hesitate to contact me: 849467@stud.unive.it”.

As in the student's questionnaire, the consent for the processing of personal data was required in this first part, in order to proceed with the compilation.

Section two is entitles like the first one. The first four questions are about some personal details, such as the years of experience in teaching, the level of school where they teach and the language of teaching, in order to further understand the composition and characteristics of the sample.

The following question *is "Have you recently participated in training course to broaden the range of your teaching skills and/or improve teaching strategies?"* aims at investigating whether the respondents are committed to staying constantly updated on their teaching method. This question provides the possibility to give more answers including CLIL courses, inclusion and inter-culture projects, etc. The teacher also has the possibility to add courses under the heading "other" that he has attended and which have not been mentioned by the researcher.

The closed answer questions "*Do you use the ELP (European Language Portfolio) to encourage the learner to reflect on his learning process?"* and *"Do you think that you are employing a Competence-based approach, as suggested by the ELP?"* aim on the one hand to verify whether teachers use this valuable tool as suggested by the Council of Europe, and on the other if they are aware that their teaching approach is in line with what was suggested by the Council of Europe and the documents drafted by it. As was mentioned in the first chapter, awareness of one's own way of acting is as important in the student as it is in the teacher. The latter, however, sometimes takes it for granted that their way of acting is necessarily the right one. For this reason, the next section of the questionnaire aims at a self-assessment of competences.

"Have you ever used PEFIL as a tool to self-assess your teaching skills?" This closed-question further investigates the way the teacher operates. PEFIL (in English " EPOSTL, namely "European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages") is another reflection tool with the aim of encouraging teachers to reflect on the knowledge and skills needed to teach languages, helping them to assess their teaching skills and allowing them to monitor their projects and take note of the experiences of teaching during the course of his own didactic training (European Council, 2007).

The next question *"How much has competence-based teaching disrupted your way of teaching?"* allows the researcher to perceive the extent to which the teacher applies the competence-based approach. Possible answers range from "not at all, I don't really know its practical implications so I don't use it" to "very much. To date I use this type of approach from the didactic design to the competence assessment".

What follows is a grid of multiple- choice questions whose answers range varies from "absolutely not" to "absolutely yes".

The general question is: *On which fronts has the Competence-based teaching approach has enabled you to improve your professional figure?* Among the various items appear "…reflecting on the importance of metalinguistic competence", "reviewing my role from traditional teacher to learning facilitator, "getting to know new ways of teaching design" etcetera

The question *"How much time do you spend on average in designing teaching activities?"* is intended to determine the time spent in preparing and organizing the activities to be done in class. The range of answers varies depending on the amount of time spent per week, i.e. from less than one hour per week to more than six hours per week. The results of this questions can indicate a high degree of interest and passion for one's teaching subject. In fact, behind a high-quality educational system lies a great amount of time dedicated of work and preparation of the teaching activities.

The last question in the second section of the questionnaire is as follows: "*Please indicate the statement you think is most true. "The didactic objectives and disciplinary verification indicators must first of all…"* ... and some of the listed items are a *"…*adapt to the classroom context", "stick to the requirements of the disciplinary area", and "stick to the general requirements of the discipline". Among other things, data collected on these questions are aimed at whether or not the teacher is flexible about potential changes of the curriculum and the setting of the teaching objectives.

Section three of the teacher's questionnaire is entitled "self-assessment of professional skills" and aims to collect data on the habits, strategies, methodologies and behaviours adopted by language teachers.

The first grid of items is preceded by the assignment "*Indicate the situation that comes closest to your teaching approach with regard to psycho-pedagogical and methodological-didactic skills*". For each item the range of answers varies from "absolutely yes" to "absolutely not". Some examples of these items are reported as follows: *"I encourage students to identify their educational needs", "I help students to set educational goals", "I facilitate and encourage student interaction"*, etc. This first grid mostly refers to the attention given by the teacher to the psychological aspects related to the student.

The following three grids refer to habits and strategies adopted in different didactic moments, i.e. during the didactic planning, during the course of the lesson, during the period devoted to the student's documentation and evaluation.

"Please indicate the situation that comes closest to your approach to instructional design." As previously stated, this grid includes all those habits that the teacher can put into practice when designing the activity to be done in class. Among these items the following can be found: *"I propose a wide range of different didactic activities", "I select authentic material wherever possible"*, etc. Again, the teacher can respond in the same way as in the previous grid.

The next grid of items is preceded by the assignment *"Indicate the situation that comes closer to your approach during the course of the lesson"*. As can be seen from the title, in this section a series of behaviours to be adopted during the lesson are indicated, including for example "*At the beginning of a learning unit I propose motivating activities to stimulate the learner's interest", "I stimulate my students' critical thinking", "I use a variety of technological and multimedia resources"*, etc. The mode of response is the same as explained in previous assignments.

The following grid concerns the teacher's behaviours and habits devoted to the student's evaluation of the competences. Specifically, the assignment says: "*Indicate the situation that comes closer to your approach during the student's evaluations"*. These include: "*I inform my students about the methods and timing of evaluation", "I am able to build an evaluation grid for unstructured tests (oral tests, essays...)",* etcetera.

The following question aims to investigate which teaching methods are applied in class by the teacher. Specifically, the question is as follows: "*How often do you use the following teaching methodologies?"*. In this case the range of answers varies from "never" to "very often". Cooperative learning, Peer-Education, argumentative debate and case study are some of the mentioned activities in this grid.

The last question of this section is an open-question, namely "*Are there other approaches and/or teaching methodologies that you use frequently? Why do you find them particularly successful?"* Here, the researcher attempts to collect data in a more qualitative way, giving voice to the respondents.

As in the student's questionnaire, teacher's questionnaire has among its scopes to investigate how teachers have behaved following the Covid-19 virus in terms of distance learning. Have they been able to promptly revolutionize their teaching mode at such an exceptional time? What are the main issues that have surfaced during the implementation of distance learning? Are there any aspects that could be useful in the future to enforce the traditional teaching? These are some of the questions that the researcher tries to investigate in this last section.

2.5. Method of Data Analysis

In this paragraph, a brief overview about the method of data analysis will be illustrated. The questionnaires have been analysed as follows:

- The collected data have been automatically tabulated in Google Modules
- Data have been transported in Excel;
- Further calculations have been made through Excel. To give an example, in order to understand how the students were split among different school years and institutions. For this purpose he used Excel, which allows to insert "filters" and discover the answers provided by a specific category. This type of calculation is not done just through Google Modules.
- Graphs have been created partly through Google Modules and partly through Excel and Word in order to become more easily readable.

- The results have been written down and the following discussion has been elaborated.
- The results obtained by both respondents' categories have been subsequently compared. The discussion has been made on the basis of the bibliography and the topics analysed in the first chapter.

2.6. Research Ethics

Ethical issues are a particularly delicate aspect in research, especially when dealing with vulnerable subjects, such as minors. The majority of the students who completed the student's questionnaire are minors. Although the data were collected through an online survey, it was impossible to require a parent's signature and/or the consent as it is required when conducting research at school. For this reason, at the very beginning of both the student's and teacher's questionnaire it has been specified that the collected data will be used exclusively for the purpose of the case study, in line with current privacy protection regulations. In addition, both students and teachers have been required to expressly authorise the processing of the main data in order to proceed with the compilation of the questionnaire.

In any case, however, it is necessary to underline that anonymity is assured to all participants and no personal specificities that can facilitate the recognition of the subjects have been asked nor were required in the questionnaire (such as the school of attendance, school of teaching, gender, etcetera).

3. RESULTS

In this section, the data retrieved from students' and teachers' questionnaires will be reported. Some questions will be analysed together in case the first one involves the closed answer "Yes"" or "No"" and the second one is part of the extension of the first question. For example, as a first question: "Has your English teacher ever talked to you about the European language portfolio?", possible answers: "Yes", "No". Then, as second question: "If you answered yes to the previous question, how often do you use it in class to reflect on your learning process and achievements?".

The data collected will be analysed with the support of graphs in order to make the results visibly clearer.

3.1.Students' questionnaires

Given that the first section of the questionnaire "Do you like English?" consists of the introduction of the questionnaire and the request for consent for the processing of data, we will proceed directly to examine the second section, which is entitled "Riesci bene in inglese?" ("Are you good at English?).

2) <u>Are you good at English?</u>

The second section is made up of eleven items and is about the perception of English in the student's life. Each item will be analysed singularly.

Item 3 - Do you like English?

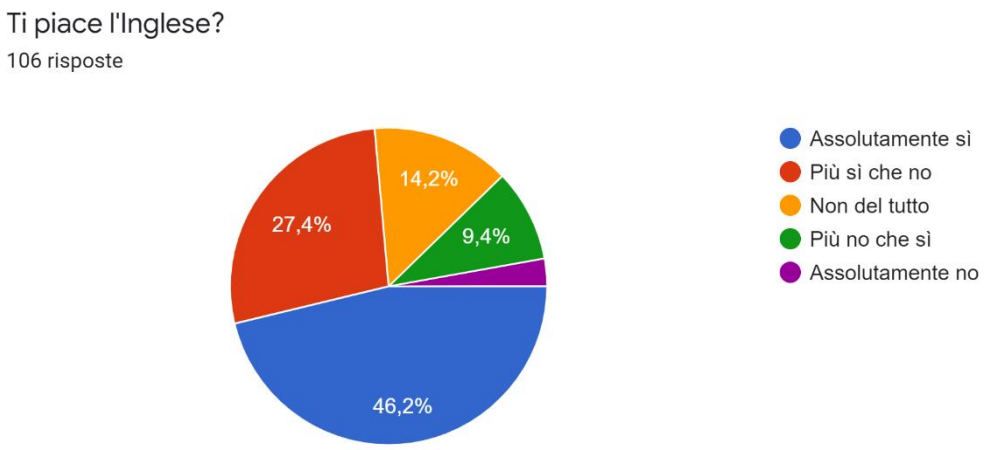


Figure 3.1

As shown in the graph above, out of 106 students who filled out the questionnaire, 49 of them (46,2%) answered "Absolutely yes", followed respectively by 29 students (27,4%) who answered "More yes than no", 15 students (14,2%) answered "Not at all". Only 10 students (9,4%) and 3 (2,8%) answered "More no than yes" and "Absolutely no", respectively.

Overall, most respondents like English. "Not at all" is considered here an answer that tends to be negative. "More yes than no" and "Absolutely no" are considered negative answers.

Item 4 - How important is English to you?

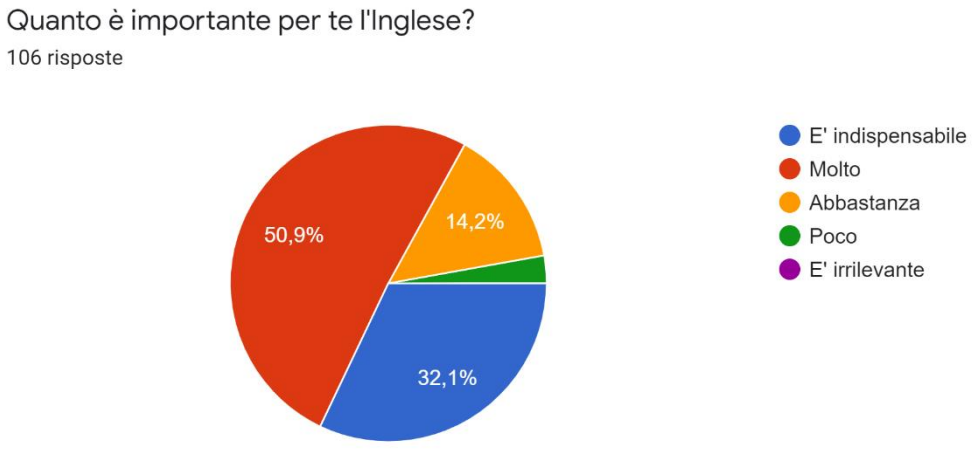


Figure 3.2

To the question "How important is English to you?" 54 students (50,9%) answered "A lot"; followed by 34 students (32,1%) who answered "It is indispensable", 15 students (14,2%) answered "Quite important". Only 3 students considered English unimportant. Interestingly, none of them answered "It is irrelevant".

In general, therefore, students consider English very significant and only 18% of the subjects do not consider it important at all or just a little.

Item 5 - Name the 3 most important reasons why it is useful for you to learn English.

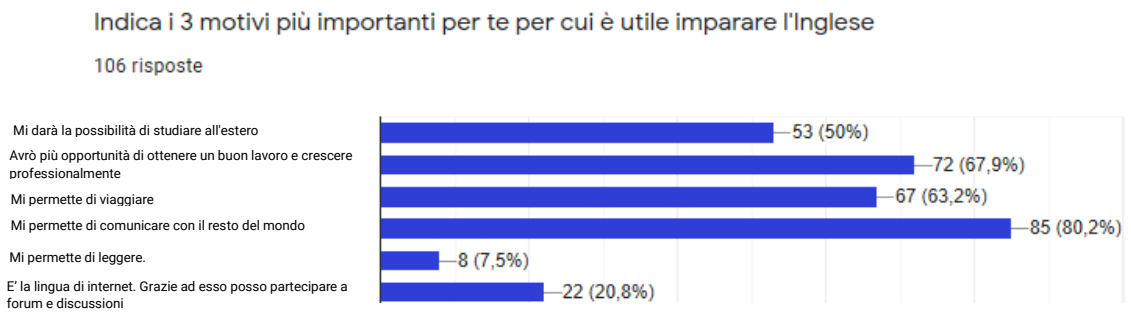


Figure 3.3

As it can be noticed from figure 3.3, among the various options available, the three reasons why students consider it important to learn English in descending order are: 1. "English allows me to communicate with the rest of the world" (80,2% of participants) 2. "Thanks to English I will have more opportunities to get a good job and grow professionally" (67,9% of participants); 3. "English allows me to travel" (63% of the participants). Interestingly, half of the subjects consider the study of English to be equally important in order to study abroad.

Item 6 - Have you ever been to England or to a country where English is spoken?

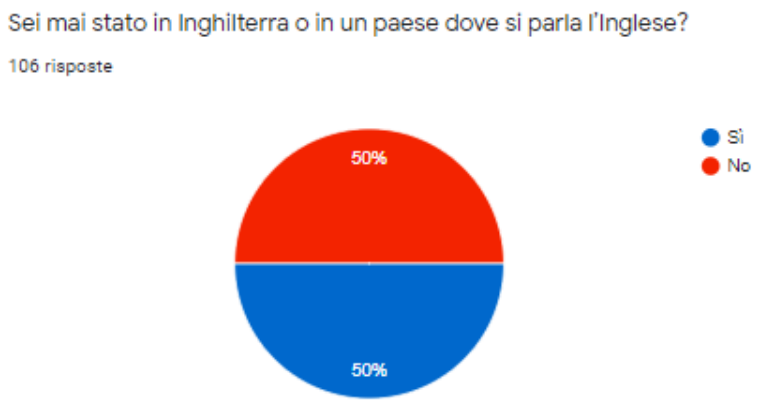


Figure 3.4

Item 7 – If yes, did you like it?

Figure 3.5

As can be seen from figure 3.4, out of 106 students, half of them have visited a country where English is spoken. In addition, the figure 3.5 shows that the vast majority of students who have been to an English-speaking country have had a positive experience. In fact, 96,3% of them answered "Yes" to the question "Did you like it?". Only two students answered "Not much" and "No".

Item 9 - Do you feel overall satisfied with your English learning?

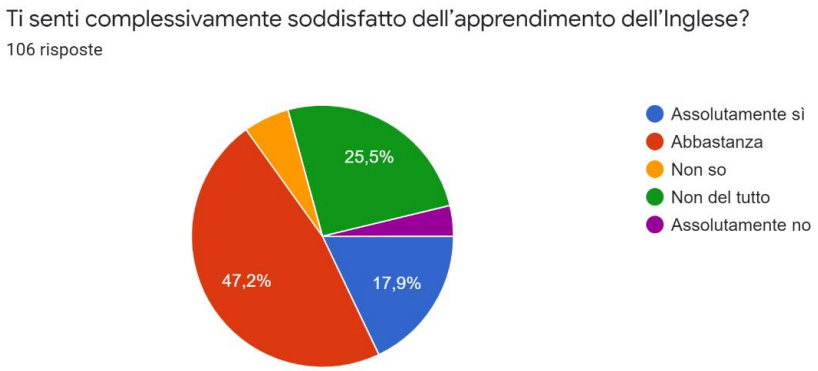


Figure 3.6

As can be seen from the graph, the feedback received from participants regarding their level of satisfaction with learning English is mixed. In fact, out of 106 students, 19 (17,9%) declare that they are absolutely satisfied, 50 students (47,2%) feel quite satisfied, 27 students (25,5%) answered "Not completely" and 6 of them (5,7%) do no expose their own judgment by stating "I don't know". Finally, 4 students (3,8%) declared not to be satisfied with their level of English learning.

Compared to the other graphs that generally showed positive answers regarding the perception of English, for the first time a considerable part of the subjects (about the 30%) answered negatively to the question, i.e. they claimed they were just a little or not at all satisfied with their learning.

Item 10 - To whom do you attribute the merit (or demerit) of your English level?

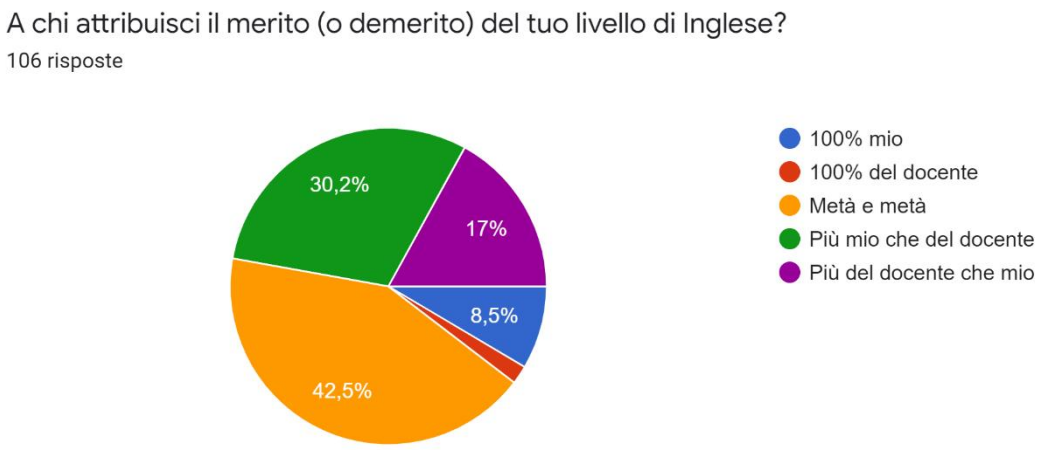


Figure 3.7

This question reflects the vision and importance that the student attaches to the figure of the teacher. The pie chart above shows how 45 students (42,5%) believe that their level of English is equally dependent on both the teacher and the learner, followed by 32 students (30,2%) who claim that their knowledge of English is due more to themselves and only partly to the teacher. Following this, 18 students (17%) responded "My level of English depends more on the teacher than on me". In contrast, only 9 students (8,5%) claim that their knowledge of English is only dependent on them. Finally, 2 students (1,9%) believe that the merit of their English level depends exclusively on the teacher.

The last three questions in this session concern the learner's autonomy and degree of responsibility regarding the foreign language.

Item 11 - Can you identify your weaknesses and strengths in English?

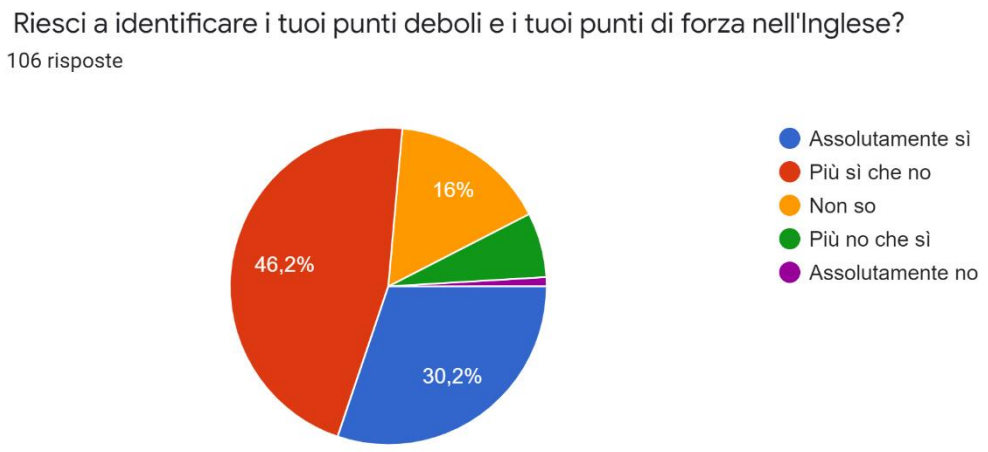


Figure 3.7

From the answers obtained to this question, it can be noticed that a good portion of subjects are able to identify most of their weaknesses and strengths in English. In fact, 49 students (46,2%) answered the question "More yes than no", followed by 32 students (30,2%) who answered "Absolutely yes". 17 students (16%) cannot identify their strengths and weaknesses in English and 7 of them (6,6%) answered "More no than yes". Finally, 1 student (0,9%) declares to be absolutely unable to identify weaknesses and strengths in the foreign language.

Item 12 - Can you monitor your progress without a test and the consequent assessment of the teacher?

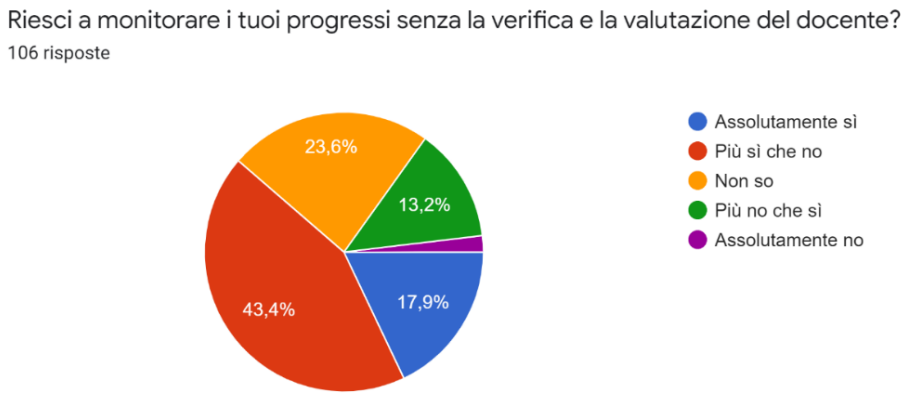


Figure 3.8

To the question " Can you monitor your progress without a test and the consequent assessment of the teacher?" 46 students (43,4%) answered "More yes than no", 25 students (23,6%) answered "I don't know", 19 students said they were absolutely aware of their progress in the language, 14 participants (13,2%) answered "More no than yes" and only 2 students answered "Absolutely no".

Overall, more than half of the respondents said they were able to monitor their progress without the teacher's verification and assessment. The rest of the students do not seem able to do so, or do not know how to express a judgement about it.

Item 13 - Are you willing to work on your own to improve your English level?

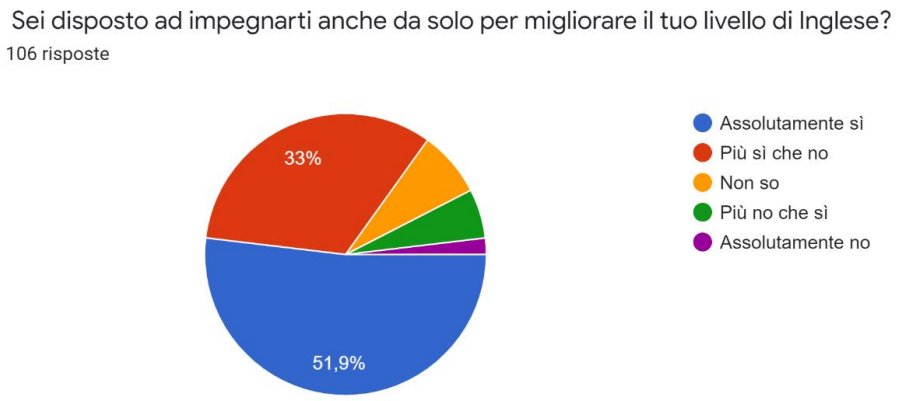


Figure 3.9

The data emerging from this answer is quite encouraging, in fact, the graph above shows that more than half of the students, precisely 55 (51,9%), are willing to commit themselves to improve their English. 35 students (33%) responded equally positively with "More yes than no". However, there are 8 students (7,5%) who are uncertain. On the contrary, a small portion of participants responds negatively, specifically: 6 students (5,7%) respond "More no than yes" and 2 learners (1,9%) say they are not at all willing to commit themselves to achieving better results in English.

The second section of the student's questionnaire is made up of twelve items, some of which consist of grids composed of several items. This part mainly concerns the

learning of English in the classroom, with a focus on the figure of the English teacher and their habits, approaches and methodologies used in the classroom. Analysis of the data in this part will be important later to understand whether the teacher uses a competence-based teaching approach.

3) English at school

Item 14 - Has your teacher ever asked you what your preferred learning techniques and strategies are? (For example, the fact that you remember the content of an image better instead of an audio, or that you prefer to work alone instead of working in a group...).

Figure 3.10

As often mentioned in the first chapter, a teacher should be interested in all those psychological aspects that affect and/or alternate the student's learning, regardless of the school subject they teach.

In this regard, the above pie chart shows a disconcerting fact: more than half of the students (precisely 60, or 56,6% of them) stated that their English teacher was never interested in the techniques and strategies preferred by the pupils. On the other hand, 46 students (43,4%) claimed the opposite, i.e. the teacher asked them about their favourite learning styles and methods.

Item 15 - If you answered yes to the previous question, in which way have you been asked?

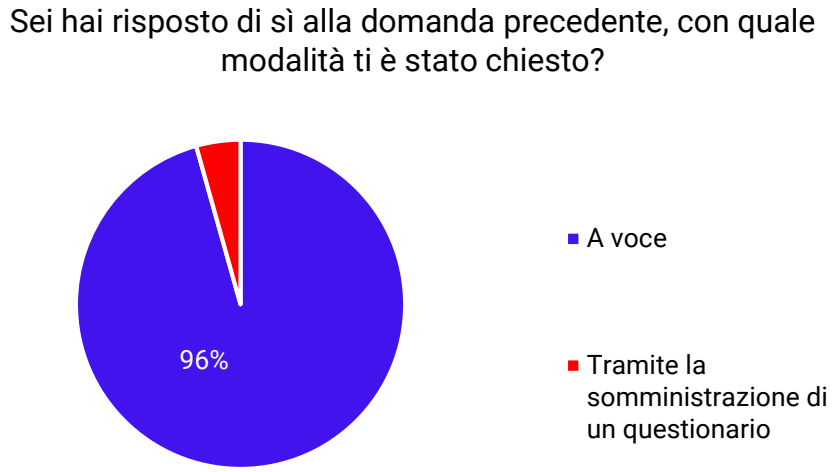


Figure 3.11

Among those who answered positively to the previous question, the vast majority affirmed that their teacher asked them about their learning preferences and style orally/by voice, namely the 96% - 44 students. Instead, the administration of a questionnaire/survey by the teacher in order to find out the characteristics and learning preferences was experienced by only 1 student.

Item 16 - Has your English teacher ever mentioned the European language portfolio to you? If you answered yes to the previous question, how often do you use it in class to reflect on your learning process and achievements?

Figure 3.12

According to figure 3.12, over 90% of students have never heard of the European Language Portfolio, the official document recognised by the Council of Europe, as well as a planning, evaluation and self-assessment tool, closely linked to the concept of student autonomy and which should be promoted by language teachers. In contrast, 10 students say that their English teacher has already spoken to them about the ELP. Moreover, to the question "If you answered yes to the previous question, how often do you use it in class to reflect on your learning process and the results achieved?", 5 of the 10 students who answered positively to the previous question answered "Often" and the remaining 5 answered "Rarely".

In essence, from the dates collected relating to these two questions, the vast majority of teachers have never provided information to their students about the ELP.

Item 18 - Before starting a new topic, does your English teacher explain the reason why it is important to know it? (i.e. What will you be able to do at the end of the unit?)

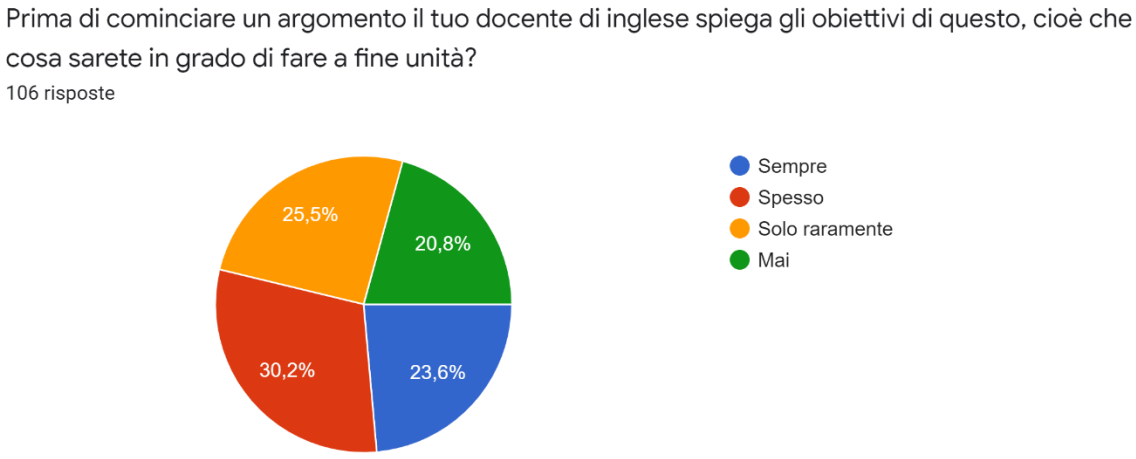


Figure 3.13

It is often said that knowledge of the goals, or "what you will be able to do" at the end of a unit is important in order to increase motivation in students (albeit extrinsic). With regard to the question above, the graph shows fairly homogeneous answers. In fact, 32 students answered "Often", followed by 27 who claimed "Only rarely". 23 students

answered "Always", whereas 22 students affirm that their teacher never explains the objectives of the new unit.

Item 19 - Do you think that it is it helpful for you that the teacher explains the objectives of the activities you carry out in class, so that you endeavour harder and can learn more easily?

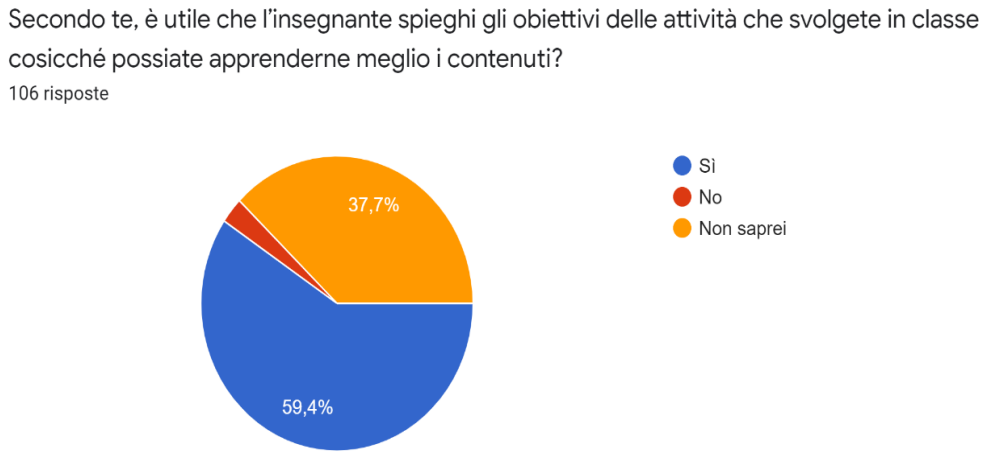


Figure 3.14

According to the figure 3.14, 63 students (37,7%) believe that clarifying the objectives of the content/topic faced in class can help them learn more easily. On the contrary, 3 students think that this is not important at all and does not affect their school performance. 37,7% of the learners replied "I don't know", thus providing a neutral answer, not relevant for the research purposes.

Item 20 - If you answered yes to the previous question, why do you think it is important to know the learning objectives?

The above question was open and optional in order to obtain individual and "qualitative" answers. 58 of the participants answered the question and the answers are shown in the original format in the table below.

Table 2. **Reasons why it is important to know the learning objectives according to the interviewed students.**

per capire meglio a che obiettivi riusciremo potenzialmente ad arrivare finita l'unità
Perché sai quali saranno i risultati sperati, sai cosa andrai incontro e molto importante è sai come potrai usufruirne nella lingua inglese.
Dà una motivazione reale che inciti lo studio
per saperci prefissare dei punti fondamentali per apprendere al meglio la lingua
Per capire in quali casi è utile utilizzarli
Sei motivato
Conoscere e gli obiettivi dell'argomento di cui si andrà a trattare mi permette di studiare ed apprendere con più facilità
Per capire immediatamente quale sarà l'argomento che tratteremo e cosa imparerò a fine capitolo.
In questo modo posso sapere come potrò usare le nozioni apprese in futuro
Perchè così la metà da raggiungere è chiara e non si rischia di fare confusione
Perché con esso saprai cosa stai andando ad imparare
Perchè so dove mi porterà lo studio
Per sapere se mi serviranno a qualcosa al di fuori della scuola
Perchè altrimenti studio senza sapere il motivo
Fare una cosa senza motivo non ha senso
per apprenderne meglio i contenuti
Per fare l'attività sapendo a cosa serve
perchè si è più motivati
Per sapere cosa è necessario apprendere meglio
Perché magari gli alunni pensano che quell'argomento sia superficiale e non lo studiano.
Per capire meglio come e cosa studieremo
Aiuta a impegnarsi
Perchè in questo modo gli alunni possono capire quando sia importante studiare inglese
Per sapere come regolarmi
Per essere più consapevole di quello che si sta imparando
una volta che ti viene dato un'obbiettivo sei più incoraggiato a raggiungerlo
Vorrei capire in che modo posso utilizzare le varie forme che imparo, se so farle ma non so utilizzarle non mi serve un granchè impararle
Dare un senso
È motivante e dà un quadro più completo di ciò che si sta facendo
Ti orienta
Cosicché posso farmi un'idea dell'argomento
Perché magari ti stimola di più ad impegnarti a studiarlo
Perché permette di capire se gli obiettivi sono stati raggiunti
Per apprendere meglio, quindi anche per capire se si sta sbagliando
Così da essere sicuri del risultato che si ottiene finendo il determinato argomento
Per sapere quando e come bisogna utilizzare le regole di grammatica o i vocaboli spiegati nel l'unità.

Per me non è indispensabile
Così ci aiuta a vedere se raggiungiamo quegli obiettivi e, di conseguenza, migliorare il nostro livello di inglese
E importante conoscere gli obiettivi dell'apprendimento perché ci permette di capire quali conoscenze e capacità apprenderemo.
Normalmente se una cosa riguarda me o comunque è di mio interesse cerco di apprenderla cercando di impegnarmi per lo più su esso. Dare importanza a tutto in modo equo spesso è un ostacolo, una situazione svantaggiosa.
Perché così sappiamo quale vantaggio ci può dare
Posso migliorare l'apprendimento
Sapendo ciò che riusciremo a fare una volta terminata l'attività già dall'inizio saremo invogliati a studiarla e ad impegnarci di piú.
Perché in questo modo noi alunni siamo più motivati a studiarlo per raggiungere gli obiettivi prefissati.
Voglio sapere quello che riusciremo a imparare dopo la sua spiegazione
Mi aiuta a monitorare le mie capacità e il mio avanzamento della lingua, permettendomi poi di affrofondire individualmente gli argomenti trattati
Ti porta a capire quello che stai facendo senza eseguire esercizi in modo meccanico
Aiuta gli studenti a focalizzarsi meglio e a porsi un obbiettivo.
Secondo me perché così a fine unità possiamo capire se abbiamo compreso o meno gli argomenti e se sappiamo applicare le nostre conoscenze in ogni ambito.
Per applicare le tecniche in un discorso
Perché ti consente di studiare con più consapevolezza.
Per capire fino a dove si può arrivare ad imparare in quel determinato corso di studi
Per sapere in che situazione applicarli

Translating all the above-reported answers is not very fruitful for research purposes, therefore the researcher considered it appropriate to group similar answers. When asked "Why is it important to know the learning objectives?" some students stated that this helps them find meaning in what they do, to know the real-life applications of the acquired knowledge ("To know in what situation to apply them"; "In this way I can know how I will be able to use the notions learned in the future"), and therefore to motivate them ("It gives a real motivation that encourages study"), as well as to study with greater awareness towards autonomy ("It helps me to monitor my skills and my progress of the language, then allowing me to deepen individually the topics covered").

The next questions are particularly aimed at getting to know the characteristics and peculiarities of the English teacher. As repeatedly claimed, in a competence-based

teaching the teacher is not only competent in their school subject, but the way they approach their students, their personality and their habits have a strong influence on the learner's success at school.

Item 21 - Indicate the situation that is closest to your experience. Your English teacher is...

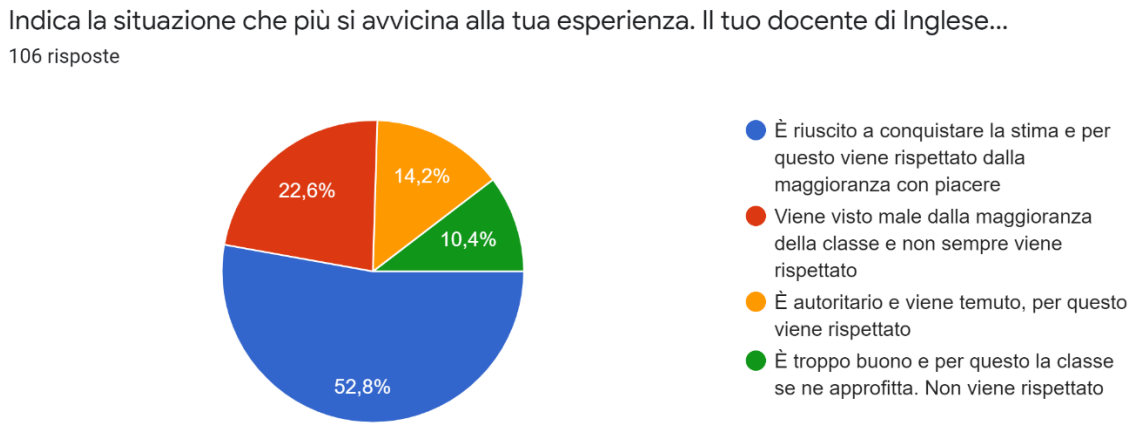


Figure 3.15

According to figure 3.15, more than 50% of the students claimed that their teacher has managed to win the esteem of the students and is therefore respected. To follow, 24 students (22,6%) said that their teacher is seen badly by the class, thus is not always respected. 15 students stated that their teacher is authoritarian and is feared by most of the class, therefore they are respected. Finally, 11 students (10,4%) affirmed that their English teacher is too permissive, so the class takes advantage of them and does not respect them.

Item 22 - Indicate the situation that is closest to your experience. Your English teacher is...

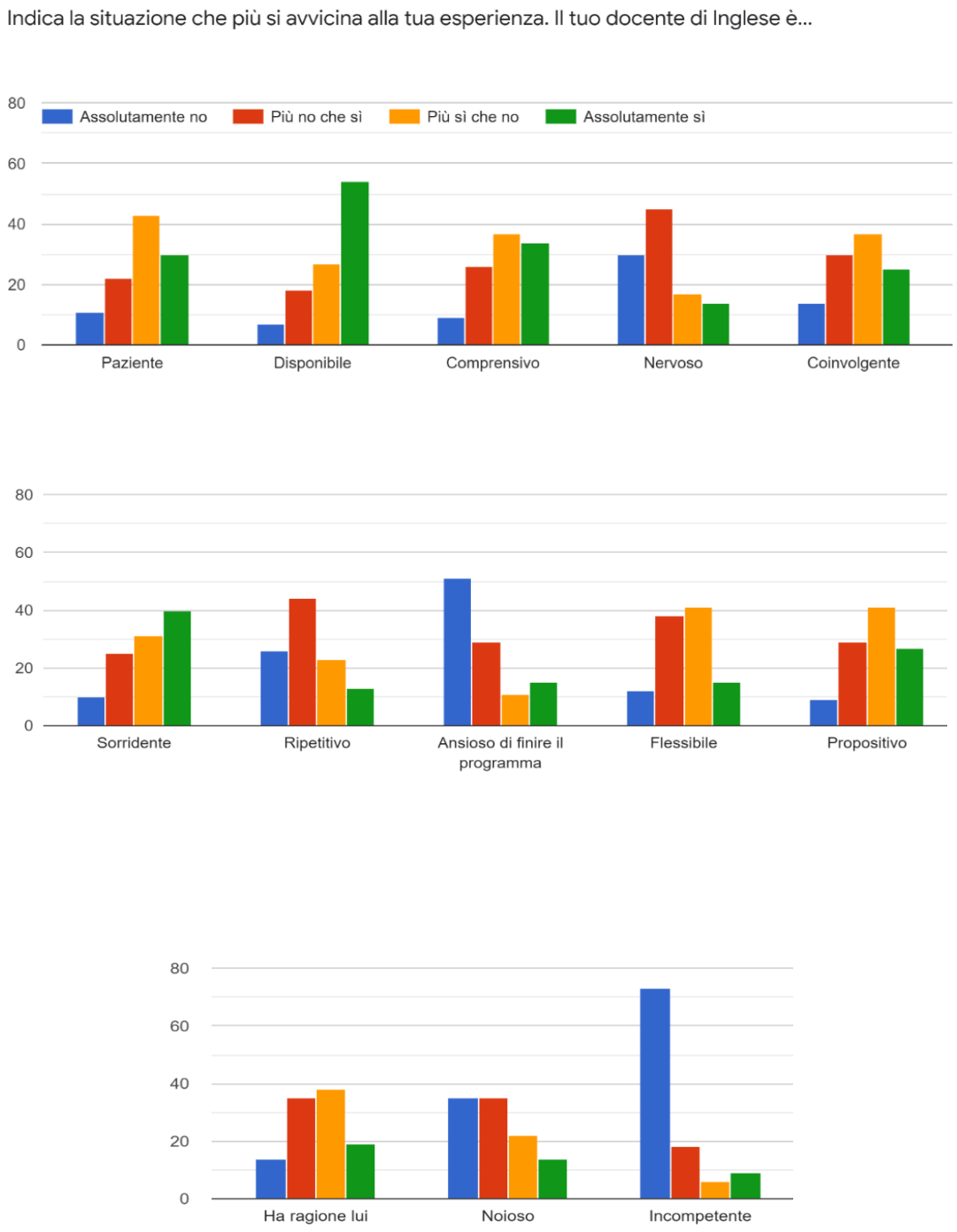


Figure 3.16

The question provided four possible answers whose range varied from "Absolutely yes" to "Absolutely no". The table below helps better understand the collected data.

"Absolutely yes" and "More yes than no" were considered positive answers, while "Absolutely no" and "More no than yes" were considered negative answers.

Table 3. **Characteristics of the English teacher according to the interviewed students.**

Teacher	Positive answers	Negative Answers
Patient	73	33
Available	81	25
Understanding	71	35
Nervous	31	75
Engaging	62	44
Smiling	71	35
Repetitive	36	70
Anxious to finish the curriculum	26	80
Flexible	56	50
Proactive	68	38
He is always right	57	49
Boring	36	70
Incompetent	15	91

Table 3.1

As it can be seen from table 3.1, students generally have a rather positive view of their teacher. In fact, most students tend to consider them patient (73:33 (e.g., 73 are the positive answers and 33 the negative answers)), available (81:25) and understanding (71:35). More than half also consider them to be quite engaging in the activities they do in class (62:44) and often wearing a smile (71:35). Among other things, data reveals that teachers are quite proactive (68:38). However, according to a good number of students, among the positive characteristics of the "good teacher" that have been listed in the table, flexibility seems to be one of features that teachers lack the most. In fact, out of 106 responses, 50 confirm that their teacher is little or not flexible at all.

As for the "negative" features of the teacher, the data collected seems to be encouraging. In fact, out of 106 students, 75 state that their teachers do not tend to be

nervous in class (74:31). 70 students believe that their English teachers are not repetitive compared to 36 who say the opposite (70:36). Another promising fact is provided by the well-known "anxiety to finish the curriculum", according to which most students feel that their teachers do not have any (80:26). Furthermore, 36 students think their teachers are boring, against 70 who think the opposite. In addition, the fact that the teacher is competent in their job is supported by the vast majority of students (91:15). Finally, 49 students believe that their teachers are always right, against 57 who say the opposite. However, it is not excluded that this item may have been slightly misinterpreted.

Overall, the data collected shows that students generally have a good view of their teachers. The results provided by the question regarding the various aspect characterizing the figure of the teacher (patience, helpfulness, understanding, etc.) are indicative of a teacher who wants to maintain a good atmosphere with their students and lower their emotional filter. The results are quite in line with the data collected in the previous question, where more than half of the learners claimed that they have a high opinion of their teachers.

Item 23 - How does your English teacher usually explain a grammar lesson?

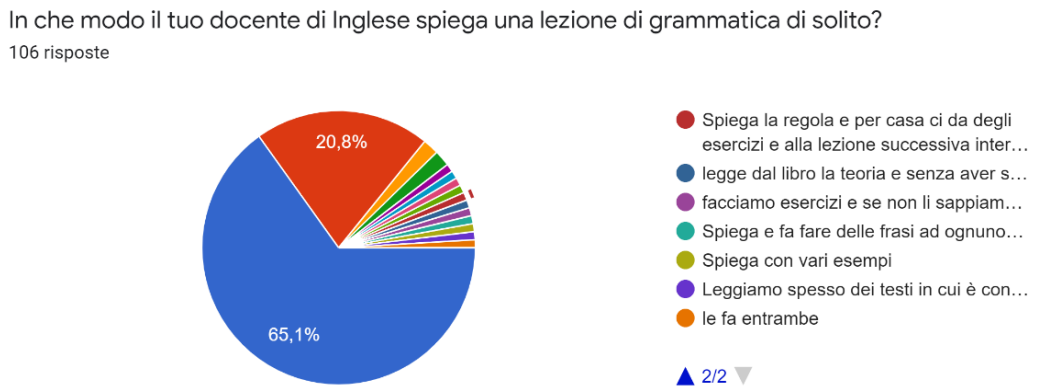


Figure 3.17

This question presented two types of answers provided by the researcher, namely "(The teacher) explains the rule, then you do exercises to understand if you can apply it" and "(The teacher) gives you clues or a sentence containing the rule and you have

to deduce it. Subsequently, you do exercises to see if you can apply the rule”. The researcher also gave "Other" as an option so that the students could better explain their own experience in their own words.

As shown in the figure above, 69 students (65,1%) claim that during grammar classes, the English teacher first explicitly explains the rule and then exercises of a fixation type take place. This type of approach is what is called "deductive" in the first chapter. On the contrary, 22 students (20,8%) state that grammar learning is more "inductive", i.e. the teacher gives clues or examples containing the grammar rule and the students have to deduct it. In this case the teacher does not conduct transmissive teaching but aims at the development of critical thinking and learner autonomy also through the activation of prior knowledge.

The remaining 14% of the subjects (15 students) provided answers that are listed below as follows.

Table 4. **Modalities of grammar teaching according to the interviewed students.**

1. Quasi mai spiega durante l’anno, ci dobbiamo arrangiare, lei semplicemente fissa la verifica. (2 answers) Hardly ever explains during the year, we have to help ourselves, she simply fixes the test. (2 answers).
2. Non faccio più grammatica da anni (5° liceo linguistico), ma comunque mi ricordo che iniziava con qualcosa che sapevamo già e univa il vecchio argomento con il nuovo, così da applicare subito e spingerci in un “terreno inesplorato” (2 answers). I haven't done grammar for years (5th language high school), but still I remember that it started with something we already knew and combined the old argument with the new, so that we immediately applied it and pushed ourselves into "unexplored territories (2 answers).
3. Ci da dei video con le spiegazioni da vedere a casa e in classe facciamo esercizi. Gives us videos with explanations to watch at home and in class we do exercises.
4. Molte volte in entrambi in modi Many times in both ways
5. Spiega e basta She just explains
6. Ci fa ragionare e arrivare alla regola Makes us reason and get to the rule
7. Spiega la regola e per casa ci da degli esercizi e alla lezione successiva interroga Explains the rule and at home he gives us some exercises and examines us in the next lesson
8. Legge dal libro la teoria e senza aver fatto esempi passa agli esercizi He reads the theory from the book and, without having made examples, moves on to the exercises.
9. Facciamo esercizi e se non li sappiamo fare oppure li faccio sbagliati ci spiega la regola

We do exercises and if we don't know how to do them or I do them wron threy explain the rule
10. Spiega con vari esempi Explains with different examples
11. Leggiamo spesso dei tesi in cui è contenuta la regola che successivamente ci viene spiegata e poi facciamo degli esercizi We often read texts containing the grammatical rule that will be subsequently explained, then we do exercises
12. Le fa entrambe Both ways
13. Spiega e fa fare delle frasi ad ognuno di noi Explains and makes us compose sentences

Table 3.2

Some of the answers provided by the students are considered similar answers to those proposed by the researcher, albeit in slightly different modalities. For instance answers 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 13 may be considered part of the deductive approach of grammar teaching. Answers such as 2, 6 and 11 are typical of the inductive approach, instead. Answers 4 and 12 fall under a mixed approach of grammar teaching, where both the deductive and inductive ways are employed by the teacher. Answer number nine is unclear and is therefore not considered for research purposes.

In summary, this data can suggest that the deductive approach is still today the most common way to teach grammar. In total, 78 students declare that their English teacher utilizes a deductive approach whereas 25 recognize that they are being taught English grammar through an inductive approach.

Item 24 - Indicate the situation that is closest to your experience. Your English teacher…

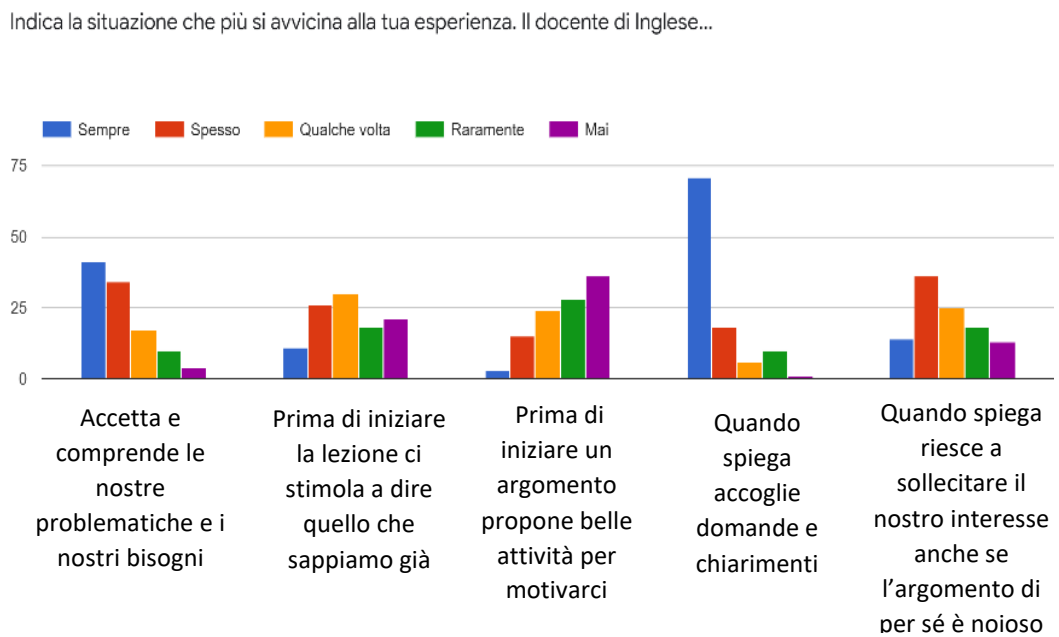


Figure 3.18

Figure 3.18 shows that teachers are generally available in understanding students' needs and requirements. In fact, out of 106 students, 75 of them state that this happens always or often, against 17 of them who answered "Sometimes", while only 14 state that they are little or not at all available in this respect.

As for the stimulation of prior knowledge, there is no specific trend in the responses, i.e. this type of activity is attested by about half of the participants. Specifically, 37 state that this activity is carried out with good consistency, while 39 say the opposite (rarely or never).

The third graph highlights the answers to the question "Before starting a topic, the teacher proposes nice activities to motivate us". In this case the trend of the answers is negative, as 64 students say that this happens never or only rarely. 24 of them answered Sometimes" and the positive answers amount to 18.

"When s/he explains, s/he welcomes questions and clarifications". The fourth graph shows how the vast majority of pupils responded positively (81), 6 responded "Sometimes" and 11 responded negatively (rarely or never).

The fifth graph highlights the data related to the item "When he explains, he succeeds in arousing our interest even if the topic is boring". Also in this case there is no specific trend of answers, even if positive answers slightly prevail (50:31, where 50

corresponds to "Always" and "often" and 31 to "Rarely" and "Never"). A considerable proportion of students responded that this happens sometimes.

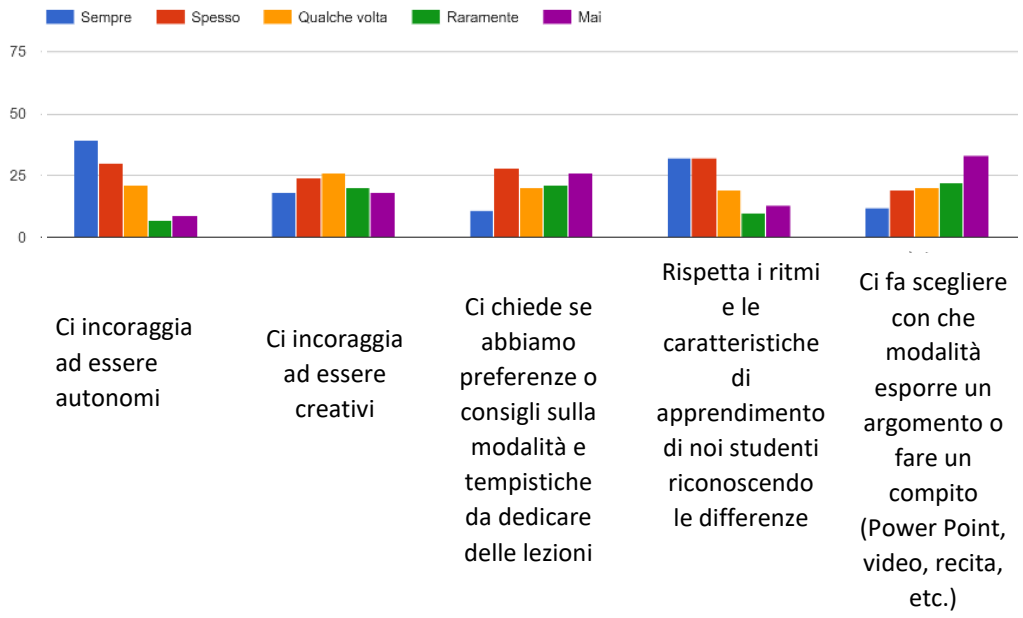


Figure 3.19

As it can be seen from figure 3.19, most teachers encourage their learners to be autonomous (69), while 16 students state the opposite. 21 students state that this happens sometimes.

The second graph of the figure investigates the frequency with which teachers encourage students to be creative. In this regard, no specific trend emerges. Specifically, 42 students gave positive answers, while 38 answered negatively. 26 of them finally gave the neutral answer "Sometimes".

The third graph concerns the frequency with which teachers ask for the participation of the class with regard to the modalities and timing of the lessons. Here the trend is negative, in fact there are 39 positive answers against 46 negative answers. The neutral answers amount to 20.

The fourth graph refers to the item "(The teacher) respects the rhythms and learning characteristics of us students by recognizing the differences". In this case the trend of the answers is clearly positive (64:23). 19 respondents gave a neutral answer.

The fifth graph reflects the frequency with which the teacher lets students choose the means of a work presentation or task execution (e.g. using PowerPoint, a video...). The response pattern is negative: 33 students said this never happens, followed by 22 who answered "Rarely". 31 are the positive answers. Neutral responses amount to 20.

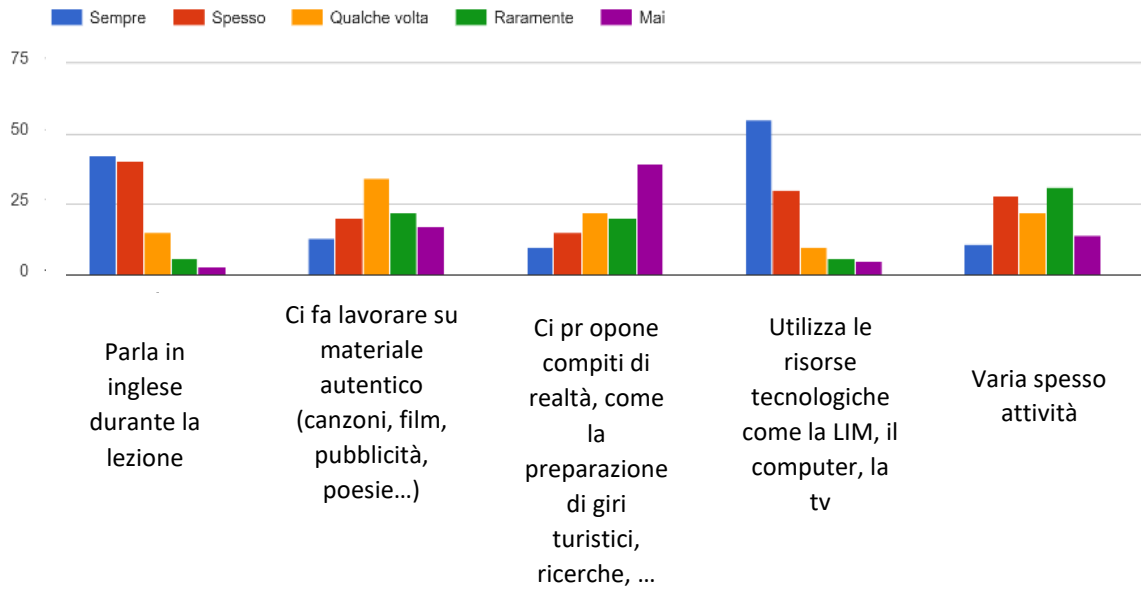


Figure 3.20

The first graph of figure 3.20 clearly highlights a positive trend of answers. In fact, 82 students declared that their teachers talk in English during the lesson, whereas 9 declared the opposite. 15 Students provided a neutral answer.

The second graph mirrors the frequency with which the teacher employs authentic materials to work on (e.g. videos, films, advertisements, poetry…). The numbers show that there is no particular trend among the respondents. Specifically, the majority of the respondents affirmed that this happens only sometimes, namely 34, while positive answers add up to 33 and the negative ones are 39.

A clear trend is visible in the third graph, where it is asked how frequently the teacher proposes real-life based tasks. The vast majority of the respondents (59) answered “Never” or “Very rarely”, while 25 students claimed that either this happens “Always” or “Often”. A relevant portion of the learners answered “Sometimes” (22).

The fourth graph shows the results concerning the frequency of use of technology in class, such as LIM, personal computers, tv and so on. The results explain that these devices are widely used by the teachers, 85 students in fact answered positively, while 11 stated the opposite and 10 “Sometimes”.

The frequency of flexibility of the activities conducted in class is represented in the last graph of Figure 3.20. The results do not polarize toward one of the two extremities but show a rather average outcome. Positive answers are 39 whereas the negative ones are 45. Neutral answers amount to 22.

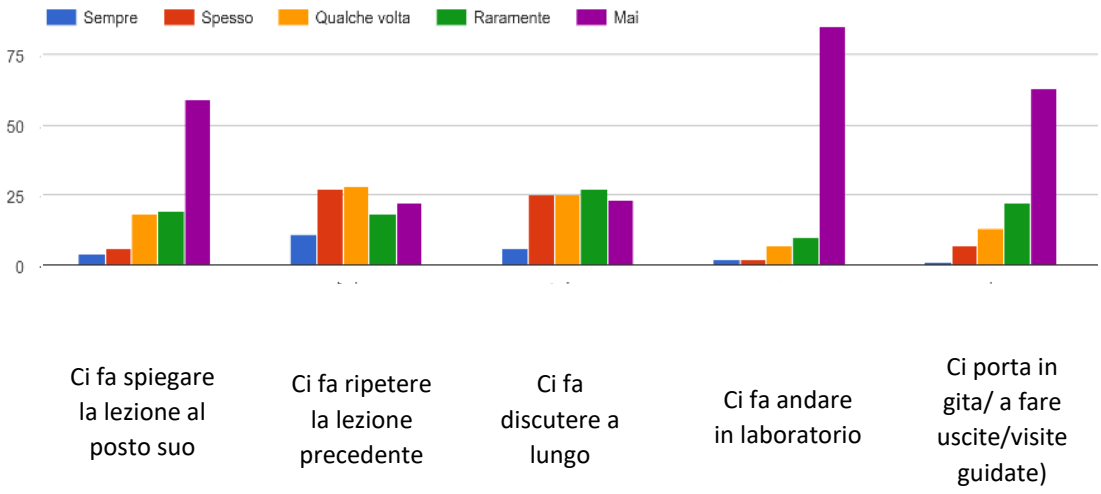


Figure 3.21

The first graph of figure 3.21 clearly indicates that the practice of letting students explain the class after having it prepared at home is not a common activity. In fact 78 respondents state that this either never happens or only rarely. Neutral subjects amount to 18, whereas 10 students have answered positively.

Results are slightly negative on the frequency of letting students repeat the previous classes, as shown in the second graph. As a matter of fact, 38 students affirm that this occurs always or often, while 40 claimed that this either never happens or only rarely. The neutral option has received the highest number of consensus (28).

The data collected about the frequency of discussions conducted in class illustrate an even distribution among the available answers, as it can be noted from the third graph.

The total of negative answer adds up to 40, while the positive ones amount to 38. The response with the highest number of respondents is “Sometimes”, namely 28.

Of particular interest is the outcome concerning the frequency of lab attendance, which is shown in the fourth graph. Out of 106 students, 85 declared that they never experienced the use of the computer room for English learning, followed by 10 who claim that they go only “Rarely”. Only 4 people provided positive answers while 7 answered neutrally.

The fifth graph illustrates the frequency with which the teachers take the students outside to run real-life activities, such as guided tours, school trips etc… Such experiences are claimed to be conducted hardly ever (22) or never (63). The positive answers total 8, while 13 is the number of respondents who state “Sometimes”.

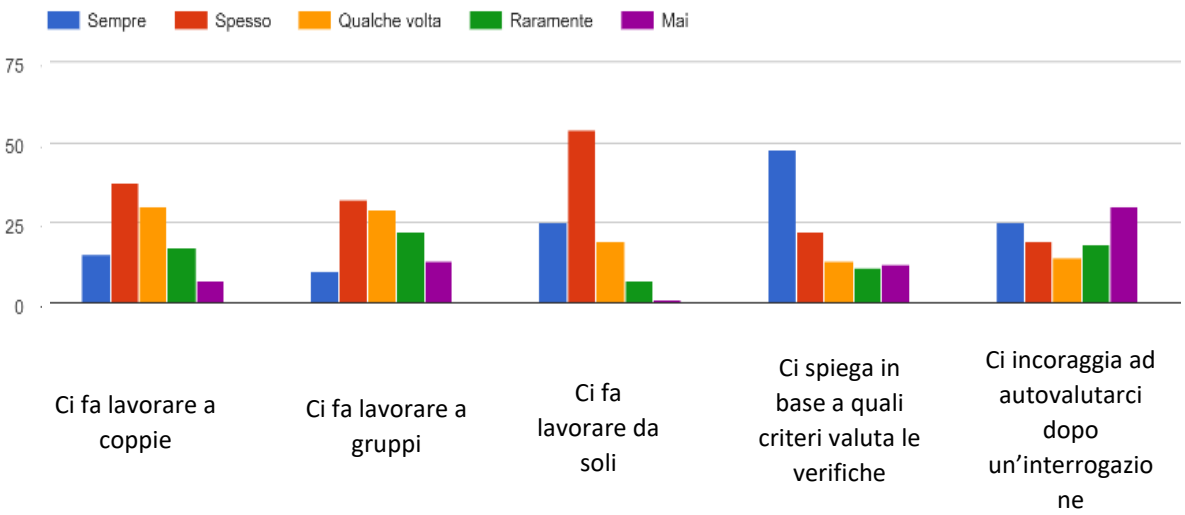


Figure 3.22

The first graph of Figure 3.22 shows the frequency with which the teacher makes students work in pairs. About half of the participants (specifically, 52) in the questionnaire state that this happens with a good frequency, while 24 students declare that this practice never or only rarely happens. 30 students gave a neutral response.

The second graph illustrates the frequency with which students work in groups. In this case there is no specific response trend, although the number of positives slightly exceeds the number of negatives (42:35). The neutral responses are 29.

The third graph of the figure above shows the frequency with which students work alone in class. Here the trend of responses is clearly positive, in fact, out of 106 respondents, 79 of them say that this practice is very usual against 26 who state the opposite. 19 are the students who answered "Sometimes".

From the first three graphs it appears clear that the most common practice in the classroom is working alone (79), followed respectively by working in pairs (52) and by working in groups (42).

The last three graphs highlight the habits relating to the test and the evaluation.

The fourth graph in figure 3.22 shows the results related to the item "(The teacher) explains us the criteria against which she evaluates the tests". It can be seen here that the answers have a positive trend, in fact 70 students say that this happens "Often" or "Always". 23 respondents answered "Never" or "Rarely". 13 individuals answered "Sometimes".

The fifth graph reflects the frequency with which the teacher invites students to self-assess following a written or oral text. The graph shows a slightly negative response trend. In particular, 44 students say that this happens with a high frequency and 48 of them state the opposite. 14 students gave a neutral response.

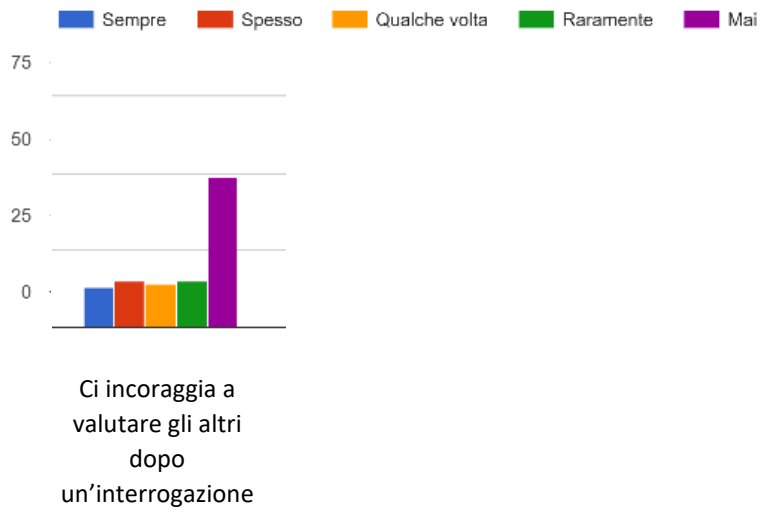


Figure 3.23

The graph from Figure 3.23 reflects the data collected on the frequency with which the teacher encourages students to evaluate others. It can be observed that the response trend is strongly negative, since out of 106 respondents, 49 state that this never happens and 15 that this only rarely happens, while 28 students report that this happens with a high frequency. 15 students answered "Sometimes".

The last part of the third section consisted of an open question, i.e. students were asked to indicate five characteristics that make an English teacher an “ideal teacher”.

Item 25 – Enlist the 5 characteristics of your ideal English teacher

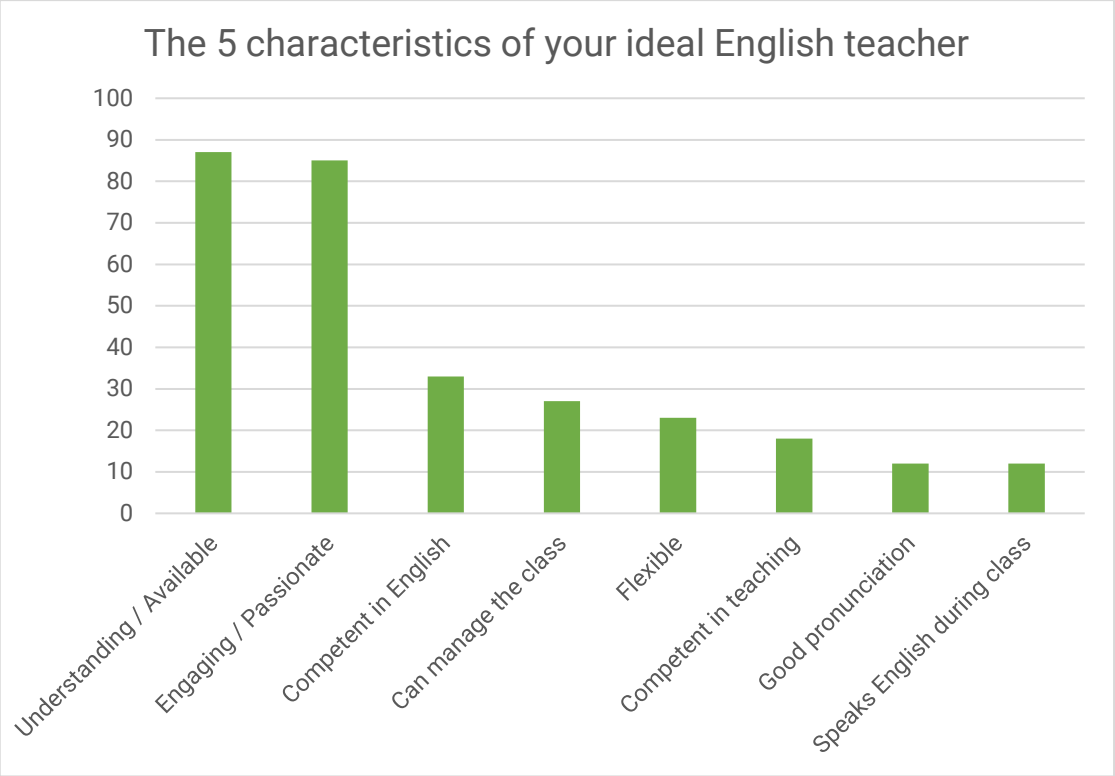


Figure 3.24

Item 25 consisted of an open question concerning the ideal characteristics of the English teacher for the students answering the questionnaire. The choice of an open question was picked by the researcher in order to leave room to the respondents to better express their opinions and feelings and to obtain more qualitative data.

The data collected has been grouped into eight main characteristics that have been found to be the most common among the respondents. In this manner, the researcher has also been able to extrapolate quantitative data from the open question scheme.

Figure 3.24 is the outcome of such extrapolation, while all the responses and comments of the respondents to the open question can be consulted in the appendix A (see page 194). Some answers have been evaluated as very peculiar and were not significant for the research purpose, thus have been isolated (for instance: “My ideal teacher should be young”).

The quantitative analysis shown in figure 3.24 shows that the characteristic “understanding / available” are the most demanded, since they have been quoted 87 times among the respondents, immediately followed by “engaging / passionate” requested by 85 students among the 106 surveyed.

Competence in English is another top priority for students, indeed 33 students placed it among their most requested characteristics for their ideal teacher.

What follows is the ability to “manage the class”, which 27 students find necessary for running an English teaching class.

“Flexibility” is at the fifth place in the ranking, totalling 23 students preferring teachers who are open about the types of activities, schedules and deadlines.

The three characteristics left at the bottom of the ranking are the following:

- “Competent in teaching”: 18 students
- “Good Pronunciation”: 12 students
- “Speaks English during class”: 12 students.

The fourth section of the student's questionnaire is made up of seven items, some of which consist of grids composed of several items. This part mainly concerns the learning of English outside of the classroom, focussing on the activities that students attend, with the purpose of investigating their informal learning processes.

4) ***English outside school***

Item 26 – Indicate the sentence that most reflects your thought

Figure 3.25

Figure 3.25 shows what is the perception of the effectiveness of learning English at school and outside of school. As it can be noted, 87,7% (93) of the respondents believe that "English is learned at school and applying it into authentic contexts in real-life". 9,4% (10) believe that "English can only be learned outside of school in real-life contexts". Conversely, the minority of the respondents, 2,8% (3), think that English is learned only at school studying and doing exercises.

Item 27 – Are you aware of the presence of numerous extracurricular activities in English that you could do?

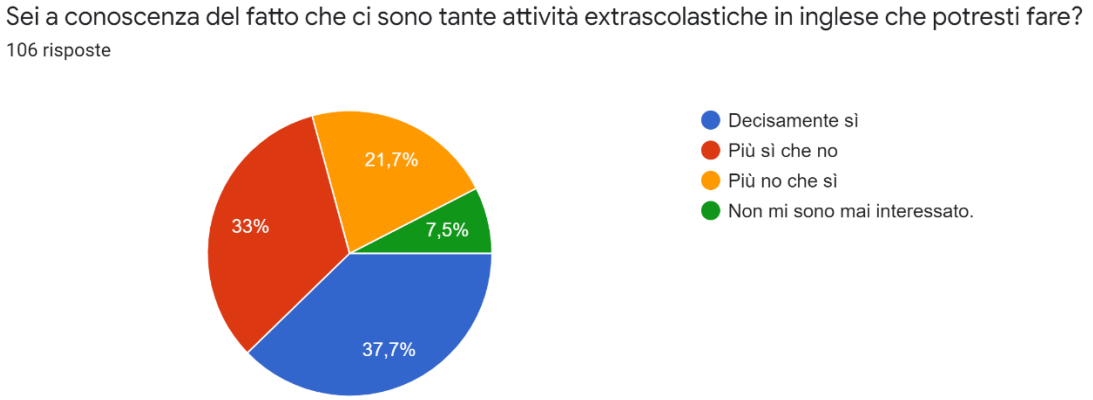


Figure 3.26

The item 27 investigates the awareness of the respondents of extracurricular activities in English. A not-too-vast majority of 37,7% (40) answered that they are definitely aware of such activities, while 33% (35) of the subjects consider themselves quite aware of them. 21,7% (23) respondents answered "More no than yes", whereas 7,5% (8) declares that they have never actively sought extracurricular activities in English, since they are not interested in them.

Item 28 – Indicate the frequency with which you carry out the following extracurricular activities (activities which you pick upon your own will)

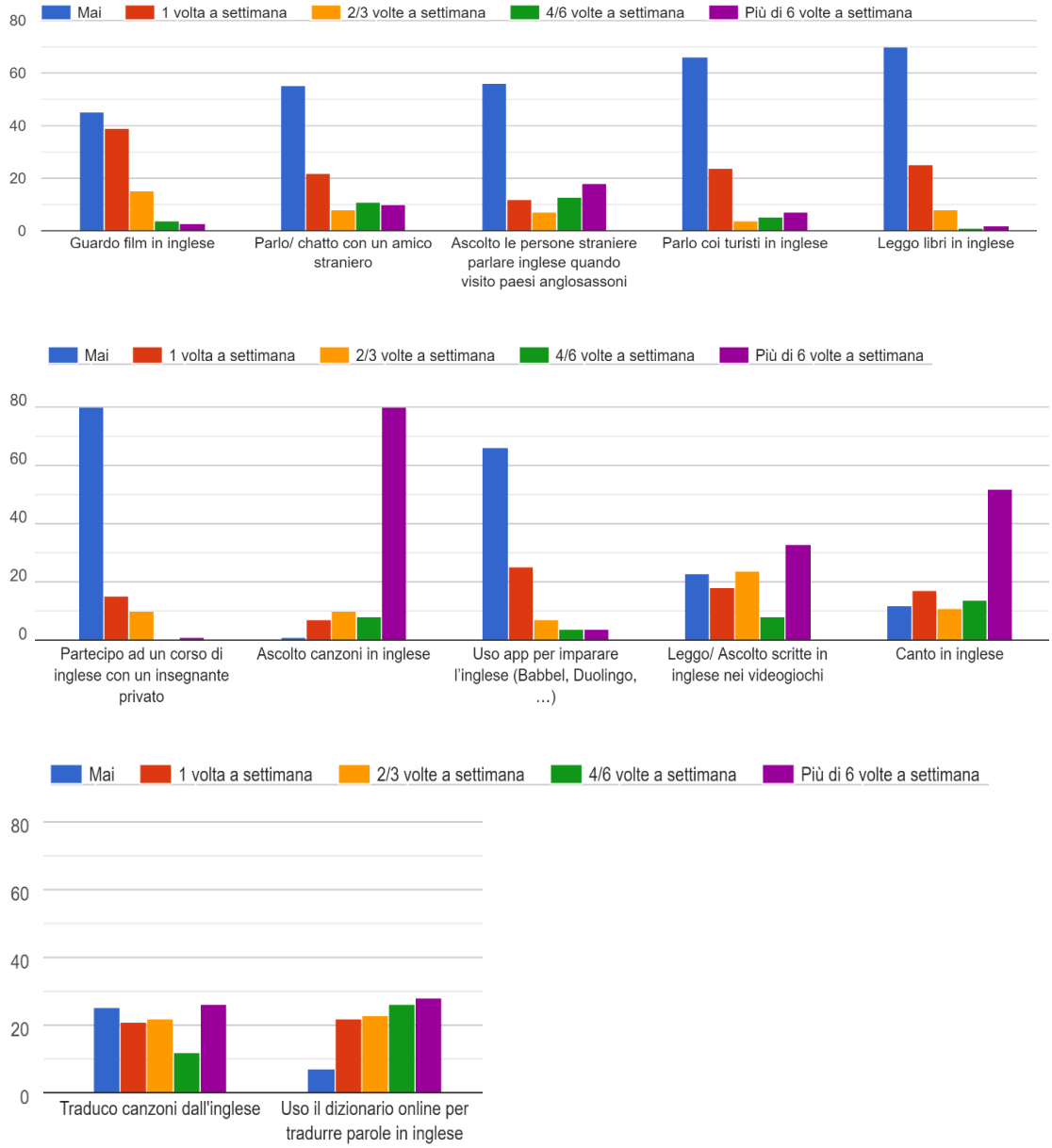


Figure 3.27

As it can be noted from Figure 3.27, the general trend in extracurricular activities is negative. Most of the activities have never been conducted by most of the respondents:

- "Watching movies in English": 45 respondents
- "Chatting or talking with a foreign friend": 55 respondents

- “Talking with foreigner when travelling abroad in English speaking countries”: 56 respondents
- “Talking with tourists in English”: 66 respondents
- “Reading books in English”: 70 respondents
- “I attend English courses with a private tutor”: 80 respondents
- “I use apps for learning English (Babble, Duolingo…)”: 66 respondents

An opposite trend can be found on those extracurricular activities that involve mediums such as music, videogames and on-line tools or platforms.
These activities are conducted by the respondents more than six times a week by the majority of the students, namely:

- “Listening to songs in English”: 80 respondents
- “Reading / listening writings in videogames”: 33 respondents
- “Singing in English”: 52 respondents
- “Translating songs from English”: 26 respondents
- “Using on-line translator for translating words in English”: 28 respondents.

Item 29 – Among the above-mentioned activities are there any that your teacher suggests you do?

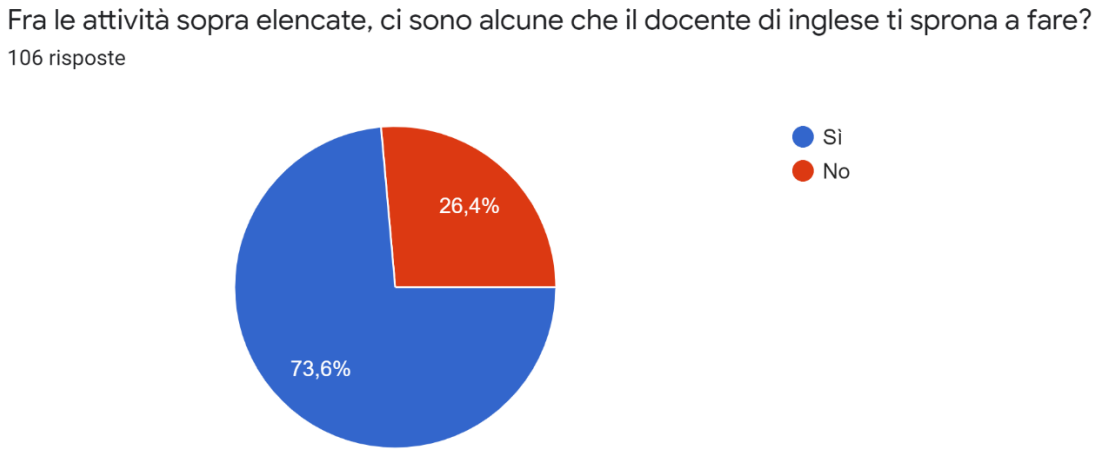


Figure 3.28

The activities of Item 28 are widely suggested by the teacher, as it can be inferred from the figure 3.28, confirmed by 73,6% (78) of the respondents.

Item 30 – If you answered positively to the previous question, which are the activities that your teacher suggests you do?

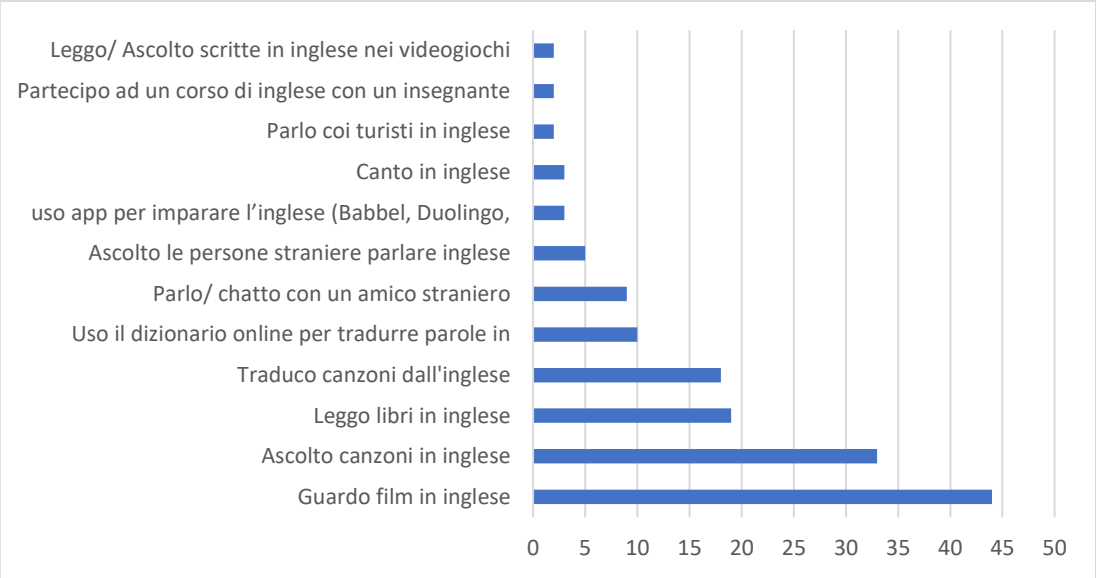


Figure 3.29

The most widely suggested activities among the respondents are "Watching films in English" (44) and "Listening to songs in English" (33). Still music-related, also "Translating songs from English" is a suggested common practice (18) together with "Reading books in English" (19).

Item 31 – Do you think that the above-mentioned extracurricular activities are in some way better compared to the ones you do in class?

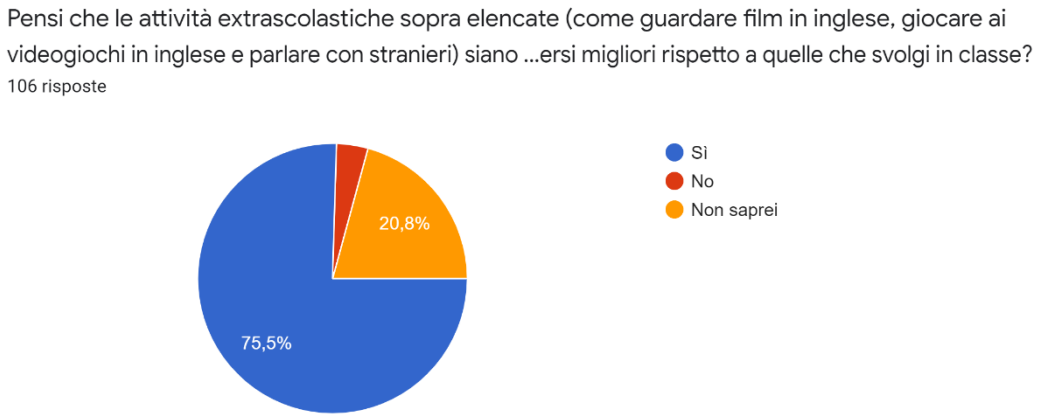


Figure 3.30

A very interesting response is provided by respondents in item 31. Figure 3.30 shows how 75,5% (80) of the students who answered positively, believe that these extracurricular activities are somehow more useful at learning English compared to the ones that are run in class. Only 4 respondents (3,8%) answered negatively, while 22 students (20,8%) is not sure.

Item 32 – If you answered YES to the previous question, why?

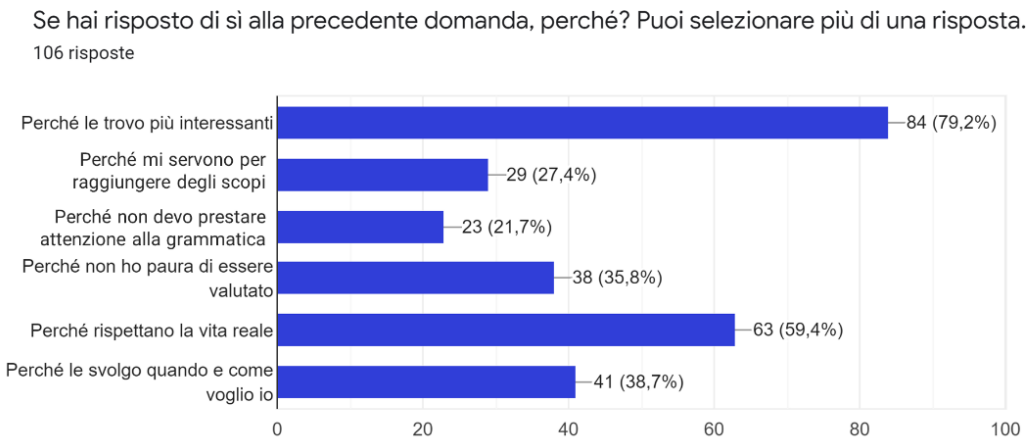


Figure 3.31

Among the reasons for preferring extracurricular activities compared to class, the most common one is “I find them more interesting” with 84 respondents (79,2%) followed by “They reflect real life” picked by 63 students (59,4%).
Thirdly, autonomy of method and time is picked as reason by 41 respondents (38,7%).

The fifth and last section of the student's questionnaire is made up of four items. This part aims at investigating the students' perception of distance learning.

5) ***Covid-19 emergency: distance learning***

Item 33 – Is your teacher conducting distance learning?

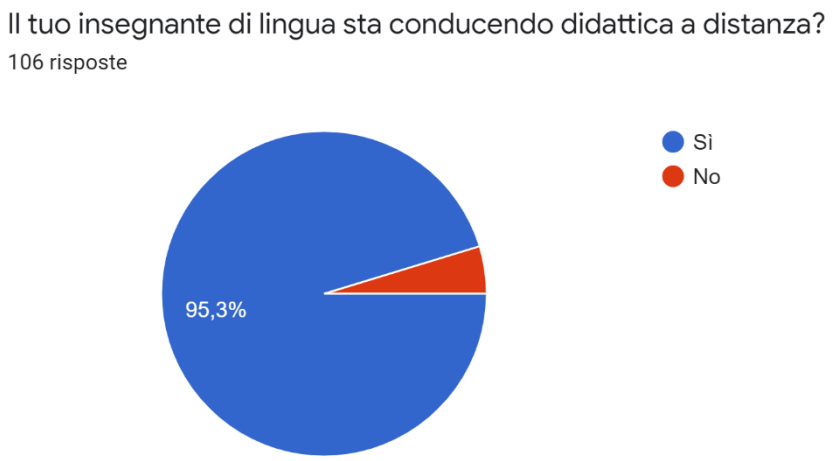


Figure 3.32

As emerges from Figure 3.32, 95,3% students (101) declare that their teachers are conducting distance learning.

Item 34 – Are you overall satisfied with this type of teaching?

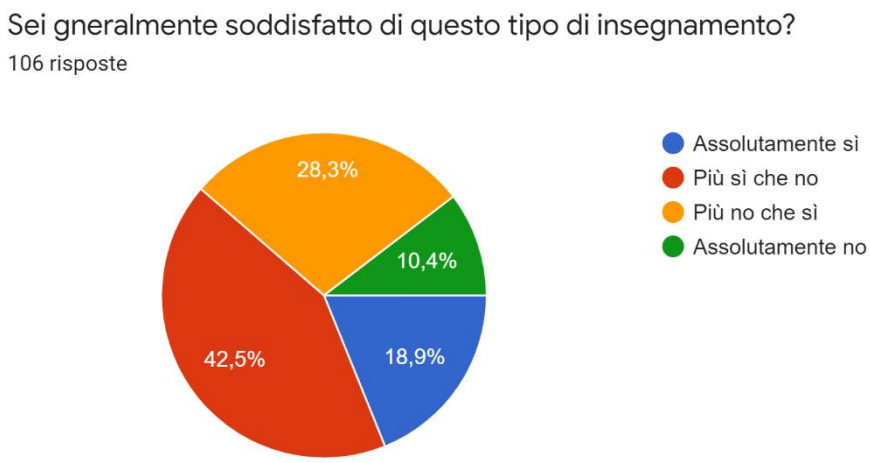


Figure 3.33

According to the data collected, 18,9 % (20) of the students said they are generally satisfied with this type of teaching, followed by 42,5 % (45) who answered "More yes than no". 28,3% of respondents were not very satisfied, while 10,4% (11) said they were absolutely dissatisfied.

Item 35 - Which issues have emerged the most? You can select more than one answer.

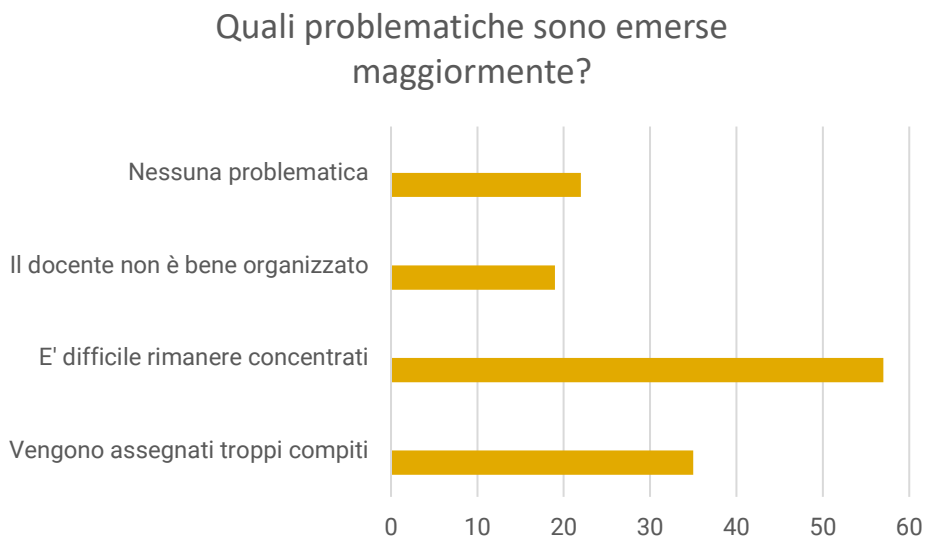


Figure 3.34

As it can be seen from the graph above, the majority of students (namely 53,8%, 57) believes that the biggest problem concerns the fact that it is very difficult to stay focused an concentrated. Another major problem is that according to 33% of students too many tasks are assigned (35). 19 respondents (17,9%) say that the teacher is not well organized.

Item 36 - Would you like your language teacher to integrate the traditional teaching method with distance learning in the future?

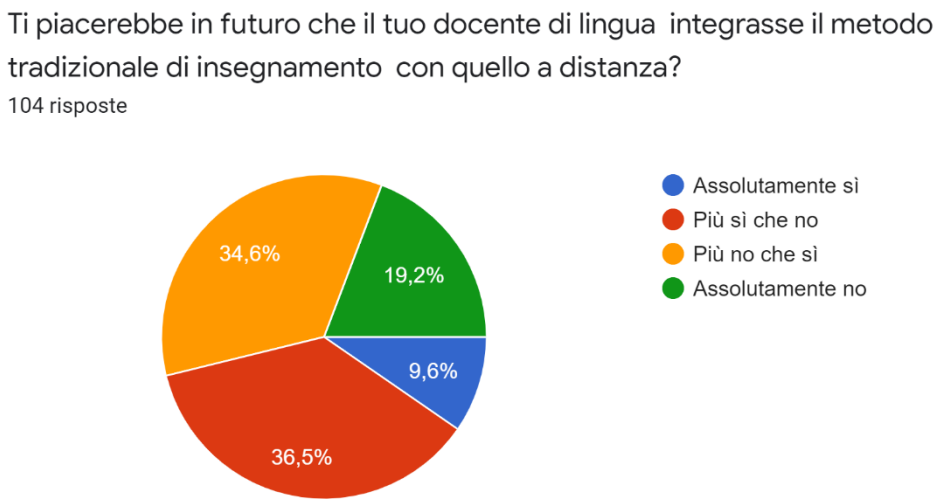


Figure 3.35

As the graph in Figure 3.34 shows, 36,5% (38) students answered "More yes than no" to the question, followed by 34,6% (36) who answered "More no than yes". The 19,2% (20) respondents answered "Absolutely not", while 9,6% (10) answered "Absolutely yes".

3.2. Teachers' questionnaires

As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, teachers 'questionnaires are made up of four sections. The first part of the questionnaire "Competence-based teaching in Language Education " consists of the introduction of the questionnaire and the request for consent for the processing of data, thus we will proceed directly to examine the second section, which had the same title of the first one.

2. **Competence-based teaching in Language Education**

The second section is made up of twelve items and is intended to obtain some information about the qualification of the respondents as well as the number of years of teaching, the type of school where they teach (first or second grade secondary school) and the language of teaching. If, on the one hand, this information ensures the anonymity of the subjects, on the other it allows the researcher to provide an outline of their profile (see Chapter 2, paragraph "The subjects").

Item 6- Have you participated in any work experience in the last twelve months to broaden the range of your teaching skills and/or improve your teaching strategies?

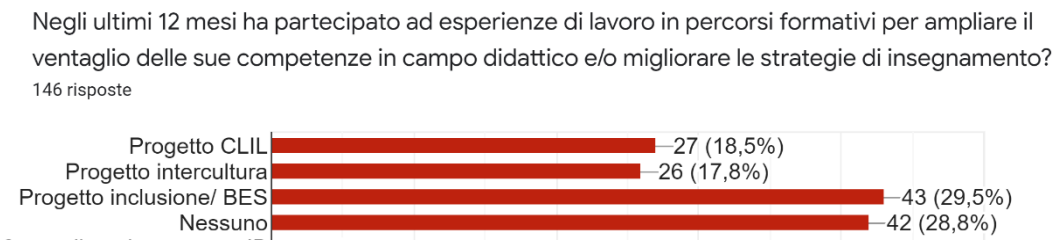


Figure 3.36

The graph in Figure 3.36 highlights the refresher courses that teachers attended to broaden their teaching skills and competences. This question included the possibility of indicating more than one answer. As it can be seen from the graph, 29,5% (43) of the teachers participated in courses related to the inclusion projects/ BES and aimed at the acquisition and/or extension of skills related to students with special educational needs. 18,5% (27) of the teachers stated that they participated in courses related to

CLIC (Content and Language Integrate Learning). Out of 146 respondents, 17,8% (26) claim that they have participated in the Interculture project. To follow, some teachers declare to have participated in different programmes such as:

- Erasmus +;
- "Flipnet, how to boost creativity" in order to become judge of Mooc debate;
- Course to become an Invalsi test developer;
- Online courses of various publishing houses, including the British Council and Oxford;
- Courses related to technological and educational innovation, including those on the "LIM" (Electronic whiteboard), Course TABLET, coding and computational thinking.

Finally, 28,85% (42) of the respondents affirm that they have not participated in any course in the last twelve months.

Item 7 - Do you use the ELP (European Language Portfolio) to encourage the learner to reflect on their learning process?

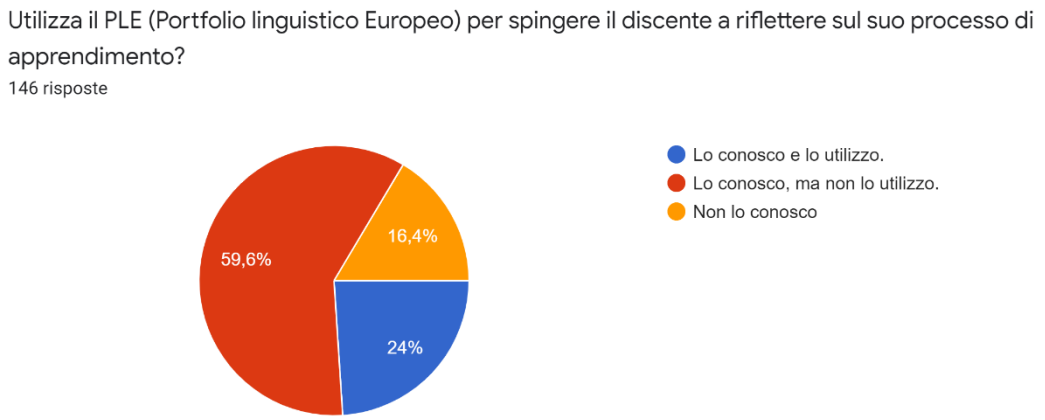


Figure 3.37

The figure above reflects the results regarding the knowledge and use of the ELP, as urged by the Council of Europe in order to encourage the learner to reflect on their learning process. The trend of the answers is negative, in fact the majority of the respondents, i.e. 59,6% (87), declare of being aware of this tool but not using it, against

24% (35) who say they employ it. Finally, the 16,4% (24) of the teachers who fulfilled the questionnaire state that they do not know the ELP and its implementations.

Item 8 - Do you think you are making proper use of the Competence-based approach to teaching, as suggested by the ELP?

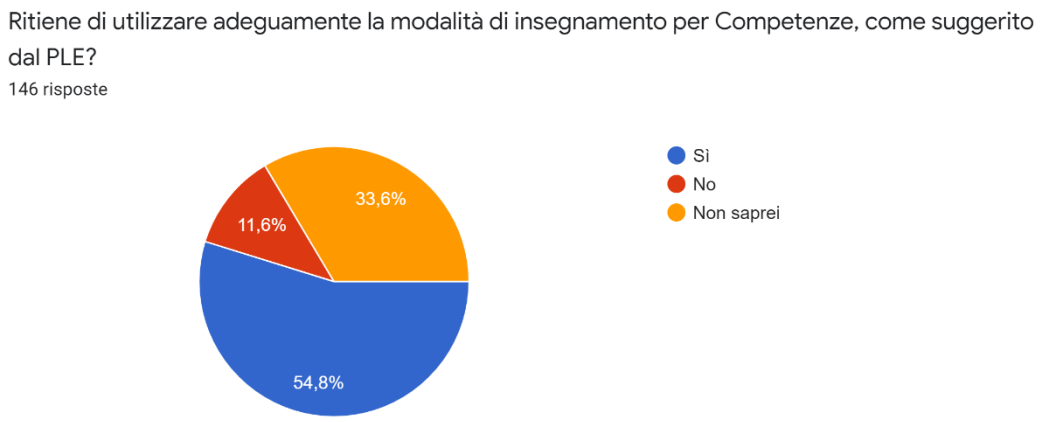


Figure 3.38

Figure 3.38 illustrates the answers given by teachers regarding the implementation of the competence-based teaching approach. 54,8% (80) of the respondents state that they believe they are using this type of approach properly, while, on the other hand, 11,6% (17) of the teachers believe that they do not use it properly. 33,6% (49) of the teachers are not sure they know all the didactic implications of this type of approach.

Item 9 - Have you ever used the EPOSTL (European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages) as a tool for self-assessment of your professional teaching skills?

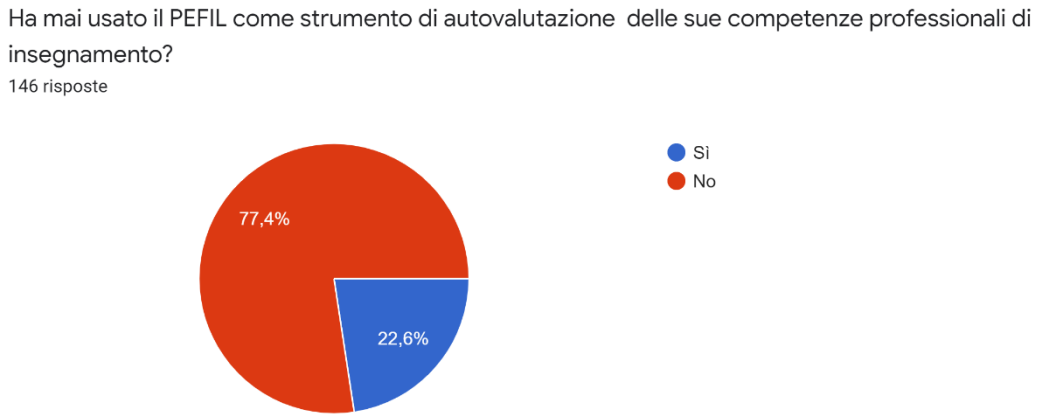


Figure 3.39

The graph in Figure 3.38 illustrates the data related to the use of the EPOSTL as a tool for self-assessment of their teaching skills and competences. The trend of responses is negative, in fact, 77,4% (113) of teachers report that they do not use this tool against 22,6% (33) who indicate the opposite.

Item 10 - How much has the competence-based approach changed the way you teach?

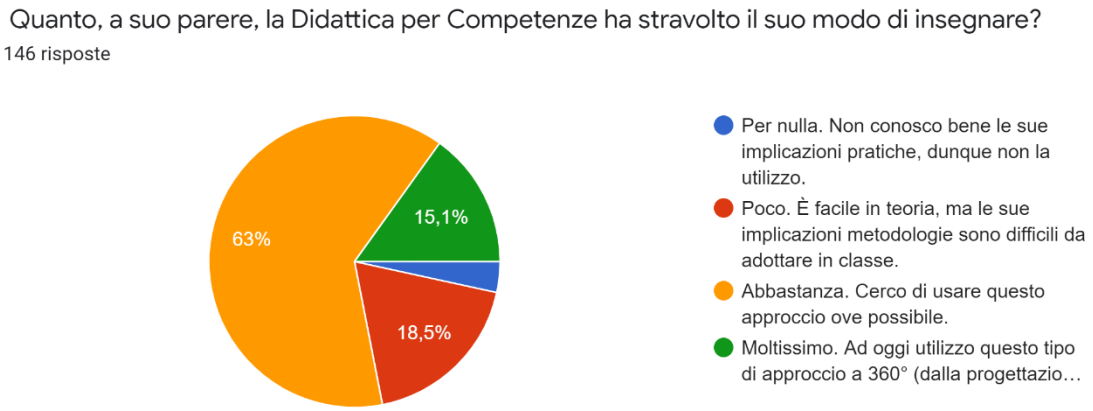


Figure 3.40

Table 37 shows how the competence-based approach has changed the way of teaching. It can be seen that more than the half of the teachers (63%, 92) states that it has quite changed their way of perceiving teaching and that they try to use the competence-based teaching approach when possible. Following this, 18,5% (27) respondents say that they put the competence learning approach into practice very little. In fact, they argue that it is easy in theory, but that its methodological implications are difficult to apply in the classroom. 15,1% (22) of the respondents claim that it has definitely disrupted their way of teaching and they try to apply it from teaching design to the competences evaluation. Finally, 3,4% (5) of respondents admit that they are not familiar with the practical implications of the competence-based teaching approach, so they do not use it at all.

Item 11 - On which aspects has the competence-based teaching approach enabled you to improve your professional figure? " The Competence-based teaching approach has allowed me to..."

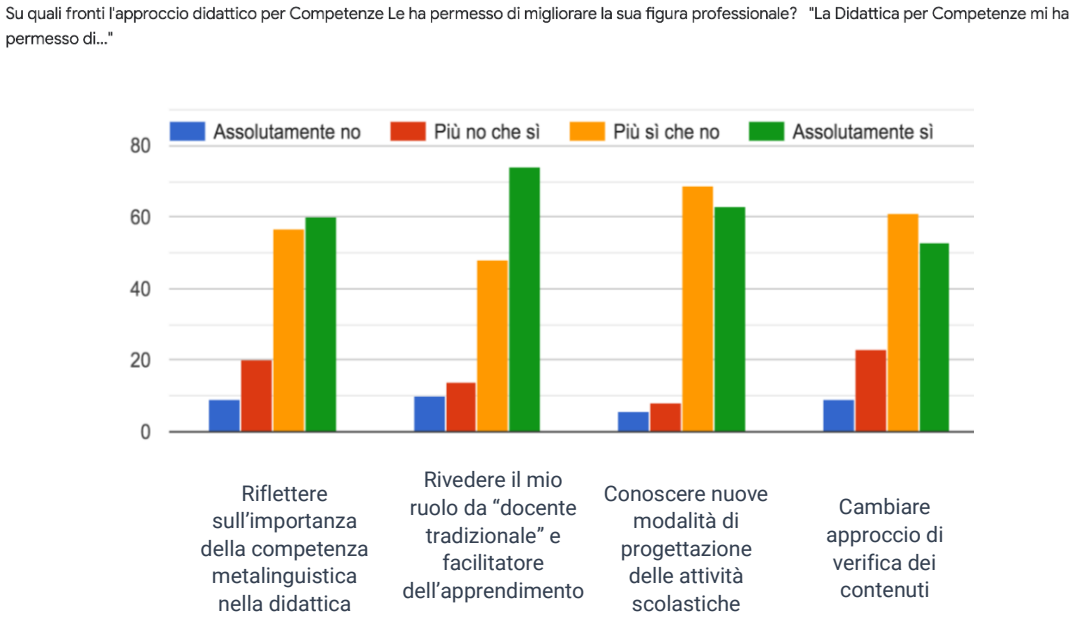


Figure 3.41

The graphs in Figure 3.41 show the data collected on the changes that have occurred in various aspects of teaching as a result of the knowledge and application of the competence-based teaching approach. More specifically, the researcher intended to verify on which aspects of teaching and how the competence-based approach has improved the professional profile of teachers.

As it can be noticed by the graphs above, there is a positive trend in the responses.

The first graph highlights the results of the data collected on the issue "The Competence-based approach allowed me to reflect on the importance of metalinguistic competence". In this respect, out of 146 respondents, 60 answered "Absolutely yes", followed by 57 who answered "More yes than no". The negative answers are twenty-nine, of which 20 respondents answered "More no than yes" and 9 responded "Absolutely no".

The second graph outlines the results of the question "Competence-based teaching allowed me to review my role from "traditional teacher" to "learning facilitator". Also in this case the trend of answers is clearly positive, in fact 74 teachers answered "Absolutely yes", while 48 answered "More yes than no". On the contrary, 14 respondents stated that competence-based teaching was not very impacting in their way of teaching and 6 teachers replied "Absolutely not".

The third graph in the figure above concerns the new ways of designing school activities. Out of 146 teachers, 63 state that, thanks to the discovery and application of competence-based teaching in the classroom, they have definitely broadened their knowledge of new ways of designing school activities, even if the highest trend of this graph is represented by the answer "More yes than no", which received 69 consents. Finally, 8 respondents answered "More no than yes" and 6 teachers claim that the competence-based teaching approach has in no way influenced the discovery of new ways of designing school activities.

The fourth graph concerns the change of contents assessment's approach. Even in this case the trend of responses appears positive: the majority of teachers (69) say that competence-based teaching has quite changed the contents assessment's approach, followed by 53 teachers who say that this type of approach has definitely changed this aspect. 14 teachers provided negative answers, of which 8 answered "More no than yes" and 6 "Absolutely no".

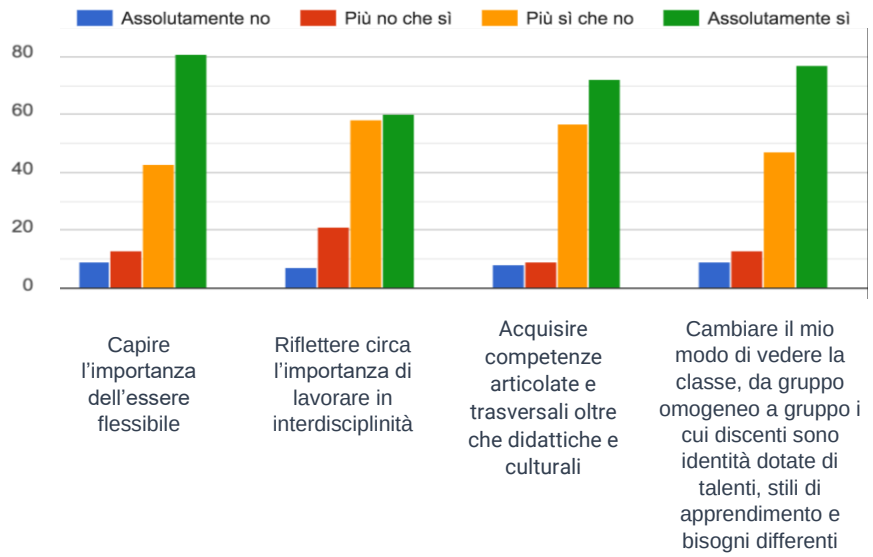


Figure 3.42

As for the graphs from figure 3.41, those from figure 3.42 show a decidedly positive trend of the answers.

The first graph is intended to verify whether teachers have become more flexible as a result of the application of the competence-based approach. In this respect, the majority of respondents (81) state that they have absolutely become more flexible, followed by 43 teachers who claim to have become quite flexible. Twenty-two respondents provided negative answers, of which 13 answered "More no than yes" and 9 "Definitely no".

The second graph in Figure 3.42 concerns the importance of working in interdisciplinarity. There were 118 positive responses, of which 60 respondents replied "Absolutely yes" and 58 "More yes than no". For what regards the negative answers, 21 teachers answered "More no than yes" and 7 "Definitely no".

The third graph answers the question "Competence-based teaching allowed me to acquire articulated and transversal competences as well as didactic and cultural competences". 72 teachers answered "Absolutely yes" and 57 answered "More yes than no". 9 teachers stated that it did not strongly influence the acquisition of transversal, didactic and cultural competences, while 8 stated that this approach did not influence in any way the acquisition of the above-mentioned competences.

The fourth and last graph of the figure 3.42 illustrates the data collected on the question "Competence-based teaching allowed me to perceive the class from a homogeneous group to a group where learners are identities with different talents, learning styles and needs”. In this regard, the response trend is still positive (124), of which 77 respondents answered "Absolutely yes" and 47 answered "More yes than no". Finally, 22 teachers provided negative answers, of which 13 answered "More no than yes" and 9 "Absolutely no".

Item 12 – How much time do you need on average to design the teaching activities per week?

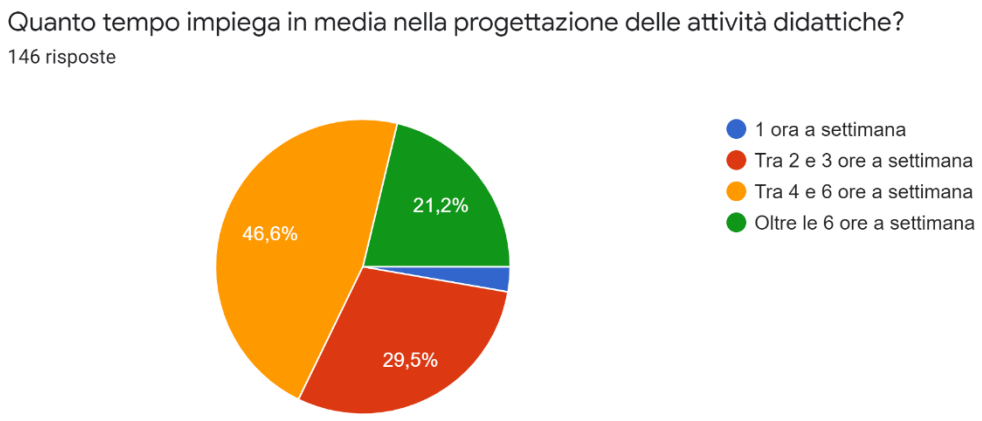


Figure 3.43

According to the data collected about the amount of time spent to prepare, organize and design the class activities, the graph above shows that the majority of the respondents (46,6%, 68) needs between four and six hours, followed by 29,5% (43) who claim to need between two and three hours. 21,2% of the respondents need over six hours a week, whereas 2,7% (4 teachers) employ around one hour a week in order to design their class activities.

Item 13 – Indicate the sentence that you believe to be closest to reality. "The didactic objectives and the evaluation criteria must be in the first place…"

Figure 3.44

Item 13 aims at investigating what is the teachers' approach in terms of curricular flexibility both on the didactic objectives and on the evaluation criteria.

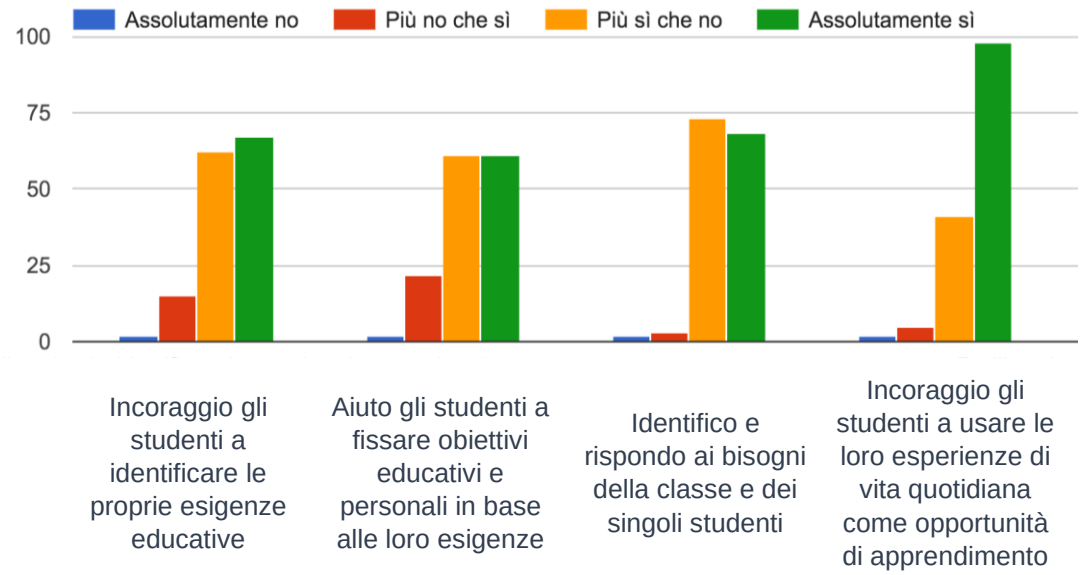
The large majority of the respondents (85,5% - 125) values adapting to the classroom context as priority, whereas almost the whole rest of the teachers interviewed believes that sticking to the needs of the disciplinary area is more important (12,3% - 18). Very few respondents (2,1% - 3) believe that they should focus strictly on the schooling curricula.

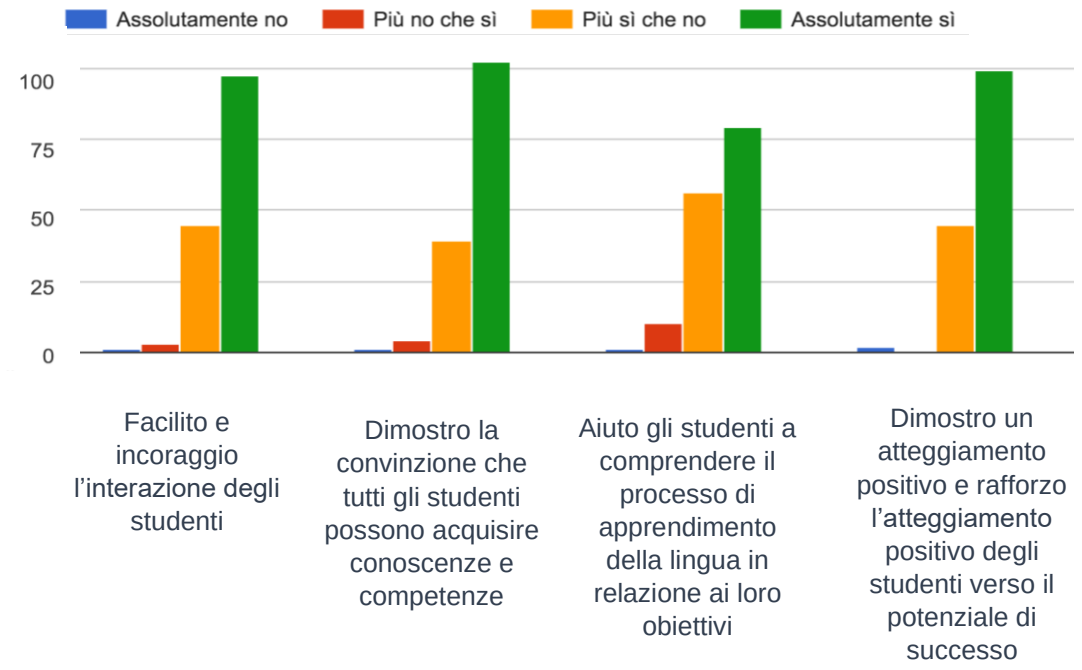
Section three of the teacher's questionnaire is entitled "self-assessment of professional skills" and aims to collect data on the habits, strategies, methodologies and behaviours adopted by language teachers.

3. Self-assessment of the professional skills

Item 14 – Indicate the situation that is closest to your teaching approach for what regards psycho-pedagogical and methodological competences

Indichi la situazione che più si avvicina al suo approccio didattico in merito alle competenze psicopedagogiche e metodologico-didattiche




Assolutamente no
Più no che sì
Più sì che no
Assolutamente sì
100
75
50
25
0
Facilito e incoraggio l'interazione degli studenti
Dimostro la convinzione che tutti gli studenti possono acquisire conoscenze e competenze
Aiuto gli studenti a comprendere il processo di apprendimento della lingua in relazione ai loro obiettivi
Dimostro un atteggiamento positivo e rafforzo l'atteggiamento positivo degli studenti verso il potenziale di successo

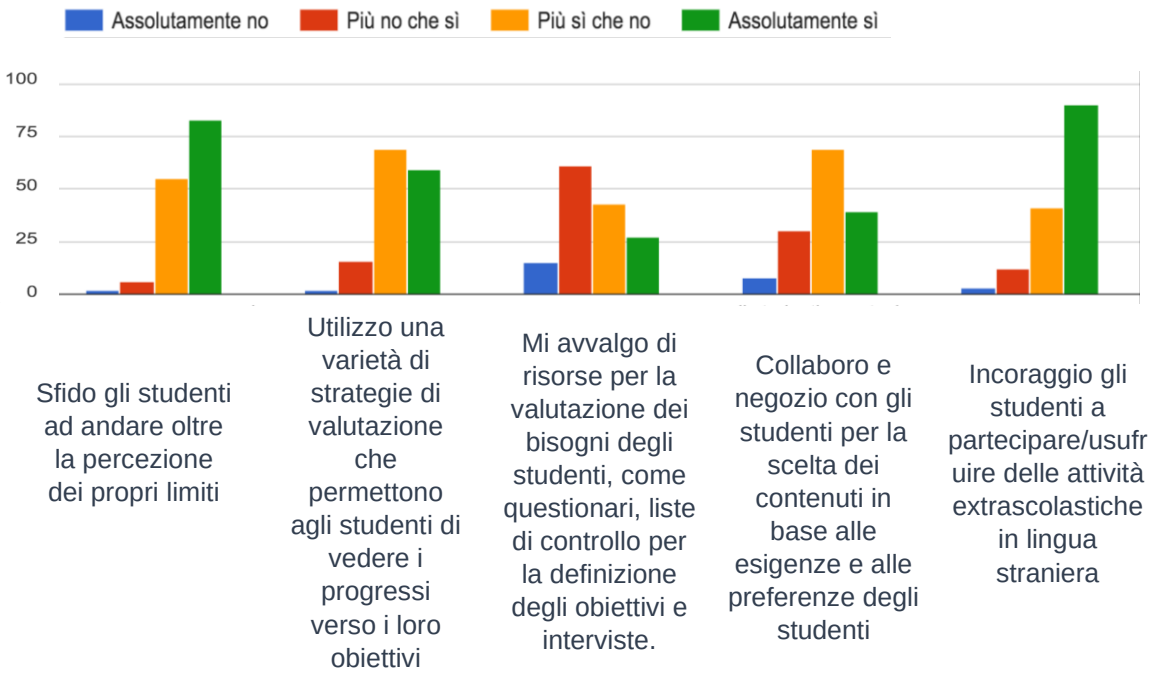

Assolutamente no
Più no che sì
Più sì che no
Assolutamente sì
100
75
50
25
0
Sfido gli studenti ad andare oltre la percezione dei propri limiti
Utilizzo una varietà di strategie di valutazione che permettono agli studenti di vedere i progressi verso i loro obiettivi
Mi avvalgo di risorse per la valutazione dei bisogni degli studenti, come questionari, liste di controllo per la definizione degli obiettivi e interviste.
Collaboro e negozio con gli studenti per la scelta dei contenuti in base alle esigenze e alle preferenze degli studenti
Incoraggio gli studenti a partecipare/usufruire delle attività extrascolastiche in lingua straniera

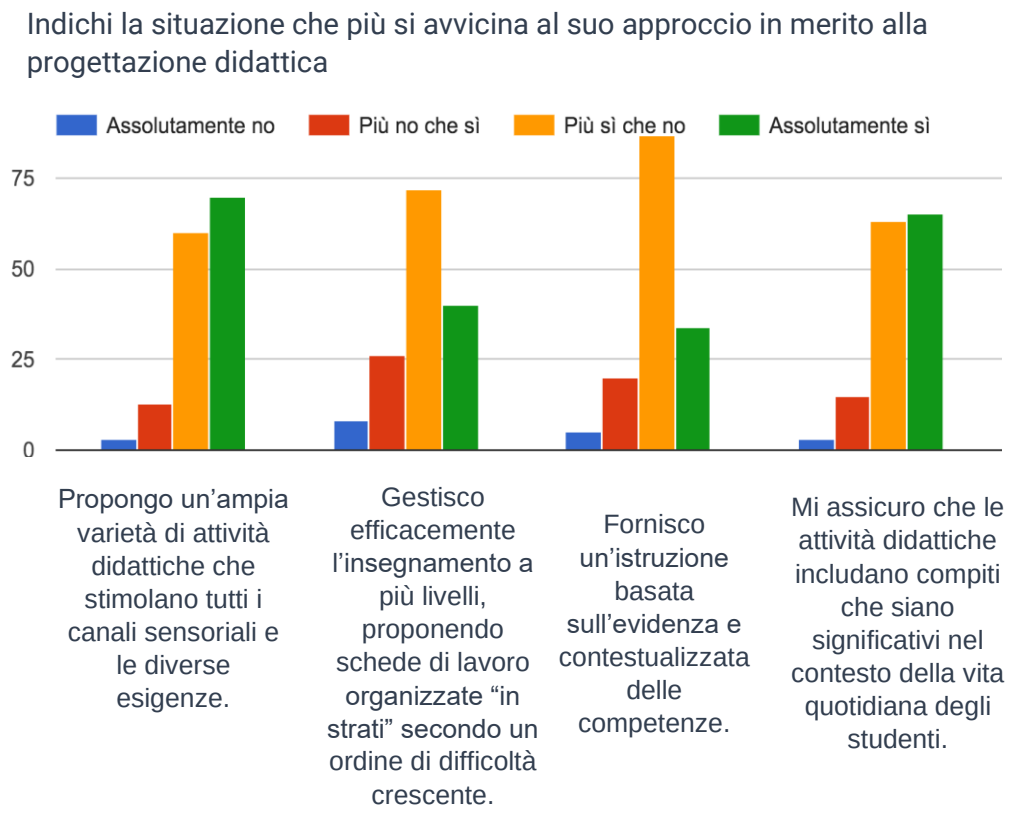
Figure 3.45

In the self-valuation of teachers in the psycho-pedagogical and methodological competences, a clear trend is visible in the answers. The vast majority of the respondents see themselves as positive actors in several ways:

- Encouraging students at identifying their own educational needs (67 “Absolutely yes” and 62 “More yes than no” against 15 “More no than yes” and 2 “Absolutely no”);
- Helping Students fixing educational and personal objectives according to their needs (61 “Absolutely yes” and 61 “More yes than no” against 22 “More no than yes” and 2 “Absolutely no”);
- Identifying and answering the needs of the class and of the single students (68 “Absolutely yes” and 73 “More yes than no” against 3 “More no than yes” and 2 “Absolutely no”);
- Encouraging the students at using their daily life experiences as learning opportunities (98 “Absolutely yes” and 41 “More yes than no” against 5 “More no than yes” and 2 “Absolutely no”);
- Facilitating and encouraging student’s interaction (97 “Absolutely yes” and 45 “More yes than no” against 3 “More no than yes” and 1 “Absolutely no”);
- Showing the possibility for all students to acquire knowledge and new competences (102 “Absolutely yes” and 39 “More yes than no” against 4 “More no than yes” and 1 “Absolutely no”);
- Helping students comprehend the process of language learning in relation to their objectives (79 “Absolutely yes” and 56 “More yes than no” against 10 “More no than yes” and 1 “Absolutely no”);
- Demonstrating a positive attitude and reinforcing a positive one to the students toward their potential (99 “Absolutely yes” and 45 “More yes than no” against 0 “More no than yes” and 2 “Absolutely no”);
- Challenging students to go beyond the perception of their own limits (83 “Absolutely yes” and 55 “More yes than no” against 6 “More no than yes” and 2 “Absolutely no”);

- Using a variety of valuation strategies that allow students to see their progresses against their objectives (59 “Absolutely yes” and 69 “More yes than no” against 16 “More no than yes” and 2 “Absolutely no”);
- Using a range of tools for the evaluation of the students needs, such as questionnaires, checklists for the definition of objectives (27 “Absolutely yes” and 43 “More yes than no” against 61 “More no than yes” and 15 “Absolutely no”);
- Collaborating and negotiating with the students for the choice of the contents based on their needs and preferences (39 “Absolutely yes” and 69 “More yes than no” against 30 “More no than yes” and 8 “Absolutely no”);
- Encouraging students to participate in extracurricular activities in foreign language (90 “Absolutely yes” and 41 “More yes than no” against 12 “More no than yes” and 3 “Absolutely no”).

Item 15 – Indicate the situation that is closest to your approach for what regards teaching design



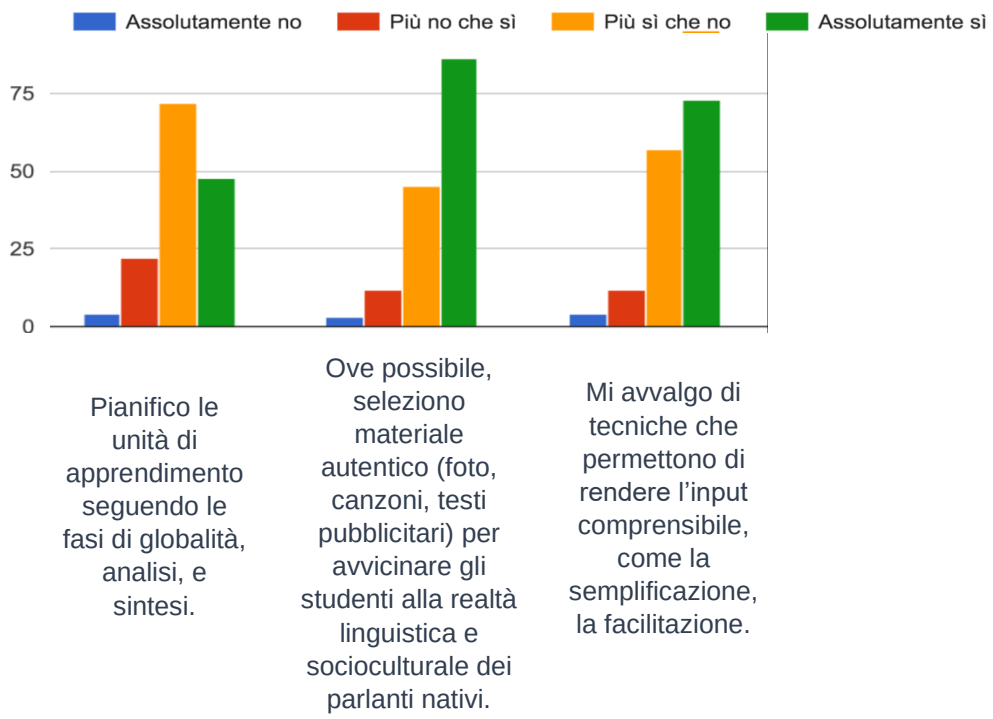


Figure 3.46

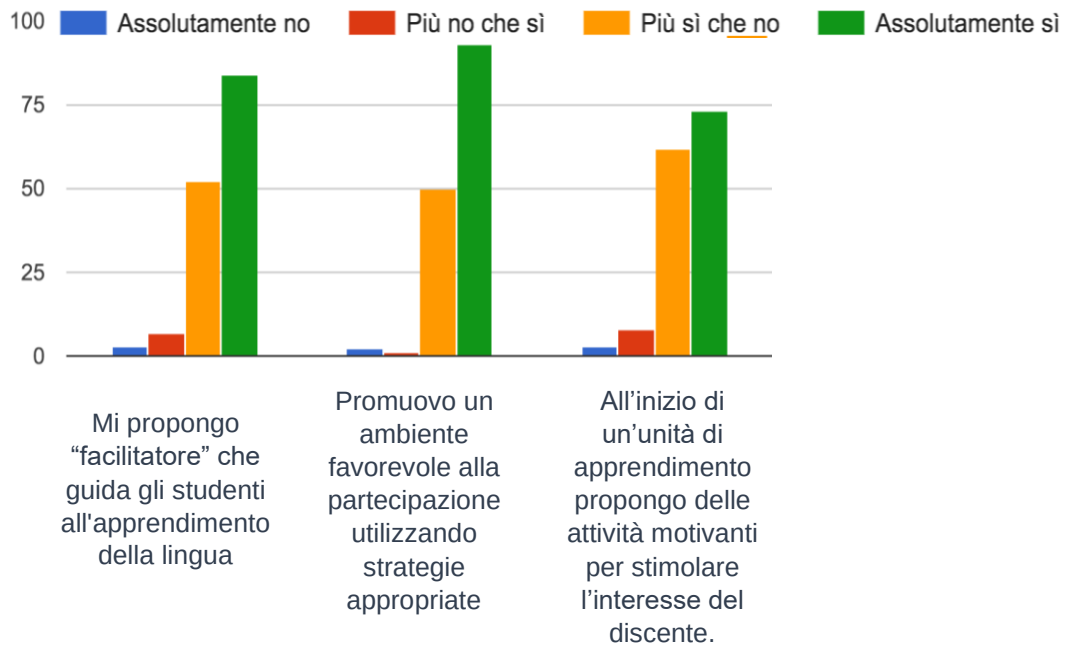
As for the part analysed before related to the psycho-pedagogical and methodological competences, graphs from Figure 3.46 regarding the self-valuation of teachers in the teaching design illustrate a clear trend in the answers too. In fact, the vast majority of the respondents tend to consider themselves good at planning and designing class activities and caring about those aspects relating to this matter. In particular, they claim to be very good at:

- Proposing a wide variety of teaching activities aimed at stimulating all the sensory channels and different needs (70 "Absolutely yes" and 60 "More yes than no" against 13 "More no than yes" and 3 "Absolutely no");
- Effectively managing teaching at multiple levels, proposing work sheets organized "in layers" according to an order of increasing difficulty (40 "Absolutely yes" and 72 "More yes than no" against 26 "More no than yes" and 8 "Absolutely no");

- Providing evidence-based and contextualised education of competences (34 “Absolutely yes” and 87 “More yes than no” against 20 “More no than yes” and 5 “Absolutely no”);
- Making sure that the teaching activities include tasks that are significant in real life (65 “Absolutely yes” and 63 “More yes than no” against 15 “More no than yes” and 3 “Absolutely no”);
- Planning the teaching units following the phases of globality, analysis and synthesis (48 “Absolutely yes” and 72 “More yes than no” against 22 “More no than yes” and 4 “Absolutely no”);
- Selecting authentic material whenever possible (photos, songs, advertising lyrics) to introduce students to the linguistic and socio-cultural reality of native speakers (86 “Absolutely yes” and 45 “More yes than no” against 12 “More no than yes” and 3 “Absolutely no”);
- Using techniques that make the input understandable, such as simplification, facilitation... (73 “Absolutely yes” and 57 “More yes than no” against 12 “More no than yes” and 4 “Absolutely no”).

Item 16 – Indicate the situation that is closest to your teaching approach during class

Indichi la situazione che più si avvicina al suo approccio didattico durante lo svolgimento della lezione



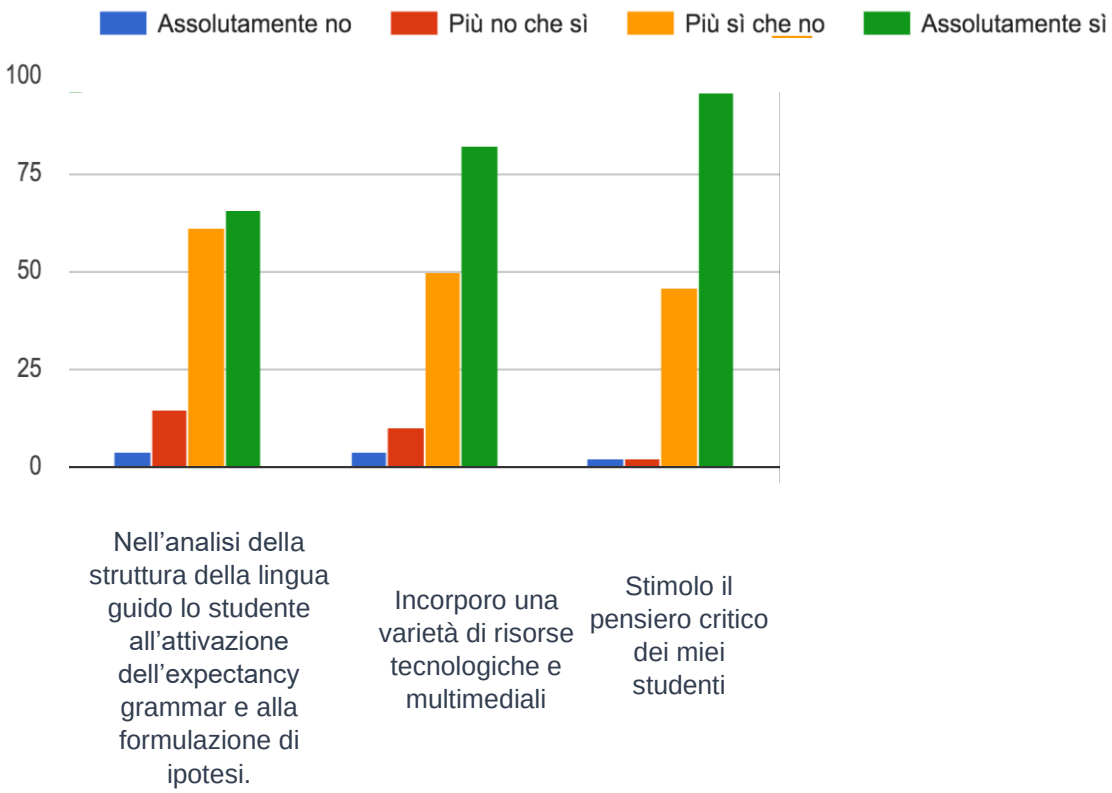


Figure 3.47

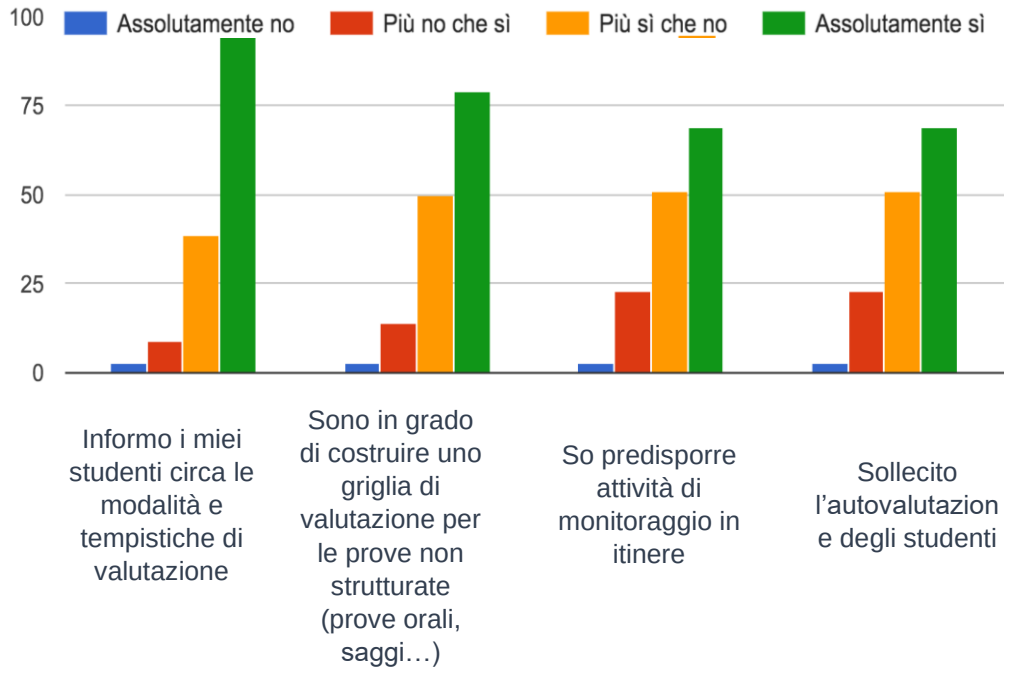
The graphs from Figure 3.47 highlight the results collected about the habits, approaches and methodologies adopted while having class. Even in this case the trend of answers is positive, as it can be noted by the predominance of the green and yellow columns on the others. Specifically, each graph illustrates the perception that respondents have of a particular aspect, i.e.

- Proposing myself as facilitator that guides the students toward language acquisition (84 "Absolutely yes" and 52 "More yes than no" against 7 "More no than yes" and 3 "Absolutely no");
- Promoting an environment that is open to participation using appropriate strategies (93 "Absolutely yes" and 50 "More yes than no" against 1 "More no than yes" and 2 "Absolutely no");
- Proposing motivating activities at the beginning of a learning session in order to stimulate the interest of the student (73 "Absolutely yes" and 62 "More yes than no" against 8 "More no than yes" and 3 "Absolutely no");

- Guiding the student through the activation of the expectancy grammar and to hypothesis formulation in the analysis of the language structure (66 “Absolutely yes” and 61 “More yes than no” against 15 “More no than yes” and 4 “Absolutely no”);
- Incorporating technological and multimedia resources (82 “Absolutely yes” and 50 “More yes than no” against 10 “More no than yes” and 4 “Absolutely no”);
- Stimulating the critical thinking of my students (96 “Absoluely yes” and 46 “More yes than no” against 2 “More no than yes” and 2 “Absolutely no”)

Item 17 – Indicate the situation that is closest to your approach for what regards students’ documents and evaluations

Indichi la situazione che più si avvicina al suo approccio didattico in merito alla documentazione e alla valutazione dello studente



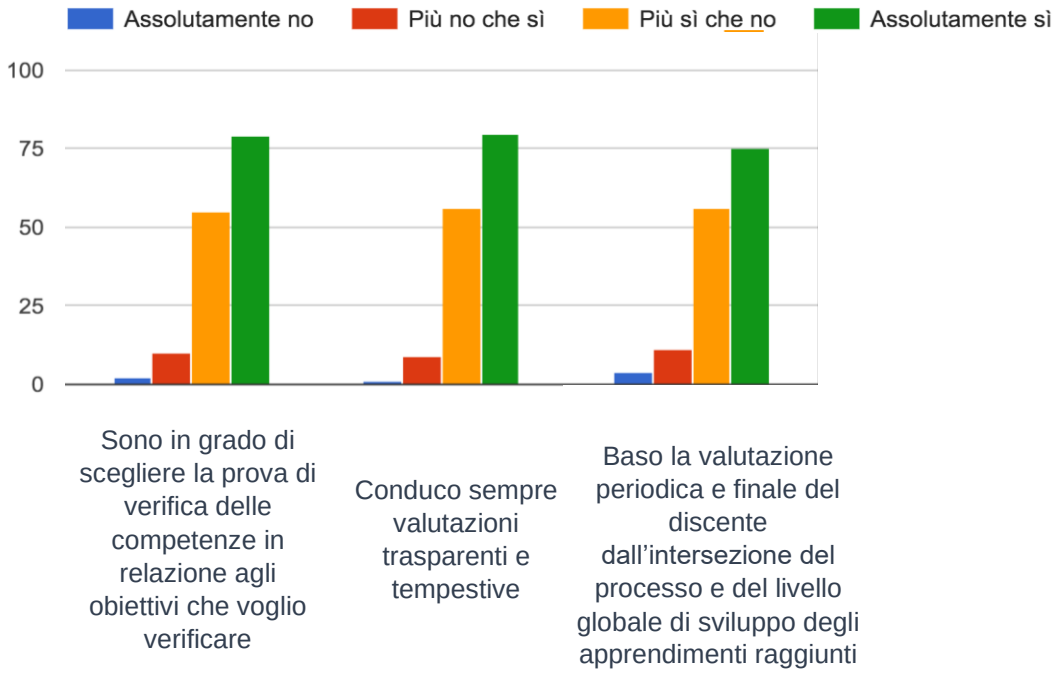


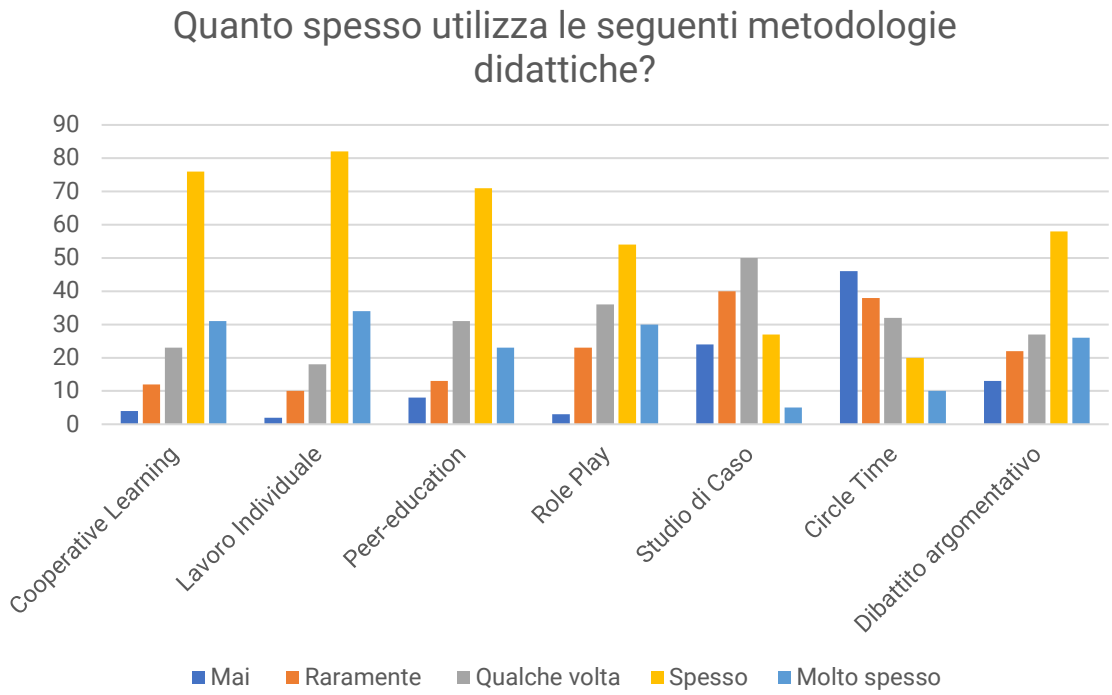
Figure 3.48

The graphs from Figure 3.48 highlight the results collected about the habits of testing and evaluating the students. The trend of answers is positive, also in this case. In particular, they claim to be very good at:

- Informing their students about the modalities and timing of evaluation (95 "Absolutely yes" and 39 "More yes than no" against 9 "More no than yes" and 3 "Absolutely no");
- Being able to build a grid of evaluation for the non-structural tasks (oral tests, essays…) (79 "Absolutely yes" and 50 "More yes than no" against 14 "More no than yes" and 3 "Absolutely no");
- Being able to build an on-going monitoring protocol (69 "Absolutely yes" and 51 "More yes than no" against 23 "More no than yes" and 3 "Absolutely no");
- Seeking student's self-evaluation (69 "Absolutely yes" and 51 "More yes than no" against 23 "More no than yes" and 3 "Absolutely no");

- Being able to choose the test of competences in relation to the objectives that I want to verify (79 “Absolutely yes” and 55 “More yes than no” against 10 “More no than yes” and 2 “Absolutely no”);
- Always conducting transparent and on-time valuations (80 “Absolutely yes” and 56 “More yes than no” against 9 “More no than yes” and 1 “Absolutely no”);
- Basing my periodic and final evaluation by intersecting the process and the global level of development of the student (75 “Absolutely yes” and 56 “More yes than no” against 10 “More no than yes” and 5 “Absolutely no”).

Item 18 – How often do you use the following teaching methodologies and activities?



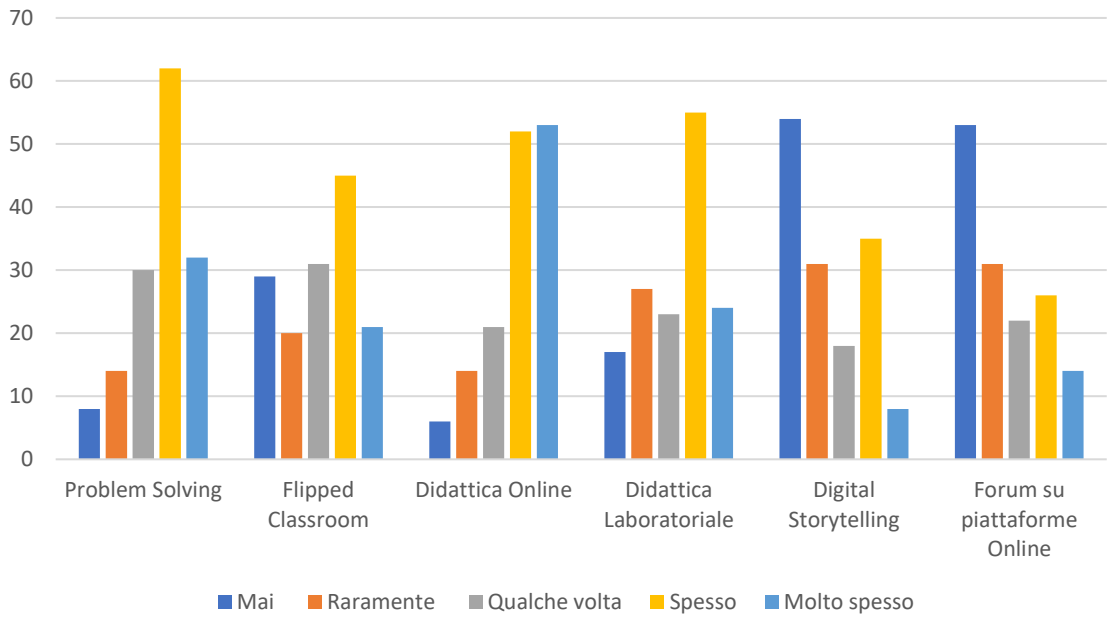


Figure 3.49

The graphs from figure 3.49 indicate the frequency with which the respondents utilize alternative teaching methodologies that stimulate the student toward critical thinking, personal development and competences generation.

This data can be interestingly compared with the previous section, in which the self-evaluation of the teachers has been exposed on the general items.
Later in the work, the comparison will dig into the confrontation between self-evaluation on the use of these methodologies and their real frequency.

The graph shows that these activities can be grouped into 2 main groups: activities that are often or very often practiced (9 out of 13), and, on the other hand, activities that are not so commonly practiced (4 out of 13).
In the first group can be found the following teaching practices:

- Cooperative learning (4 “Never” and 12 “Rarely” 23 “Sometimes” 76 “Often” and 31 “Very often”);
- Individual work (2 “Never” and 10 “Rarely” 18 “Sometimes” 82 “Often” and 34 “Very often”);
- Peer education (8 “Never” and 13 “Rarely” 31 “Sometimes” 71 “Often” and 23 “Very often”);
- Role play (3 “Never” and 23 “Rarely” 36 “Sometimes” 54 “Often” and 30 “Very often”);
- Argumentative debate (13 “Never” and 22 “Rarely” 27 “Sometimes” 58 “Often” and 26 “Very often”);
- Problem solving (8 “Never” and 14 “Rarely” 30 “Sometimes” 62 “Often” and 32 “Very often”);
- Flipped classroom (29 “Never” and 20 “Rarely” 31 “Sometimes” 45 “Often” and 21 “Very often”);
- Online teaching (6 “Never” and 14 “Rarely” 21 “Sometimes” 52 “Often” and 53 “Very often”);
- Lab-teaching (17 “Never” and 27 “Rarely” 23 “Sometimes” 55 “Often” and 24 “Very often”);

In the second group can be found the teaching practices with negative popularity, namely:

- Case study (24 “Never” and 40 “Rarely” 50 “Sometimes” 27 “Often” and 5 “Very often”);

- Circle time (46 “Never” and 38 “Rarely” 32 “Sometimes” 20 “Often” and 10 “Very often”);
- Digital storytelling (54 “Never” and 31 “Rarely” 18 “Sometimes” 35 “Often” and 8 “Very often”);
- On-line forums (53 “Never” and 31 “Rarely” 22 “Sometimes” 26 “Often” and 14 “Very often”).

Item 19 – Are there other approaches or methodologies that you use frequently? Why do you find them particularly valid?

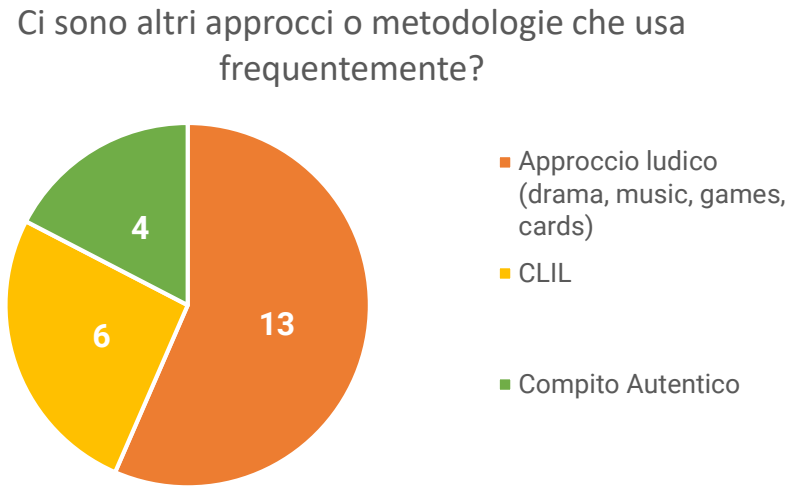


Figure 3.50

The item above was an open question whose graph shows approaches and methodologies that respondents frequently apply in class. In this graph are shown the most frequent answers. As it can be seen, 13 lecturers use the game approach as they claim it fosters a sense of challenge, motivation and therefore acquisition. These include drama, playing cards, quizzes, songs, etc.). In addition, 6 teachers say that they find CLIL a good practice to apply in the classroom. 4 teachers mentioned the importance of the authentic task. All open-ended answers can be consulted on page 200 of Appendix B.

As done with the students' questionnaire, in the teachers' questionnaire the researcher wanted to exploit the exceptional situation to investigate the methodologies and challenges of distance learning. The opportunity given by this particular situation has obliged the teachers to change their habits and exercise flexibility, in a totally new manner far from traditional methods and never experienced before.

4. Covid-19 Emergency: distance learning

Item 20 – Indicate the sentence that best reflects your activity during distance learning

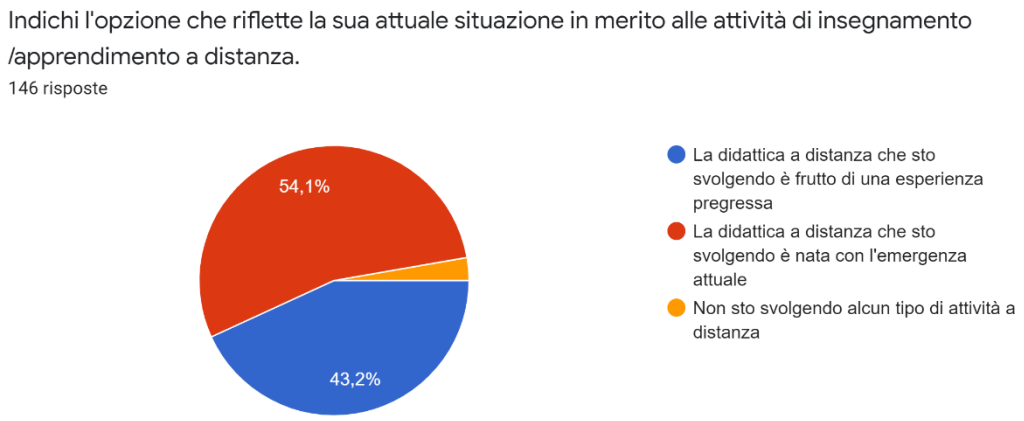


Figure 3.50

Item 20 investigates the preparedness of the teachers to the forced distance learning situation that COVID-19 has caused. As it can be seen from figure 3.50, 54,1% (79) of the respondents has declared that their distance learning practices have emerged solely due to the current emergency and not due to previous applications that have been consolidated before. Conversely, 43,2% (63) had the chance to further put into practice habits and routines that they had previously already experienced. Only 2,7% (4) declared of not conducting any distance learning activities at the moment of the questionnaire (2nd half of March 2020).

Item 21 – Have you been trained or assisted during this phase?

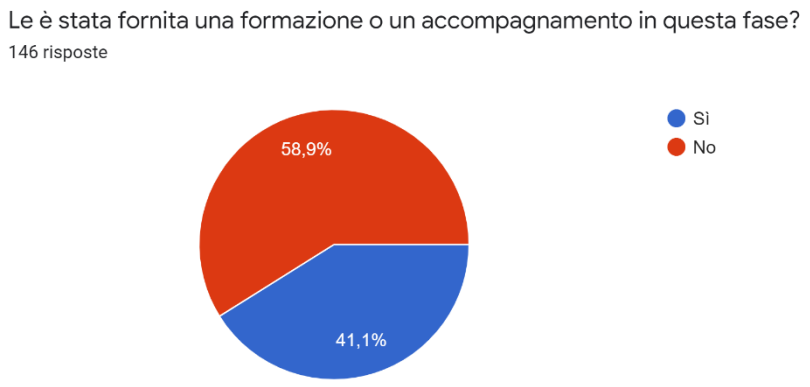


Figure 3.51

Figure 3.51 shows how the distance learning activities among most of the respondents have been the outcome of an autonomous and proactive implementation since 58,9% (86) of the respondents declared of not having received any training nor being assisted by the teaching institutions during this phase. On the other hand, 41,1% (60) of the teachers interviewed declare the opposite.

Item 23 – Are you overall satisfied with the outcomes of distance learning?

Figure 3.52

Despite being mostly a new experience for the teachers, the vast majority of the respondents is satisfied with the outcomes of distance learning:

- 11,6% (17) states “Absolutely yes”;

- 61,6% (90) states “More yes than no”;
- 24,7% (36) states “More no than yes”;
- 2,1% (3) states “Absolutely no”.

Item 24 – Which have been the problems you faced when executing distance learning?

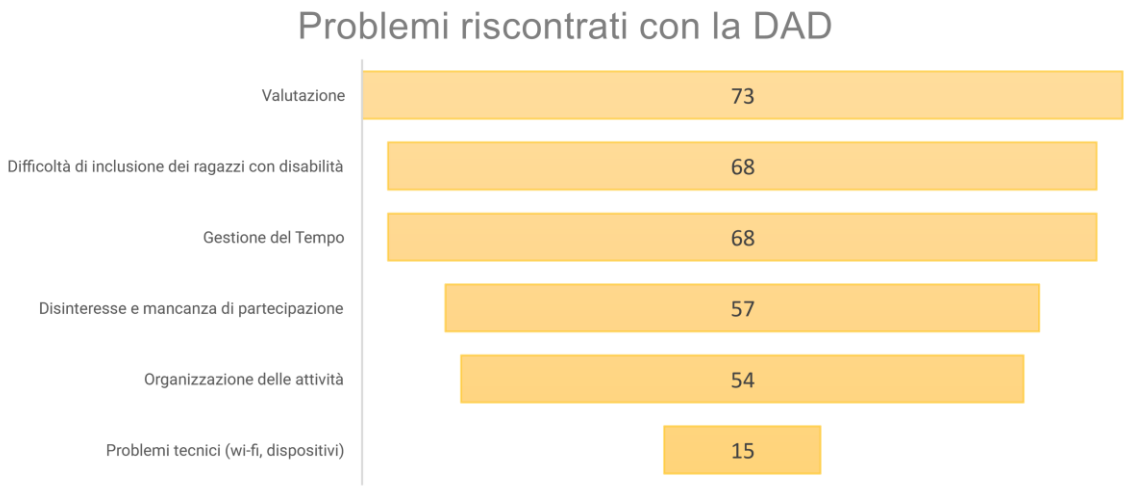


Figure 3.53

Item 24 allowed picking multiple answers for explaining the issues teachers found during distance learning. “Evaluation” was the biggest issue among the respondents, with a total of 73 choices followed by the “Difficulty of inclusion of students with disabilities”, which totalled 68 choices. Also with 68 choices, “Time management” emerged as a main issue. Distance learning has evidently created difficulties when teachers were seeking to motivate and create interest among the students, as it has been chosen as third among the possibilities with 57 choices. “Organizing activities” follows with 54 choices, while in the last position “Technical issues” (unstable connections, lack of adequate devices…) can be found with 15 choices.

Item 25 – Will you be considering this teaching method also in the future?

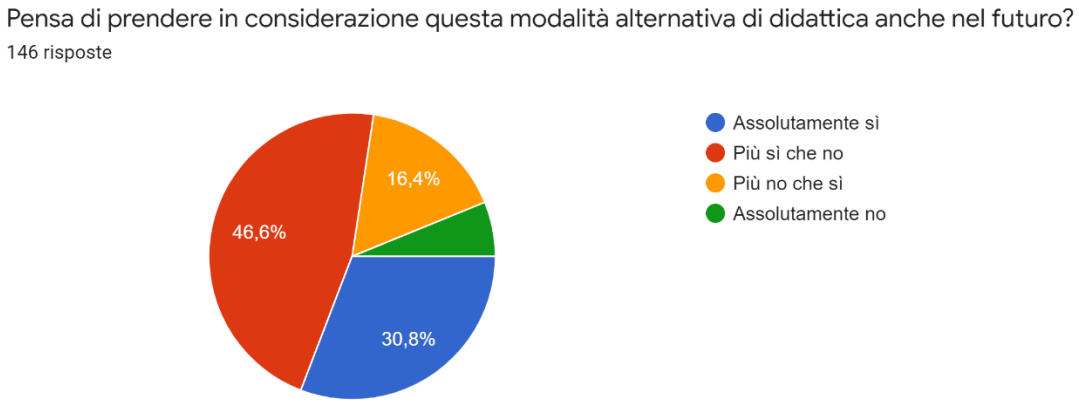


Figure 3.54

Thinking ahead, beyond the pandemic, item 25 is intended to investigate whether this lock-down distance learning experience has brought a new teaching modality that could be of use also in the future as integration of traditional teaching and learning. Figure 3.54 shows that it has been an overall positive experience and that in the future it will be taken into consideration. Respondents answered respectively:

- "Absolutely yes" 30,8% (45);
- "More yes than no" 46,6% (68);
- "More no than yes" 16,4% (24);
- "Absolutely no" 6,2% (9).

The next chapter will revolve around the analysis and evaluation of the answers of both students' and teacher's questionnaires. Most importantly, the implications and interpretations scattering out of the analysis will be the focus of the final part of the work.

4. DISCUSSION

This chapter will be concerned with the discussion of both students' and teachers' questionnaires, with the primary objective of answering the research questions. Furthermore, reflections will be raised on the salient issues that will emerge from the findings. Such speculations are made on the basis of the theoretical premises set out in the first chapter. In the course of the discussion of the results, comparisons will be also made among the answers provided by the two categories of respondents in order to shed some light on the similarities and discrepancies between teachers' and students' viewpoints and perceptions. In addition, the limits of the present study will be shortly illustrated together with some suggestions for future research in this field.

4.1. Discussion of Research Questions

In this part, the research questions will be singularly discussed. At the onset, it seems useful to recall the main features of the two categories of participants as follows:

- 106 students filled in the questionnaire. Among them, 13% attend the lower-secondary school and 87% attend the upper-secondary school (42 attending the "lyceum", 38 attending the "technical school, 12 attending the "vocational school");
- A total of 146 teachers filled in the questionnaire and most of them (84,2%) have at least four years of teaching experience. Furthermore, over the 63% of them teach at the upper-secondary school and English is the most taught foreign language among the participants (over 66%), followed by Italian as a foreign language, French, Spanish and German, respectively.

4.1.1. Comments on student's questionnaires

As it has been already mentioned in the paragraph 2.1. of the second chapter, through the administration of the student's questionnaires the researcher wanted firstly to explore the level of satisfaction of English language learning. Secondly, the issue of the autonomy, which represents one of the pillars towards the student's competences

learning, will be explored. Thirdly, it will be verified whether the various practices linked to the competence-based teaching are employed in class. Finally, the researcher wished to provide an answer about the perception and frequency of English informal learning.

4.1.1.1. Research Question 1

The first part of the questionnaire contained items aimed at answering the first research question, i.e. how English is perceived by middle and high school students. As it can be seen from the collected data, the majority of students (78) like English, beyond the fact that even more respondents consider it is very important, if not essential. This suggests that, being aware of its importance, also those students who do not like the language will have to make the effort of learning it. As they further declare, since English is a *lingua franca*, it will allow them to communicate with the rest of the world and therefore open up the possibilities of getting a more satisfactory job (67,9%), using it for leisure travel (63,2%) and studying abroad (50%).

In any case, given that students are generally well aware of the usefulness of English in practical terms (traveling, finding a job, communicating with others, etc.), it would be good for the teacher to remind the listless ones to mention the less accredited reasons for the utility of English. In order to do so, teachers must be able to find the access key to strike at the heart of each student. In particular, reasons that might seem trivial to a teacher, such as the ability to understand a video game by using English, might instead be a good reason to ignite the learner's curiosity. Another good starting point may be to encourage the students to explore a topic of interest on their own. This proposal, beyond having a good chance of success and promoting the student's autonomy, could turn out to become their driving force behind the commitment towards the foreign language, and a potential interest in further informal learning.

Overall, it can be claimed that the results of these first data are encouraging about the perception of English. It can be generally assumed that students who decide to attend a language school have a penchant or aptitude for foreign languages, but in this case the group of respondents is quite heterogeneous and only thirteen stated that they attend a Foreign Language High School, therefore the positive feedback is even more

promising. Moreover, among those who had the opportunity to visit an English-speaking country (50% of the respondents), only two students claimed not to have been enthusiastic about their experience abroad. On the contrary, 96,3% declared the opposite. It is widely acknowledged that experiencing the utility of a language, especially in a FL context, even for a short time, can increase the desire and motivation of learners. Therefore, being aware of the importance of the subject under study may be a source of great motivation, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, as suggested by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan's Self- Determination Theory (see Chapter 1, paragraph 1.2.4).

As concerns the degree to which the figure of the teacher affects the students' level of English (question 10), first of all, it is interesting to note that 17% of students mostly attribute to the teacher the merit (or demerit) of their level of knowledge in the school subject, while 42,5% believe that their level of English depends equally on the teacher and on themselves. It follows that over the half of the participants consider the teachers and their personality to be very important, if not fundamental to do well in English. In general, the ability to promote “intellectual enthusiasm” and personal motivation to learn is a characteristic that seems to have significant implications for the teaching effectiveness. In particular, as Ryans (1961) states, inspiring, creative and enthusiastic teachers are considered to be more valuable as learners tend to engage more. Obviously, the figure of the understanding and friendly teacher may be influential if in accordance with the personality of the student themselves, namely it is less important for those students whose motivational orientation is cognitive or personal affirmation. On the contrary, students who are interested in interpersonal relationships also appreciate an understanding and friendly guide.

In conclusion, satisfaction of English learning experience is claimed to be quite positive, although not with a vast majority among the respondents (65%).

4.1.1.2. Research Question 2

This research question tackles the issue of the learner's autonomy in the study of the language. Paragraph 1.2.1. of chapter 1 emphasized the importance of the teacher to encourage their students to become autonomous. As previously mentioned, with reference to the concept of "autonomy" it is meant "the learner's readiness and ability to take control of his/her own learning" (Holec 1981:19). This is a complex process that implies a new role for the teacher and a new attitude of all those involved in the learning process. The learner becomes aware of this by setting objectives and becoming responsible for his/her own study, and consequently, the traditional teacher-learner relationship is strongly modified. The teacher has to learn to function as an intermediary to harmonize the transition from traditional teaching to autonomous learning, preparing students to become more active in deciding on the content to be learned and methods and strategies to be used. At the same time, learners need to organize their own learning path, monitor the process of their own learning autonomously, end up self-evaluating themselves and setting themselves new goals. In order to move towards autonomy, it is necessary to develop metacognitive skills and to acquire or refine a form of thinking that is oriented towards a reflection on the learning process.

From the study of the literature so far addressed in this work, it was assumed that students possess a rather limited degree of autonomy due to the fact that they do not normally face explicit and planned pathways aimed at developing autonomy. Considering that measuring the degree of autonomy is a very difficult task as declared by several scholars (such as Little (1991) and Nunan (1997)), the researcher has sought to provide an overview about this aspect by exploring some of the most important indicators of the “autonomous learner” that have been mentioned previously. In general, a tiny majority of the respondents claims to feel confident of the autonomy in their learning process. Moreover, item 13 proofs that some of those who are not autonomous yet are willing to work on it (90%).

It should be here recalled that among the participants only 13% attends middle school. In general, it can be assumed that there is a slightly higher level of autonomy in high school students than in younger secondary school students, due to age and therefore to

a wider experience and self-knowledge, as well as a school history that should have helped them develop personal strategies for their studies. Therefore, the predominance of high school students over middle school students could have reflected in the results that emerged from the items analysed above about the learner's degree of autonomy in the learning process.

Next, is an analysis of the answers provided by the respondent about the autonomy-inducing practices that teachers should put in place. First of all, the vast majority of the students state that their teachers encourage them to be autonomous. However, the push toward autonomy is not supported by specific practices. As a matter of fact, students claim not being largely granted decision-making power over contents, strategies and timing, thus suggesting that teachers leave less room to negotiation over the agendas. Secondly, the ELP is strongly unknown despite being the main tool that should be used to lead students toward autonomy in the learning process. This is also confirmed by the answers of the teachers' questionnaires, in which only 24% of the respondents declare of using it in class in order to guide their students toward a reflection on their learning process. Still, the simplest way to practice autonomy, namely working on one's one, is widely implemented.

In summary, it can be deduced that teachers only rarely put in place techniques and strategies that go beyond the mere encouragement toward autonomy and the simple work on one's self. Such practices are indeed the ones which involve a minimum effort, and at the same time less fruitful results.

4.1.1.3. Research Question 3

This research question was intended to verify whether teachers conduct a style of teaching that does not simply convey notions and theory, but allows all students to learn in a meaningful, autonomous and responsible way, to do research and be curious, to make assumptions, to collaborate, and above all to be autonomous. The previous question dealt with the issue of autonomy. As it is the first pillar of the development

of competence education, it was thought that it deserved a separate analysis. In this paragraph, however, an attempt has been made to investigate matters related to the issue of autonomy, such as metacognition, the didactic/inductive approach to grammar and the self-evaluation practice, but also motivation, flexibility of teaching techniques and so forth. In this way, an effort has been made to provide a general overview of the teacher's mode and habits of teaching (from the students' point of view) to determine whether these are in harmony with all the principles and aspect that lead to the competences acquisition, and that that have been dealt in chapter one.

- *Metacognition*

As it has been previously described in paragraph 1.2.2. of chapter 1, by metacognition it is meant the awareness and control that people have of their own cognitive process, thus allowing them to know and manage their learning process. It thus follows that the development of metacognition also promotes the student's autonomy.

To this context also belongs the mode of teaching grammar. As previously mentioned, (see paragraph 1.2.5., chapter 1) the vast majority of modern research supports the theory that the inductive teaching approaches favour the critical thinking of the students that leads them to work out a "rule" for themselves even before practicing the language. The use of the inductive method should thus be preferred in order to stimulate metalinguistic reflection and metacognition in general. As evidenced in Item 23, however, the deductive teaching practice still seems to be the most common way to approach grammar. As a matter of fact, 78 students claim that their teacher is used to explicitly tell a grammatical rule, leaving no room for reasoning, hypothesising and reflecting, and thus not favouring that cognitive effort that literature insists on professing as an essential part for the development of metacognition and autonomy. On the contrary, only 25 students affirm that their teacher is used to put them in the position to hypothesize theories and rules by providing them with examples or texts containing that specific grammatical rule. This practice most likely indicates an inductive approach to grammar.

The elicitation of previous knowledge before starting a topic, as well as inviting students to repeat the content of the previous class and encouraging class discussions are useful practices that stimulate the learner to develop critical thinking and monitor

their own learning path, although they might seem of little relevance at the onset. Nevertheless, if summed together, the results provided by the students ‘questionnaire indicate that these do not find great diffusion.

- *Incentives to motivation*

In the competence-based teaching method, among the common practices that stimulate the students’ motivation can be found the exploitation of the didactic objectives by the teachers.

In this work it has been found that to over 46% of the participants the objectives are not at all or only rarely provided before starting a new topic.

This negative result is further reinforced by item 20 in which the students confirm that knowing the objectives would help them find meaning in what they do, since they could understand the real-life applications of the new knowledge.

On the other hand, as evidenced in Item 22, when trying to profile the teachers under the lens of behavioural characteristics, the students recognize exactly those features that are a good starting point for conducting competence-based teaching. Specifically, they recognize patience, availability, understanding, smiling and the ability to actively involve the students in the learning. As it is well documented in literature, such set of features will positively trigger the motivation of the learners and thus enhance the language learning. Further confirmation of the positiveness of the characteristics that they recognize today in their teachers, is provided by item 25, in which the students enlisted the five features of their ideal English teacher. Here it can be seen a significant overlap between item 22 and item 25, with the addition of the competence in English language. These characteristics however only constitute a starting point for the motivation, and as it can be seen in item 24 - graph n° 3, practical activities in this direction are not so common. As a matter of fact, when asked explicitly about motivating activities before and during the class, students still answer positively but with a lower degree, thus showing that they do not perceive the effort of being motivated.

- *Meaningful tasks*

Motivation requires first and foremost a meaningful task. Besides this, authentic and real-life based tasks constitute the first pillar that drives the students toward competence acquisition.

Among the interviewed students, tasks based on authentic material like advertising, movies, music etc., seem to be a quite common practice. Real-life based tasks (case studies, guided tours in English…) on the other hand are very rare and constitute a missed opportunity for raising motivation through seeing real-life applications of the language. As Glatthorn (1999) states, these kind of tasks "promote and evaluate the knowledge, skills and competences used to solve real and actual problems" on top of requesting the student to hypothesize, choose and decide, thus favouring the development of the metacognitive process as well as their responsibility and autonomy. Such tasks are often meant to be executed in groups, favouring discussions and social interactions. As it emerges from the questionnaires, group works together with work in pairs are quite diffused, even if data about working in autonomy is discouraging since it is more frequent.

As literature points out, it should be offered to students to carry out tasks both independently and in groups since the ability to work in groups is a competence which is constantly required at all levels of life and work. Given its importance, it falls within the social and civic competences, as mentioned in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2006).

- *Teaching flexibility to favour the different types of intelligence*

The teachers of the interviewed students show a very high degree of appreciation in accepting and understanding their problems and needs and are subsequently very open to questions and clarifications.

However, their degree of flexibility does not go much beyond this openness. In fact, item 24 - 8th graph evidences that flexibility meant as "giving choice to the students over the modalities and timing of the classes" is not a too common practice. Teachers

still own the majority of these decisions in class, leaving little room to the students' ideas. This will weigh negatively on the autonomy of the student and on their motivation.

The same kind of behaviour is confirmed in the modalities of executing a task, as seen in graph n° 10: teachers seem to stick to their own chosen modality, without giving the choice to the learners.

Despite the fact that the use of technological resources is widely used in class (whiteboard, computers, tv…) as seen in graph n°14, the activities are not varied strongly throughout the class. Also activities as guided tours, out-of-class lessons are rare events.

Summarizing the evidence regarding the flexibility in teaching, it can be asserted that the didactic approach is not fully learner-centred, and thus not in line with the overall competence-based approach.

Once more, it should be here noted that literature highly recommends teachers and educators to vary activities and provide different tools and strategies in the classroom in order to leave room for different ways of learning and thus promoting the competences acquisition. In fact, as suggested by the Multiple Intelligence Theory by Gardner, a teacher that wants to achieve a good level of inclusiveness must take into account the different forms of intelligence, and consequently, the differences in the way of learning that these forms of intelligence trigger. In order to promote greater inclusiveness, it is therefore strongly recommended to expand the range of teaching techniques to be implemented in class.

- *Task and evaluation issues*

Looking at the habits related to tests and evaluations, the case study shows that students are aware of the evaluation criteria that will be used in the tests. Being aware of such criteria is fundamental since it helps the students lower their affective filter, and therefore mitigates anxiety and increase the possibilities to perform better during the test.

For what regards the self-evaluation, it can be seen a slightly negative trend in the answers: students are not frequently asked to evaluate themselves, indeed.

Although the topic of competence assessment is not the focus of this work, the researcher wanted to investigate whether students are encouraged to practice self-assessment in class, since it is also one of those practices that help train metacognition. In an approach centred on the student and his/her learning rather than the discipline and his/her teaching, this metacognitive operation is not optional nor secondary, but constitutes an essential part of the construction of the subject's knowledge and skills. Self-assessment is only one of the metacognitive phases or activities within a more global approach. As it has already been explained, a metacognitive approach involves knowledge and skills throughout the learning process, from planning before the task to monitoring during the task to the actual self-assessment after the task. This is why all teachers (and not only foreign language teachers) are strongly encouraged to include this activity among the practices applied in school.

4.1.1.4. Research Question 4

The fourth research question was intended to explore the perception and frequency of informal learning for what regards the English language.

As it was seen in paragraph 1.1.2, the European Council claims that teachers and educators are supposed to explicit the resources and opportunities of informal learning so that learners can become aware and take advantage of them.

Item 26 shows that the vast majority (87%) of the interviewed students is convinced that English can be learned by studying at school and then applying it through authentic contexts in real-life. This convincement is also reflected in the awareness of the extra-curricular activities that they can take part in.

It must be noted that several of these activities can hardly be conducted in middle-school or in the first two years of high-school because they require a minimum of B1 level (threshold English), and the majority of the interviewed students attend the first years of high-school.

With this in mind, when looking at the detail of which extra-curricular activities are the most executed by the interviewed, the work has highlighted the predominance of practices that involve mediums such as music (singing, translating songs), video games

(reading, listening), on-line tools or platforms (using on-line dictionaries). These activities are in fact conducted by the students more than 6 times a week.

The effort required for these activities is certainly lower compared to others such as watching a movie or reading a book in English; therefore the results do not surprise the researcher. Also, these activities come as a “side-effect” of leisure time, whereas the most demanding ones involve more conscious and autonomous students who are willing to improve the language also in their free time.

Finally, according to the students, teachers do suggest and promote these practices and encourage them to practice English outside school with both more and less-demanding activities.

4.1.2. Comments on teacher’s questionnaires

As can be inferred from the literature of the first chapter, the "good teacher" who leads to the acquisition of skills and competences and not to the mere assimilation of concepts and definitions, plays a very delicate role. This does not only require psycho-pedagogical competences, but also refined skills of designing, planning, management and assessment of the teaching activities.

Therefore, in order to properly conduct this type of teaching it is assumed that the teachers, whether novice or not, should constantly reflect on their professional competences as well as take part in training and refresher courses throughout their career in order to keep pace with the student's needs.

As it has been already mentioned in the paragraph 2.1. of the second chapter, through the administration of the teacher’s questionnaires the researcher was intended to explore the habits, strategies, methodologies and behaviours adopted by foreign language teachers. In addition, the researcher wished to investigate the teacher’s perception on the competence-based teaching, if they are used to attending training and refresher courses and/or if they use tools to reflect on their teaching approach, thus showing a willing to improve their quality of teaching.

4.1.2.1. Research Question 1

For what regards the issue of training and refresher courses, 43 of the 146 teachers interviewed in the last year have participated in courses or masters aimed at acquiring or extending skills related to students having special educational needs. In each class there are most likely students who present a request for special attention for different reasons, among them cultural and social disadvantage, specific learning disorders, etc. These courses are not exclusively addressed to support teachers but are intended to all the teachers, regardless of the subject, so that they can be put in a position to acquire pedagogical knowledge and consolidate skills necessary to achieve effective and meaningful learning in students, especially those with special educational needs. Furthermore, 27 teachers attended CLIL-related courses. Since 2015 CLIL has officially become part of the priority educational objectives of the Italian school system and its first objective concerns the enhancement and strengthening of language skills as well as transversal competences. The attendance of training courses in this field by a considerable number of teachers is a good indication, bearing in mind that this teaching practice was almost unknown until ten years ago.

In addition, 26 teachers have attended courses related to the topic of interculture with the aim of training teachers able to face concrete situations of school life in which people from different cultures live together.

However, it is interesting to note that almost 30% of the teachers declared not to have attended any of the training/refreshing courses the last year.

4.1.2.2. Research Question 2

As far as the use of ELP is concerned, only 24% of teachers say they use it in class to encourage students to reflect on the learning process, while 60% claim they are familiar with it, but do not use it in class. In addition, over 16% of respondents said they are not familiar with this tool. This discouraging figure agrees with what most students stated, namely they had never heard of it, let alone been encouraged by the teacher to use it. As already mentioned, CEFR also recommends teachers to make use of this invaluable tool for its countless benefits. In fact, it not only helps students to become aware of their learning process at school, but also increases their awareness of

the informal language learning as well as aims at developing plurilingual competences together with lifelong learning strategies.

The EPOSTL constitutes a document addressed to foreign language teachers, especially those who are newcomers, but it does not exclude the use of those who have already collected several years of experience). Among its various aims, this tool is intended to encourage teachers to reflect on the professional skills needed to carry out this work, as well as to facilitate a self-assessment of one's own skills. Specifically, the latter section is made up of a series of "can-do" descriptors that serve to highlight one's own achievements and to indicate any improvements to be made to one's teaching. Again, the results are extremely discouraging as more than 77% of respondents said they do not use this tool. As the Council of Europe argues, its descriptors may seem “restricted” as they provide a systematic way of considering teachers' professional skills in the form of a checklist. Nevertheless, the ultimate aim is to be a stimulus to discuss about and improve one’s own teaching approach. As a result, the use of EPOSTL is highly recommended together with the ELP.

4.1.2.3. Research Question 3

What is teachers' perception of the competence-based teaching approach and on which aspects of their teaching habits has it had the greatest impact? Overall, over half of the teachers interviewed believe that they adopt an appropriate didactic approach towards the development of competences. However, one third of the respondents are not sure whether they apply teaching methodologies and strategies aimed at the competence acquisition. A small percentage of respondents said they can’t (11%).

Furthermore, the majority of the teachers states that competence-based teaching has quite changed their way of perceiving teaching and try to apply it when possible. However, a considerable proportion (18.5%) states that they apply just a little this teaching approach as the methodological implications are difficult to adopt in the classroom.

As concerns the aspects on which competence-based teaching has mostly changed the teaching habits, the majority of respondents strongly agreed that they have changed their perspective on the following issues:

- review the role from "traditional teacher" to "learning facilitator";
- know and implement new way of designing the school activities;
- comprehend the importance of being flexible;
- acquire both soft skills and didactic-cultural skills;
- change the way of perceiving the class as a group of *different* people with different needs, learning styles and talents.

Finally, the overwhelming majority of participants believe that the teaching and testing objectives should first and foremost be adapted to the classroom context, and only then should the needs of the disciplinary area be considered. Specifically, the adaptation of curricular objectives consists of modifying or reformulating the standard teaching offer to the possibilities and needs of the learners. In other words, an attempt is made to take the individual characteristics of the learners into account when planning the methodology, the content and, above all, the evaluation of learning. In this way, the learner's curriculum is modified to adapt it to their particular characteristics in the context of inclusive teaching. Contrary to what one might believe, from a competence point of view the curriculum is not something rigid but must be able to evolve within a flexible structure, indeed.

4.1.2.4. Research Question 4

The last research question sought to explore the habits, techniques and teaching strategies of foreign language teachers in Italy through the self-assessment of the professional skills and competences.

As far as psycho-pedagogical and general skills are concerned, teachers claim that they usually favour different types of intelligence and different learning strategies, as well as guiding them to reflection as a metacognitive mode. In fact, the vast majority of them consider themselves skilled in encouraging students to identify their educational needs and then help them set goals according to their requirements. All teachers also claim to be able to identify and respond to the demands of the class and of the

individual student. This is in line with what teachers previously stated, specifically that school goals and assessments should first and foremost take into account the needs of the class. In addition, most teachers state that they propose a wide variety of teaching activities aimed at stimulating all sensory channels. In fact they very often propose activities such as cooperative learning, peer education, role play, argumentative debate and problem-solving activities. Students on the other hand have stated the opposite. Moreover, most teachers also say that they do not use resources for student needs assessment, such as questionnaires, target setting checklists or interviews. In addition, a considerable percentage of them (26%) claim that they do not negotiate with students for the choice of content based on students' needs and preferences. As a matter of fact, in the student questionnaire it emerged that these do not have any influence on the choice of content. It is therefore deduced that there is an intention and predisposition to listen to and respond to the needs and requirements of the students, but this converts little into teaching practice as teachers do not use adequate tools to capture the needs and preferences of the students.

Teachers also say they foster students to use their daily life experiences as learning opportunities. Linked to this, they affirm to encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities in a foreign language. This implies that, as strongly suggested by the various European institutions, teachers stimulate their students to study outside the school context and thus promote informal learning.

With regard to classroom participation, teachers claim to stimulate critical thinking and peer interaction. In this regard, the results of Nicolini's studies (2009) have shown how people, in an attempt to convince others, carry out an in-depth meta-reflection on their own point of view to be able to argue it in the best way, also through the use of rhetorical strategies. The discussion develops the ability to argue and support one's own point of view while at the same time empathically considering alternative ways of looking at the issues, leading to qualitatively superior solutions. In addition, teaching how to behave in conflict means encouraging students not to be afraid of differences but to learn to know and appreciate them.

For what regards teachers’ general attitude, these claim to demonstrate a positive one and in turn to reinforce the positive disposition of students towards the potential for

success. This is confirmed by the students who consider that the personality of the teacher plays a quite decisive role in the potential for success as it stimulates motivation. As is well known, motivation is the driving force.

All in all, it can be seen that the teachers interviewed declare themselves to be able to conduct student-centered teaching. However, these premises are partly denied because the majority of respondents say that they do not use tools that are able to intercept students' needs and preferences. In addition, negotiating and collaborating with students on the choice of content based on their preferences seems not to be common practice among all participants. Finally, there is a strong discrepancy between what students and teachers claimed in terms of varying the teaching techniques. In paragraph 4.1.4. “Limitations of the study”, an explanation about this outcome will be provided.

As far as didactic planning is concerned, the most interesting aspects that have emerged are reported as follows. Teachers state that they are used to assign significant tasks in the context of students' daily life. This is in agreement with the students' statements. As a matter of fact, students said that they often perform exercises starting from songs, advertisements, videos that are not teaching-related but that come out of daily activities. However, while most of the teachers state that they propose real-life based tasks to the students in order to exercise their competences, students seem not to be used to carry out such activities in class. Actually, when asked about the frequency with which teachers propose the "case-study", which is one of the most significant tasks related to the development of skills, this emerges among the less common practices.

A good percentage of teachers declare to propose motivating activities to stimulate the learner's interest. Moreover they declare to structure the learning units according to the principles of globality, analysis and syntax. As already explained in chapter 1 (paragraph 1.2.7.), the Acquisition Unit, differently from the Didactic Unit, is built from the point of view of acquisition and is conducted through an inductive approach. Such unit is flexible and the teacher acts more like a guide and support to the student. This type of approach therefore presupposes an inductive approach to grammar that is excellent for the acquisition of competences. Furthermore, in the analysis of the

structure of the language, most of the teachers state that they guide students in activating the expectancy grammar and formulating hypotheses in order to stimulate reflection as a metacognitive mode. Taken together, however, these statements disagree with what the students express. The latter stated indeed that learning grammar is mostly done through an inductive approach. A result with such a discrepancy does not allow an adequate conclusion to be reached and would deserve in-depth research on the subject.

What follows is the discussion of the practices concerning testing and assessment.

All too often evaluation is considered a point of arrival at which must be reached in order to obtain and provide an account of the results achieved. Although motivating through assessment may seem a challenge, there are actually a number of practices that can be implemented to make assessment less traumatic. For example, getting the student used to the way and timing of assessment is a good starting point and is far from trivial. In this regard, teachers say that they are used to informing students about the methods and timing of evaluation, in agreement with the students' statements. Furthermore, teachers conduct transparent and timely evaluations. Secondly, they state that they are proficient in building assessment grids for unstructured tests. Most of them also urge self-evaluation (although this practice is not carried out by 26 teachers). Last but not least, the majority of teachers state that they base the learner's periodic and final evaluation on the overall learning development path achieved.

In general, the results of the self-assessment section suggest that the teachers interviewed have a very important conception of the self and that through the practices and strategies they adopt in class, they strive to guide the learner to the acquisition of competences. All in all, therefore, a competence-based teaching approach can be assumed by almost all the teachers interviewed. Sometimes, however, when analysing some aspects more in depth, some shortcomings or gaps emerge from the teachers and/or some claims about certain practices are not in line with what previously expressed by the students.

4.1.3. Covid-19 emergency: comparison between the students' and teachers' perceptions about distance learning

The timing of the questionnaires conducted in this work coincided with the unfortunate lockdown period due to the COVID-19, from March until May 2020.

The closure of schools has obliged students and teachers to start adopting distance learning practices that in the vast majority of the cases had never been experienced before.

The researcher took the chance of this period to collect data that will not fit into the research purpose but that could be of interest for the teaching community.

According to the respondents of the two questionnaires, despite its limitations, distance learning has resulted into being a satisfying experience, especially for the teachers (73,2%), whereas for the students the satisfaction was a bit lower (61,4%).

The reasons among the dissatisfaction differ among the students and the teachers. For the first ones the main reason is that the teacher is not well organized: this could be an understandable matter as from the teachers questionnaire it results that for most of them (54,1%) the competences necessary for distance learning had to be acquired in the emergency time and that the 58,9% had received no training nor assistance in the management of the distance learning. On the other hand, for the teachers the evaluation has been the main issue, which is very understandable especially for first time experiencers in distance learning without any training.

For what regards the future, when asked about integrating distance learning with traditional teaching methods the two groups answer very differently. The majority of teachers (77,4%) after this experience, will consider integrating it into traditional classes. The reasons behind can be imputed to the fact that, compared to the beginning of the distance learning experience, teachers are now more experienced and have acquired the necessary competences. Instead, as opposed to the teachers, a slight majority of the students would rather not include distance learning in the future.

4.1.4. Limitations of the study

In this paragraph a short list of the limitations and possible biases of the study will be enlisted and analysed.

First of all, the size of the sample of the students that have been interviewed in the questionnaire is limited (106), whereas the size of the teachers' one was larger (146). This was also due to COVID-19 situation that made it difficult to reach students in a lockdown period.

Secondly, despite being anonymous, on-line questionnaires can generate biases in the answers that can hardly be avoided but that must be considered in the subsequent analysis. Moreover, the literature on interviewing tools mentions that those who compile the questionnaires will tend to think about what the most desirable answer would be and to pick the one that is socially most acceptable and preferable (De Beni and Moè, 2000:192).

Thirdly, it must be noted that the sample of the teachers fulfilling the questionnaire has been sourced through social media, specifically from Facebook groups named "Flipped teachers" or on-line forums created with the purpose of sharing didactic ideas. The bias in this aspect is that teachers actively attending these groups most probably do not represent the totality of language teachers, but only those who are already at the forefront in the adoption of innovative teaching techniques. That is probably why the outcomes of the teachers 'questionnaires will only partially mirror the practices adopted by foreign language teachers in Italy and are sometimes in contrast with students 'perception of their teachers 'practices.

Fourthly, in order to smoothen the questionnaire compilation process on the side of students and teachers, for certain questions the researcher has opted for a scale of frequency that can be very subjective from the respondent's point of view (frequently, very often, sometimes etc…). To solve the issue of the rigidity and to give room to better expression for the respondents, the researcher has created several questions that combined both multiple choice answers with open answers (under the option "Other") and also simple open answers. This allowed the researcher to provide herself with a number of qualitative feedbacks which go deeper in the understanding of the topic, rather than only measuring it. Nevertheless, in order to extrapolate data from these

qualitative answers, the researcher has manually selected and categorized the answers under concepts that could collect numerous similar replies.
Lastly, it must be noticed that the subjectivity of the researcher might have somehow interfered with the present research.

4.1.5. Further research

Considering the limitations of this study also due to the Covid-19 lockdown period, further research on the topic in order to stronger validate the effects of the competence-based approach in foreign language teaching would be strongly advised. In this sense, a new structured study could be formulated, and given its complexity, it would be suggested to be run by PHD students.
In the new study the subjects would have to be both the teachers and the students of foreign language. One class would work as control group while the other would be the class exposed to the practices which lead the students towards the competences acquisition. In order to be statistically significant, the number of classes involved in the study would have to be a multiple of 2 and with similar number of attendees: in this way there would always be 1 subject class for every control class group.
In order to identify which classes would be exposed to the competence-based teaching approach, an initial questionnaire would have to be distributed to the professors in order to identify those classes that will fall into this categorization and which not. To identify their use of the competence based teaching approach, the questions would have to be both explicit (e.g. “Do you use practices aimed at the competences acquisition?”) and non-explicit (e.g. “How often do you let your students reflect on what they have learned /… let explain the previous class?”). This need is the result of this work, in which it has been found how teachers judge their teaching approach as strongly focused on the competences acquisition. Therefore, strong detail-oriented questions must be here posed in order to identify the ones who implement habits and practices in line with the competence-based approach.
At the same time, this set of questions will allow to create follow-up suggestions for those teachers who self-assess as fully conducting a competence-based approach but who at the end of the study will result as not.

Also, these classes would have to be in the beginning of an academic path (e.g. 1st year of High School). Following this choice, the effects of the new teacher (positive or negative) would be assured for both classes. The timing of the study should be of at least one year, in order to let the teachers' teaching method and strategy fully roll-out until the obtainment of their objectives.

Once identified the classes through teachers' questionnaires, initial questionnaires will be distributed among the both the subject classes and control classes with items that will identify their starting situation for what regards the foreign language knowledge and motivation.

Subsequently and gradually, additional questionnaires would be distributed throughout the year in order to see changes, improvements, or worsening situations. Also, as the students would become more and more acquainted with the teachers' personalities, techniques and methods, questions investigating their teachers' habits around the competence-based practices would be proposed in the questionnaires.

Together with this analytical component of the study, participant observation aimed at in depth investigating and confirm the questionnaires results would be highly recommended.

As a result, this study would allow to verify which habits and practices lead to the best results in terms of foreign languages competences acquisition.

Conclusions

Competence-based teaching approach is the appropriate response to a change in a didactic approach incapable of providing the basis for living actively in the complexity of today's society. This research project was an attempt to explore both the perception of English in school and extracurricular contexts and the teaching habits and techniques of foreign language teachers.

The data collected from the students' questionnaire shows that students like English and are aware of its importance as a lingua franca. Interestingly, they argue that the figure of the teacher is crucial for school success and consider their experience of learning English to be quite positive.

Overall, students feel autonomous in their learning process, especially in identifying their strengths and weaknesses and monitoring their progress in English. However, although their teachers encourage them to be autonomous, the drive towards autonomy is not supported by the use of tools to guide autonomy or specific practices that overstep working on one’s self. Self-evaluation, for example, is a practice that is poorly promoted by teachers. Moreover, it has been shown that the way grammar is taught is still strongly deductive, to the detriment of the practice of metacognition and metalinguistic reflection. The elicitation of prior knowledge also seems to be an uncommon practice. Students also state that their teachers have a positive attitude: this is a good starting point to support motivation, but they do not often seem to conduct activities that push in that direction. Furthermore, while exercises based on authentic material seem to be frequent, real-life tasks are quite rare, although they are among the most effective tasks which lead to the competences acquisition.

As concerns the issue of flexibility, according to the student’s perspectives, teachers seem to meet their needs and requirements. Nevertheless, practices related to flexibility do not seem to be particularly frequent, including, for example, negotiating the modalities of expositing a task. On the other hand, technology and teamwork are relatively frequent.

In conclusion, although students' perceptions of both the English language and the figure of the teacher are overall positive, one cannot equally argue that teachers have

an approach that is fully student-centred, therefore not entirely in line with the competence-based approach.

As far as the perception and frequency of activities related to informal learning of English is concerned, students believe that the winning formula for learning the language is to apply what has been learned in the classroom in real life contexts. The activities that are most frequently carried out involve media such as music, singing, translating songs and playing video games in English. Watching movies or reading books is rarely or never done, which is certainly due to the need to have a good level of English.

The data collected from the teachers' questionnaire suggests that most teachers do not use the ELP (European Language Portfolio) to guide students through their learning process. Moreover, most of them do not know nor use EPOSTL, namely the tool for self-assessment of their professional skills. In general, however, teachers believe that they have a competence-based approach. They claim to be proficient in encouraging their students to identify and respond to their educational needs and to vary activities to stimulate different sensory channels. They also promote cooperative learning, problem-solving and critical thinking activities, but do not easily negotiate with students on how to perform a task. Significant, real-life based tasks are also common practice, although complex activities such as the case-study are not frequently proposed. Furthermore, teachers claim to motivate their students with stimulating activities and organize lessons according to the acquisition method "globality, analysis, synthesis". This statement is inconsistent with the students's opinions. Teachers encourage self-evaluation and declare to be able to build an evaluation grid for subjective tests.

On the whole, it can be stated that the teachers' "self-assessments" reveal a didactic approach mostly focused on the learner and aimed at the competences acquisition. Nevertheless, some data contradicts the statements of the students about their teachers. In any case, the research carried out has clarified some doubts and shed light on habits, techniques and practices regarding the competence-based teaching.

According to the teachers 'viewpoints, their way of working seems to be in line with what is dictated by the European institutions, but the opinions of the students, our main

beneficiaries, must never be overlooked. The researcher hopes to have given teachers an opportunity to reflect on and/or improve their professional figure. In fact, it is the students' as well as the teachers' task to constantly reflect on their work and question themselves.

In summary, notwithstanding being limited, the present study somehow extends the knowledge of the competence-based education and training and paves the way for further and more extensive research.

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APPENDIX A: Students' Questionnaire

Do you like English?

La compilazione del questionario si svolge in forma anonima, i dati raccolti saranno trattati in maniera aggregata e nel rispetto della legge sulla privacy ai meri fini di ricerca per tesi di Laurea Specialistica in Glottodidattica.

*Campo obbligatorio

Presentazione

Ciao! Sono Silvia Bizzotto, laureanda all'Università Cà Foscari di Venezia. In questo questionario ti porrò alcune domande riguardo la tua esperienza di apprendimento della lingua inglese. Ci impiegherai al massimo 15 minuti, ma ti chiedo di rispondere in tutta onestà. La tua collaborazione mi sarà di grande aiuto!
Are you ready? ...Let's get started!

1. Autorizzi il trattamento dei dati personali ai sensi del Decreto Legislativo 30 giugno 2003, n. 196 "Codice in materia di protezione dei dati personali" e del GDPR (Regolamento UE 2016/679)? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Sì

2. Frequenti la scuola media o le superiori? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Sì

Passa alla domanda 3.

Riesci bene in Inglese?

La prima parte riguarda la percezione che hai della lingua inglese in generale.

3. Ti piace l'Inglese? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Assolutamente sì
- Più sì che no
- Non del tutto
- Più no che sì
- Assolutamente no

4. Quanto è importante per te l'Inglese? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- E' indispensabile
- Molto
- Abbastanza
- Poco
- E' irrilevante

5. Indica i 3 motivi più importanti per te per cui è utile imparare l'Inglese *

Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

- [ ] L'Inglese mi darà la possibilità di studiare all'estero
- [ ] Grazie all'Inglese avrò più opportunità di ottenere un buon lavoro e crescere professionalmente
- [ ] L'inglese mi permette di viaggiare
- [ ] L'inglese mi permette di comunicare con il resto del mondo
- [ ] L'inglese mi permette di leggere.
- [ ] L'inglese è la lingua di internet. Grazie ad esso posso partecipare a forum e discussioni

Altro: [ ] _____

6. Sei mai stato in Inghilterra o in un paese dove si parla l'Inglese? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Sì
- No

7. Se hai risposto di sì alla domanda precedente, ti è piaciuto?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Sì
- No
- Insomma

8. Se hai risposto di no alla domanda precedente, perché?

9. Ti senti complessivamente soddisfatto dell'apprendimento dell'Inglese? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Assolutamente sì
- Abbastanza
- Non so
- Non del tutto
- Assolutamente no

10. A chi attribuisci il merito (o demerito) del tuo livello di Inglese? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- 100% mio
- 100% del docente
- Metà e metà
- Più mio che del docente
- Più del docente che mio

11. Riesci a identificare i tuoi punti deboli e i tuoi punti di forza nell'Inglese? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Assolutamente sì
- Più sì che no
- Non so
- Più no che sì
- Assolutamente no

12. Riesci a monitorare i tuoi progressi senza la verifica e la valutazione del docente? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Assolutamente sì
- Più sì che no
- Non so
- Più no che sì
- Assolutamente no

13. Sei disposto ad impegnarti anche da solo per migliorare il tuo livello di Inglese? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Assolutamente sì
- Più sì che no
- Non so
- Più no che sì
- Assolutamente no

L'Inglese fra i banchi di scuola

La seconda parte riguarda il tuo apprendimento dell'inglese a scuola.

14. Il tuo docente ti ha mai chiesto quali sono le vostre tecniche e strategie di apprendimento preferite? (Per esempio, il fatto che ricordi meglio il contenuto di un immagine invece di un audio o che preferisci lavorare da solo invece di lavorare in gruppo...). *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Sì
- No

15. Se hai risposto di sì alla domanda precedente, con quale modalità ti è stato chiesto?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- A voce
- Tramite la somministrazione di un questionario
- Altro: _____

16. Il tuo docente di inglese ti ha mai parlato del portfolio linguistico europeo? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Sì
- No

17. Se hai risposto di sì alla domanda precedente, quanto spesso lo usa in classe per riflettere sul proprio processo di apprendimento e sui risultati raggiunti?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Spesso
- Solo raramente
- Mai

18. Prima di cominciare un argomento il tuo docente di inglese spiega gli obiettivi di questo, cioè che cosa sarete in grado di fare a fine unità? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Sempre
- Spesso
- Solo raramente
- Mai

19. Secondo te, è utile che l'insegnante spieghi gli obiettivi delle attività che svolgete in classe cosicché possiate apprenderne meglio i contenuti? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Sì
- No
- Non saprei

20. Sei hai risposto di sì alla domanda precedente, perché ritieni importante conoscere gli obiettivi dell'apprendimento?

21. Indica la situazione che più si avvicina alla tua esperienza. Il tuo docente di Inglese... *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- È riuscito a conquistare la stima e per questo viene rispettato dalla maggioranza con piacere
- Viene visto male dalla maggioranza della classe e non sempre viene rispettato
- È autoritario e viene temuto, per questo viene rispettato
- È troppo buono e per questo la classe se ne approfitta. Non viene rispettato

22. Indica la situazione che più si avvicina alla tua esperienza. Il tuo docente di Inglese è... *

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	Assolutamente no	Più no che sì	Più sì che no	Assolutamente sì
Paziente				
Disponibile				
Comprensivo				
Nervoso				
Coinvolgente				
Sorridente				
Ripetitivo				
Ansioso di finire il programma				
Flessibile				
Propositivo				
Ha ragione lui				
Noioso				
Incompetente				

23. In che modo il tuo docente di Inglese spiega una lezione di grammatica di solito? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Vi spiega la regola, poi fate esercizi per vedere se riuscite ad applicarla.
- Vi da degli indizi oppure una frase che contiene la regola e voi dovete arrivare a dedurla. Poi fate esercizi per vedere se riuscite ad applicarla.
- Altro: _____

24. Indica la situazione che più si avvicina alla tua esperienza. Il docente di Inglese... *

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	Sempre	Spesso	Qualche volta	Raramente	Mai
Accetta e comprende le nostre problematiche e i nostri bisogni					
Prima di iniziare la lezione ci stimola a dire quello che sappiamo già					
Prima di iniziare un argomento propone belle attività per motivarci					
Quando spiega accoglie domande e chiarimenti					
Quando spiega riesce a sollecitare il nostro interesse anche se l'argomento di per sé è noioso					
Ci incoraggia ad essere autonomi					
Ci incoraggia ad essere creativi					
Ci chiede se abbiamo preferenze o consigli sulla modalità e tempistiche da dedicare delle lezioni					
Rispetta i ritmi e le caratteristiche di apprendimento di noi studenti riconoscendo le differenze					
Ci fa scegliere con che modalità esporre un argomento o fare un compito (Power Point, video, recita, etc.)					
Parla in inglese durante la lezione					
Ci fa lavorare su materiale autentico (canzoni, film, pubblicità, poesie...)					

Ci propone compiti di realtà, come la preparazione di giri turistici, ricerche, ...					
Utilizza le risorse tecnologiche come la LIM, il computer, la tv					
Varia spesso attività					
Ci fa spiegare la lezione al posto suo (dopo averla preparata in classe)					
Ci fa ripetere la lezione precedente					
Ci fa discutere a lungo					
Ci fa andare in laboratorio					
Ci porta in gita/ a fare uscite/visite guidate)					
Ci fa lavorare a coppie					
Ci fa lavorare a gruppi					
Ci fa lavorare da soli					
Ci spiega in base a quali criteri valuta le verifiche					
Ci incoraggia ad autovalutarci dopo un'interrogazione					
Ci incoraggia a valutare gli altri dopo un'interrogazione					

25. Elenca 5 caratteristiche che deve avere il tuo insegnante di Inglese ideale *

L'Inglese fuori dalla scuola

La seconda parte riguarda le attività che svolgi in Inglese fuori dalla scuola.

26. Indica l'affermazione che ritieni più vera per te *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- L'inglese si impara solo a scuola studiando e facendo esercizi
- L'inglese si impara solo fuori dalla scuola in contesti di vita reale
- L'inglese si impara studiandolo a scuola e applicandolo in contesti autentici di vita reale

27. Sei a conoscenza del fatto che ci sono tante attività extrascolastiche in inglese che potresti fare? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Decisamente sì
- Più sì che no
- Più no che sì
- Non mi sono mai interessato.

28. Segna la frequenza con cui svolgi le seguenti attività extrascolastiche (attività che scegli di fare di tua spontanea volontà). *

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	Mai	1 volta a settimana	2/3 volte a settimana	4/6 volte a settimana	Più di 6 volte a settimana
Guardo film in inglese					
Parlo/ chatto con un amico straniero					
Ascolto le persone straniere parlare inglese quando visito paesi anglosassoni					
Parlo coi turisti in inglese					
Leggo libri in inglese					
Partecipo ad un corso di inglese con un insegnante privato					
Ascolto canzoni in inglese					
Uso app per imparare l'inglese (Babbel, Duolingo, ...)					
Leggo/ Ascolto scritte in inglese nei videogiochi					
Canto in inglese					
Traduco canzoni dall'inglese					
Uso il dizionario online per tradurre parole in inglese					

29. Fra le attività sopra elencate, ci sono alcune che il docente di inglese ti sprona a fare? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Sì
- No

30. Se hai risposto di sì alla domanda precedente, quali sono le attività che il tuo docente di Inglese ti sprona a fare?

31. Pensi che le attività extrascolastiche sopra elencate (come guardare film in inglese, giocare ai videogiochi in inglese e parlare con stranieri) siano per certi versi migliori rispetto a quelle che svolgi in classe? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Sì
- No
- Non saprei

32. Se hai risposto di sì alla precedente domanda, perché? Puoi selezionare più di una risposta. *

Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

- [ ] Perché le trovo più interessanti
- [ ] Perché mi servono per raggiungere degli scopi
- [ ] Perché non devo prestare attenzione alla grammatica
- [ ] Perché non ho paura di essere valutato
- [ ] Perché rispettano la vita reale
- [ ] Perché le svolgo quando e come voglio io

Emergenza Covid-19: la didattica a distanza

33. Il tuo insegnante di lingua sta conducendo didattica a distanza? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Sì
- No

34. Sei gneralmente soddisfatto di questo tipo di insegnamento?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Assolutamente sì
- Più sì che no
- Più no che sì
- Assolutamente no

35. Quali problematiche sono emerse maggiormente? Puoi selezionare più di una risposta *

Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

- [ ] Vengono assegnati troppi compiti
- [ ] E' difficile rimanere concentrati
- [ ] Il docente non è bene organizzato
- [ ] Nesuna problematica

Altro: [ ] _____

36. Ti piacerebbe in futuro che il tuo docente di lingua integrasse il metodo tradizionale di insegnamento con quello a distanza?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Assolutamente sì
- Più sì che no
- Più no che sì
- Assolutamente no

Alcune generalità.

...Abbiamo quasi finito!

37. Indica la tua età in cifre *

38. Indica la tua nazionalità *

39. Indica la tua lingua madre (o le tue lingue madri) *

40. Quali altre lingue conosci*? (Per conoscere si intende almeno il sapere gestire una semplice conversazione)

41. Indica la tua classe (per esempio: 3° Liceo Linguistico).

Grazie per la collaborazione, mi sei stato/a di grande aiuto!

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APPENDIX B: Teachers' Questionnaire

La Didattica per Competenze nell'educazione linguistica

Gentile Docente,
sono Silvia Bizzotto, una laureanda presso l'Università Cà Foscari di Venezia. Questo questionario si inserisce nella ricerca di tesi Specialistica in Glottodidattica e vuole indagare se i docenti di lingua straniera adottano un approccio didattico in linea con la Didattica per Competenze.
Il target prescelto per questa ricerca e al quale è destinato il questionario è formato da insegnanti di lingua straniera della scuola secondaria di primo e secondo grado.
La ringrazio per aver accettato a collaborare alla raccolta dati. Per qualsiasi informazione o chiarimento non esiti a contattarmi: 849467@stud.unive.it.
*Campo obbligatorio

1. Autorizzi il trattamento dei dati personali ai sensi del Decreto Legislativo 30 giugno 2003, n. 196 "Codice in materia di protezione dei dati personali" e del GDPR (Regolamento UE 2016/679)? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Sì

La Didattica per Competenze nell'educazione linguistica

2. Formazione professionale *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Laurea Specialistica di Nuovo Ordinamento
- Laurea di Vecchio Ordinamento
- Diploma di Scuola Superiore

3. Anni di insegnamento *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Meno di 1 anno di insegnamento
- Tra 1 e 3 anni di insegnamento
- Tra 4 e 6 anni di insegnamento
- Oltre 7 anni di insegnamento

4. Scuola presso cui insegna attualmente *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Secondaria di I grado
- Secondaria di II grado

5. Lingua di insegnamento *

Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

- [ ] Inglese
- [ ] Francese
- [ ] Tedesco
- [ ] Spagnolo
- [ ] Russo
- [ ] Italiano L2/LS

Altro: [ ] _____

6. Negli ultimi 12 mesi ha partecipato ad esperienze di lavoro in percorsi formativi per ampliare il ventaglio delle sue competenze in campo didattico e/o migliorare le strategie di insegnamento? *

Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

- [ ] Progetto CLIL
- [ ] Progetto intercultura
- [ ] Progetto inclusione/ BES
- [ ] Nessuno

Altro: [ ] _____

7. Utilizza il PLE (Portfolio linguistico Europeo) per spingere il discente a riflettere sul suo processo di apprendimento? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ( ) Lo conosco e lo utilizzo.
- ( ) Lo conosco, ma non lo utilizzo.
- ( ) Non lo conosco

8. Ritiene di utilizzare adeguamente la modalità di insegnamento per Competenze, come suggerito dal PLE? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ( ) Sì
- ( ) No
- ( ) Non saprei

9. Ha mai usato il PEFIL come strumento di autovalutazione delle sue competenze professionali di insegnamento? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ( ) Sì
- ( ) No

10. Quanto, a suo parere, la Didattica per Competenze ha stravolto il suo modo di insegnare? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Per nulla. Non conosco bene le sue implicazioni pratiche, dunque non la utilizzo.
- Poco. È facile in teoria, ma le sue implicazioni metodologie sono difficili da adottare in classe.
- Abbastanza. Cerco di usare questo approccio ove possibile.
- Moltissimo. Ad oggi utilizzo questo tipo di approccio a 360° (dalla progettazione alla verifica delle competenze).

11. Su quali fronti l'approccio didattico per Competenze Le ha permesso di migliorare la sua figura professionale? "La Didattica per Competenze mi ha permesso di..." *

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	Assolutamente no	Più no che sì	Più sì che no	Assolutamente sì
riflettere sull'importanza della competenza metalinguistica nella didattica				
rivedere il mio ruolo da "docente tradizionale" a facilitatore dell'apprendimento				
conoscere nuove modalità di progettazione delle attività scolastiche				
cambiare approccio di verifica dei contenuti				
capire l'importanza dell'essere flessibile				
riflettere circa l'importanza di lavorare in interdisciplinarità				
acquisire competenze articolate e trasversale oltre che didattiche e culturali				
cambiare il mio modo di vedere la classe, da gruppo omogeneo a gruppo i cui discenti sono identità dotate di talenti, stili di apprendimento e bisogni differenti				

12. Quanto tempo impiega in media nella progettazione delle attività didattiche? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- 1 ora a settimana
- Tra 2 e 3 ore a settimana
- Tra 4 e 6 ore a settimana
- Oltre le 6 ore a settimana

13. Indichi l'affermazione che ritiene più vera. "Gli obiettivi didattici e gli indicatori di verifica disciplinari devono in primo luogo" ... *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Adattarsi al contesto classe
- Attenersi alle esigenze d'area disciplinare
- Attenersi alle esigenze generali di indirizzo

Autovalutazione delle competenze professionali

14. Indichi la situazione che più si avvicina al suo approccio didattico in merito alla competenze psicopedagogiche e metodologico-didattiche. *

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	Assolutamente no	Più no che sì	Più sì che no	Assolutamente sì
Incoraggio gli studenti a identificare le proprie esigenze educative				
Aiuto gli studenti a fissare obiettivi educativi e personali in base alle loro esigenze				
Identifico e rispondo ai bisogni della classe e dei singoli studenti				
Incoraggio gli studenti a usare le loro esperienze di vita quotidiana come opportunità di apprendimento				
Facilito e incoraggio l'interazione degli studenti				
Dimostro la convinzione che tutti gli studenti possono acquisire conoscenze e competenze				
Aiuto gli studenti a comprendere il processo di apprendimento della lingua in relazione ai loro obiettivi				
Dimostro un atteggiamento positivo e rafforzo l'atteggiamento positivo degli studenti verso il potenziale di successo				
Sfido gli studenti ad andare oltre la percezione dei propri limiti				
Utilizzo una varietà di strategie di valutazione che permettono agli studenti di				

vedere i progressi verso i loro obiettivi				
Mi avvalgo di risorse per la valutazione dei bisogni degli studenti, come questionari, liste di controllo per la definizione degli obiettivi e interviste.				
Collaboro e negozio con gli studenti per la scelta dei contenuti in base alle esigenze e alle preferenze degli studenti				
Incoraggio gli studenti a partecipare/usufruire delle attività extrascolastiche in lingua straniera				

15. Indichi la situazione che più si avvicina al suo approccio didattico in merito alla progettazione didattica *

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	Assolutamente no	Più no che sì	Più sì che no	Assolutamente sì
Propongo un'ampia varietà di attività didattiche che stimolano tutti i canali sensoriali e le diverse esigenze.				
Gestisco efficacemente l'insegnamento a più livelli, proponendo schede di lavoro organizzate "in strati" secondo un ordine di difficoltà crescente.				
Fornisco un'istruzione basata sull'evidenza e contestualizzata delle competenze				
Mi assicuro che le attività didattiche includano compiti che siano significativi nel contesto della vita quotidiana degli studenti				
Pianifico le unità di apprendimento seguendo le fasi di globalità, analisi, e sintesi.				
Ove possibile, seleziono materiale autentico (foto, canzoni, testi pubblicitari) per avvicinare gli studenti alla realtà linguistica e socioculturale dei parlanti nativi.				
Mi avvalgo tecniche che permettono di rendere l'input comprensibile, come la semplificazione, la facilitazione.				

16. Indichi la situazione che più si avvicina al suo approccio didattico durante lo svolgimento della lezione *

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	Assolutamente no	Più no che sì	Più sì che no	Assolutamente sì
Mi propongo "facilitatore" che guida gli studenti all'apprendimento della lingua				
Promuovo un ambiente favorevole alla partecipazione utilizzando strategie appropriate				
All'inizio di un'unità di apprendimento propongo delle attività motivanti per stimolare l'interesse del discente.				
Nell'analisi della struttura della lingua guido lo studente all'attivazione dell'expectancy grammar e alla formulazione di ipotesi.				
Incorporo una varietà di risorse tecnologiche e multimediali				
Stimolo il pensiero critico dei miei studenti				

17. Indichi la situazione che più si avvicina al suo approccio didattico in merito alla documentazione e valutazione dello studente. *

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	Assolutamente no	Più no che sì	Più sì che no	Assolutamente sì
Informo i miei studenti circa le modalità e tempistiche di valutazione				
Sono in grado di costruire uno griglia di valutazione per le prove non strutturate (prove orali, saggi...)				
So predisporre attività di monitoraggio in itinere				
Sollecito l'autovalutazione degli studenti				
Sono in grado di scegliere la prova di verifica delle competenze in relazione agli obiettivi che voglio verificare				
Conduco sempre valutazioni trasparenti e tempestive				
Baso la valutazione periodica e finale del discente dall'intersezione integrata del processo e del livello globale di sviluppo degli apprendimenti raggiunti				

18. Quanto spesso utilizza le seguenti metodologie didattiche? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	Mai	Raramente	Spesso	Qualche volta	Di frequente	Molto spesso
Cooperative learning						
Lavoro individuale						
Peer-Education						
Role-play						
Studio di caso						
Circle Time						
Dibattito argomentativo						
Problem Solving						
Flipped Classroom						
Didattica online						
Didattica laboratoriale						
Digital Storytelling						
Forum su piattaforme online						

19. Ci sono altri approcci e/o metodologie didattiche che utilizza di frequente? Perché li trova particolarmente vincenti? *

Emergenza |Covid-19: didattica a distanza

20. Indichi l'opzione che riflette la sua attuale situazione in merito alle attività di insegnamento /apprendimento a distanza. *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ( ) La didattica a distanza che sto svolgendo è frutto di una esperienza pregressa
- ( ) La didattica a distanza che sto svolgendo è nata con l'emergenza attuale
- ( ) Non sto svolgendo alcun tipo di attività a distanza

21. Le è stata fornita una formazione o un accompagnamento in questa fase? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- ( ) Sì
- ( ) No

22. Quale tipo di piattaforma/servizi utilizza? Può selezionare più di una risposta *

Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

- [ ] Software del registro elettronico
- [ ] Google Suite for education
- [ ] Office 365 Education
- [ ] Moodle
- [ ] Materiali e compiti per email
- [ ] Nessuno

Altro: [ ] _____

23. E' generalmente soddisfatto degli esiti della didattica a distanza? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Assolutamente sì
- Più sì che no
- Più no che sì
- Assolutamente no

24. Quali sono le problematiche emerse nello svolgimento della didattica a distanza? E' possibile selezionare più di una risposta. *

Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

- [ ] Gestione del tempo
- [ ] Organizzazione delle attività
- [ ] Disinteresse e mancanza di partecipazione degli studenti
- [ ] Difficoltà di inclusione dei ragazzi con disabilità
- [ ] Valutazione

Altro: [ ] _____

25. Pensa di prendere in considerazione questa modalità alternativa di didattica anche nel futuro? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Assolutamente sì
- Più sì che no
- Più no che sì
- Assolutamente no

26. Altre considerazioni.

Grazie per la collaborazione.

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APPENDIX C: Students'open answers on Item 25

creativo, disponibile, competente, buona pronuncia, deve riuscire a trattenere l'attenzione della classe
disponibile comprensivo severo ma non troppo innovativo paziente
Comprensivo, gentile, divertente, che sappia coinvolgere tutta la classe
Buona pronincia, voglia di fare, motivazione, coinvolgente
sorridente, preparato, disponibile, comprensivo, coinvolgente
Saper spiegare bene, saper gestire la classe, coinvolgere, aiutarmi a crescere come persona e saper relazionarsi con noi studenti.
Competente, rispettoso dei tempi, collaborativo, un po che si faccia rispettare e che non dia solo esercizi continuamente per farci imparare l'inglese quando ha a malapena spiegato la regola
Comprensivo Flessibile nel spostare le verifiche Paziente Disponibile a rispiegare Che ci metta impegno e passione in ciò che fa
Deve essere creativo, paziente, appassionato, coinvolgente e organizzato
Paziente, competente, coinvolgente, simpatico e disponibile.
Deve essere coinvolgente, trattare temi di attualità o connessi ad altre materie, deve parlare inglese durante le lezioni, innovativo e avere voglia di fare
competente, intraprendente, comprensivo, amante della materia, con una buona pronuncia
competente, intraprendente, comprensivo, amante della materia, con una buona pronuncia
Molto paziente Flessibile Attento
Coinvolgente simpatico comprensivo gentile che sappia gestire la classe
deve saper rendere la lezione non noiosa, saper spiegare in modo comprensibile, non essere pesante, ogni tanto deve staccare dalla lezione e magari scherzare con qualcosa e deve comprendere i ragazzi
Bravo, comprensivo, autorevole, gentile, simpatico
capace non arrogante comprensivo che ti fa amare la materia
Incoraggiante, sorridente, competente, un po' severo
sorridente, divertente, simpatica, brava , gentile

Buono, paziente, bravo a spiegare, intelligente, comprensivo
Comprensibile Gentile Flessibile Simpatico Sorridente
Comprensivo, simpatico, determinato, materialista, chiaro
Comprensivo, Imparziale, Calmo, Coinvolgente e Preparato
Capire i ragazzi ed i loro problemi
Parlare sia italiano che inglese Gentile Spiegare bene
gentile, coinvolgente, non noioso, comprensivo, flessibile
Comprensivo, paziente, divertente, moderno, chiaro
-comprensivo -gentile -non noioso -severo il giusto -coinvolgente
deve essere più simile ad una madrelingua, deve fare attività alternative per imparare, deve farci parlare molto sopratutto conversare anche solo per fare due chiacchiere, spiegare molto la grammatica anche attraverso dei video
COMPRENSIVO, LENTO, SORRIDENTE, CREATIVO, FORTE
Non dovrebbe minacciarci e dire che siamo la sua classe peggiore di tutta la sua carriera Poi dovrebbe pianificare le verifiche Dovrebbe stimolarci Fare esempi quando spiega le regole Non interrogarci tutte le lezioni
deve dare molta importanza al parlato, deve coinvolgere la classe il più possibile, deve parlare più possibile inglese durante la lezione, e proporre diversi tipi di attività
1.Saper coinvolgere gli alunni 2.Avere una buona pronuncia 3.Aiutare gli alunni a correggere la pronuncia 4. Aiutare e ascoltare gli alunni 5.Far fare molta attività di speaking agli alunni
1.paziente 2.motivante 3.originale 4.allegro 5.flessibile
interagire in inglese, attività particolari tipo canzoni e film in lingua, conversazione tra studenti, produzione orale e scritta, cultura generale
Paziente, creativo, socievole, coinvolgente e soprattutto SPIEGARE BENE
disponibile paziente appassionato flessibile pulito
Onestamente non aggiungerei nulla, la mia prof ha tutto quello che serve(non è per fare il lecchino)

competenza, buona volontà, incoraggiamento, altruista, simpatico
Simpatico, coinvolgente, rispettoso, disponibile, incoraggiante
Competente, che sa coinvolgere, severo il giusto, divertente e serio allo stesso tempo, disponibile
Deve essere creativo, originale, deve sempre applicare l'inglese in situazioni reali e concrete, deve essere comprensivo e flessibile permettendo agli alunni di provare a parlare una lingua nuova senza sentirsi in soggezione
Creativo, paziente, autoritario, disponibile e "tecnologico"
Gentile Paziente Comprensivo Non troppo severo Propositivo
Deve utilizzare molto l'inglese in classe, deve essere paziente, coinvolgente, sorridente, acculturata
Creativa, coinvolgente, incoraggiante, socievole, rispettabile
Comprensivo,Simpatico,allegro,gentile,pronto a dare una mano
severo, molto ma molto preparato in inglese, NON noioso e comprensibile
Diplomatico, estroverso, realistico, apprensivo e autoritario.
Mh.... Forse più dominante
Gentile Bravo a spiegare Flessibile Disponibile
non farmi annoiare, coinvolgente equo, allegro, spontaneo e interessante
non ripetitivo (stiamo troppo tempo ogni argomento), ci deve stimolare con nuovi modi per esporre la sua lezione, simpatico, paziente e con il vero interesse che quando usciremo da quella scuola sapremo parlare l’inglese
-avere proposte utili per apprendere la lingua, magari nei ragazzi con difficoltà -integrare lo studio autonomo con studio di gruppo -utilizzare la tecnologia -farci mettere in pratica ciò che apprendiamo -CONOSCERE LA LINGUA E LA PRONUNCIA!!
Moderno, comprensibile, competente, innovativo e flessibile
Comprensivo Una persona normale che magari al posto di farci copiare tutti gli esercizi sul quaderno ci facesse fare delle cose più interessanti Aperto Loquace Severo al punto giusto
innovativo, istruito, versatile, gentile, capace di comprendere le difficoltà di ogni alunno per poterli aiutare nell'apprendimento
Disponibile, comprensivo, interessante, positivo, innovativo
Paziente, comprensivo, deve dire il motivo di un'eventuale interrogazione o compito, deve farsi rispettare dai propri alunni, ma non deve essere troppo autoritario
Simpatico,gentile,propositivo,disponibile,rispettabile
1 capire le diversità tra i vari studenti 2 essere vario

3 fare speaking activities 4 far capire che è felice di insegnare la lingua e che le piace 5 parlare quasi tutta la lezione inglese per alcuni soggetti può essere di difficile interpretazione, capire quando è il momento di integrare con l'italiano
Il mio insegnante di inglese ideale deve essere: -Socievole con gli alunni; -Saper coinvolgere gli alunni con differenti attività; -Essere sempre a disposizione per dubbi; -Scegliere un metodo di apprendimento che vada bene per tutta la classe; -Motivare gli studenti a conoscere questa lingua.
-avere proposte utili per apprendere la lingua, magari nei ragazzi con difficoltà -integrare lo studio autonomo con studio di gruppo -utilizzare la tecnologia -farci mettere in pratica ciò che apprendiamo -CONOSCERE LA LINGUA E LA PRONUNCIA!!
creativo, disponibile, competente, buona pronuncia, deve riuscire a trattenere l'attenzione della classe
competente comprensivo intelligente deve capire noi ragazzi deve occuparsi di noi
Vorrei avere l'insegnante che avevo l'anno scorso. Aveva tutto quello di cui avevo bisogno, era disponibile, aperto a nuove modalità di lavoro, intraprendente, incitava quelli meno bravi, era rispettato e ci portava in gita. Soprattutto si vedeva che ci teneva al nostro apprendimento. Anche se non c'entra vorrei anche dire che con l insegnante che ho ora in prima superiore abbiamo fatto si e no 3 o 4 pagine del libro dall' inizio dell'anno e non ho fatto nessun progresso. Lui si adegua a quelli della classe che non sanno nemmeno dire CANE in inglese ma non lo trovo giusto che quelli bravi tipo me debbano fare poco solo per stare dietro a quelli che non sanno nulla.
creativo, coinvolgente, corretto, paziente e puntuale
Disponibile, preparato, coinvolgente, simpatico, paziente.
Più giovane, disponibile, meno prof,
Comprensivo, propositivo, paziente, coinvolgente, disponibile
Non deve interrogare
competente, parla inglese durante la lezione, positivo, coinvolgente, rilassato
Padronanza della lingua (competente), passione, autorevolezza, coinvolgente e paziente.
Comprensivo, paziente, competente, disponibile, simpatico
Tranquillo Non noioso Gentile Deve accogliere le nostre idee Positivo
Simpatico, gentile, comprensibile, che spiega bene e che mi aiuti con i compiti
paziente, disponibile, alternativo,
Disponibile, preparato, coinvolgente, creativo e flessibile

Paziente determinato comprensivo
Parlare sempre e solo inglese. Non fermarsi alla base ma cercare di essere creativo, l'inglese ha molte "shades" non c'è solo letteratura o solo grammatica. Spingere gli studenti a conoscere nuove parole, il lessico è essenziale. Ed infine motivarci, perché è fondamentale conoscere una lingua come l'inglese. Non solo per un lavoro futuro ma perché senza non puoi muoverti e resti ignorante. (Passami il termine, per favore).
Disponibile, paziente, creativo, coinvolgente, che ti spinga a ragionare
Interessante, stimolante, disponibile, competente, creativo
Paziente Che sappia coinvolgerci Che ci faccia lavorare su materiale autentico (es. canzoni)
Comprensivo Autoritario Tranquillo Ripetitivo Interessato ai pensieri degli studenti
Valido, disponibile, che si faccia rispettare, che riesca a coinvolgere, che insegni l'inglese quotidiano
Comprensivo competente simpatico autoritario che si fa rispettare
gentile; disponibile;corretto;simpatico;saggio
Parlare sempre e solo inglese. Non fermarsi alla base ma cercare di essere creativo, l'inglese ha molte "shades" non c'è solo letteratura o solo grammatica. Spingere gli studenti a conoscere nuove parole, il lessico è essenziale. Ed infine motivarci, perché è fondamentale conoscere una lingua come l'inglese. Non solo per un lavoro futuro ma perché senza non puoi muoverti e resti ignorante. (Passami il termine, per favore).
Dovrebbe essere simpatico, coinvolgente, costante, serio, originale (dovrebbe insegnarci inglese in modi diversi. Ad esempio attraverso film, musica, oppure lavori a gruppi) e dovrebbe essere in grado di tenere la classe in ordine e farsi rispettare da tutti senza però risultare troppo severo.
Creativo Coinvolgente Paziente Comprensivo Disponibile
Interessante, simpatico, disponibile ad aiutare, severo al punto giusto e senza preferenze.
Esaustivo comprensivo competente professionale creativo
Bravo in inglese Saper insegnare Saper coinvolgere e stimolare la classe Essere comprensivo Avere un buon rapporto con I propri studenti
Parla quasi esclusivamente inglese, sprona tutti a parlare e praticare la lingua, comprensivo dei ritmi di ciascuno, non fa solo lezione frontale, autorevole
Disponibile, comprensivo, tranquillo, coinvolgente, esigente
Non lo so
Capace, onesto, socievole, non aggressivo, preparato

Sapere spiegare bene Non farci annoiare Farci fare attività diverse dalla solita spiegazione Che si preoccupi di noi Che ci capisca
Superdisponibile, propositivo, comprensivo, paziente e coinvolgente
Buono, gentile, bravo, comprensivo e pacifico.
Simpatico Coinvolgente Motivante paziente preparato
Coinvolgente, competente, propositivo, innovativo e gentile
Creativa, coinvolgente, incoraggiante, socievole, rispettabile

APPENDIX D: Teachers' open answers on Item 19

CLIL
Lexical approach
dibattito in lingua
Gamification (kahoot, quizizz) perché al professionale in classi formate da soli maschi puntare sulla competitività individuale (classifica finale) rende.
lavorare in gruppo, rendere attori del processo conoscitivo gli alunni, differenziare i lavori in classe
Board and card games
quelle citate in precedenza sono esaustive
Inserisco compiti di realtà, sia nella formazione che per la verifica
ESA, perché mi aiuta nell'organizzazione e stimola la motivazione intrinseca degli studenti.
Esperienze fuori dalla classe - dove e' possibile - interazione con la comunita' e il mondo esterno
Dibattito argomentativo: Aiuta gli stuenti a sviluppare un punto di vista critico e a motivarlo
Problem solving
1.peer education affiancando studenti italofoni a non italofoni = ed. interculturale; 2.sono assolutamente favorevole al CLIL, a cui ho partecipato per diversi anni e che ora non si propone più, perchè è un ottimo approccio al plurilinguismo autentico e favorisce la consapevolezza e l'utilizzo dell'interlingua 3. valorizzo i tanti allievi bilingui o plurilingui
Flipped classroom
Compito autentico
Si prediligono le tecniche di un approccio comunicativo, si chiede sempre la motivazione dello studente. Molto utilizzate le canzoni e il paragone tra Italia e proprio Paese. Faccio uso di attività ludiche in base alla motivazione della classe
role play
Suggestopedia moderna
Molto spesso propongo attività da svolgere in coppia all'esterno della classe, compiti di realtà di cui poi rendere conto all'interno della classe.
no non utilizzo altre metodologie
In realtà mi sono resa conto di non sapere di cora si stessa parlando con PEFIL e PLE e di non usare quasi mai le varie metodologie. Seguo il libro, essenzialmente, ma mi rendo conto che non funziona. Quindi adesso sto copiando il questionario per usarlo come checklist e approfondire i vari metodi e atteggiamenti citati. Grazie della comprensione
Noi usiamo ACTFL come linea guida, ma si puo` ricondurre al QUadro Europeo
Attività di riscaldamento e concept-checking
Flipped classroom
Clil, motivante e costruttivo
Rolex play
Riflessione linguistica e conversazioni sono utili per confermare le competenze acquisite
approccio ludico
Frequenti attività che portano all'autovalutazione. Rendono lo studente consapevole in modo concreto
Obliquità: porre ostacoli differenziati a seconda delle capacità per permettere a tutti di sperimentare il successo
Flipped classroom e didattica online sono indispensabili in questi giorni, in situazioni normali le uso meno
Esperienze situazionali di apprendimento e compiti autentici
Lexical approach e Chunch lesson
TIE theatre in education
Credo molto nell'approccio educativo dell'Universal Design for Learning
reggio children approach

Dipende dal.tipo di utenza, che firma.la.classe
Ricerca azione
La didattica laboratoriale perché unisce il lavoro di gruppo
Lavori di gruppo- favoriscono le relazioni interpersonali attraverso il confronto
Consiglio di seguire il loro programma televisivo /film/telefilm in italiano. Questo diventa materiale di produzione orale in classe.
Brain storming, mappatura di contenuti in cooperative learning
Di recente ho studiato il task based approach e mi sembra un ottimo approccio per il focus sul significato, l'outcome che corrisponde a un atto comunicativo autentico e significativo, per il fatto che è learner centered e spinge gli apprendenti a responsabilizzarsi e sentirsi parte attiva del processo di apprendimento
tpr
Clil perché insegno anche corsi di contenuto
Peer to peer
Flipped Classroom
Debate
Canzoni e bio musica consigliata dai ragazzi. materiali autentici e stimolanti per i ragazzi
Debate
la drammatizzazione.
Presentazioni orali individuali e di gruppo
Le metodologie tic sono molto motivanti attraverso i progetti training
Ora didattica a distanza
Hackaton, CBL....
teach to learn, gamification, webquest
Ho trovato utile usufruire del rapporto esistente tra musica e apprendimento di una lingua straniera. In particolare con la didattica dell'italiano a stranieri ho utilizzato quella che definirei una memoria sensoriale. Data la musicalità della nostra lingua ho anche avuto la possibilità di promuovere la cultura italiana attraverso le sue canzoni. Soprattutto a fine lezione, un'attività ricreativa ma allo stesso tempo formativa.
Debate
Didattica ludica e didattica del fare
online activities
Lavoro per gruppi tra pari. Vincenti perchè mettono meno a disagio chi è in difficoltà
Drama in Education
PBL perche' creano basi per il futuro attraverso compito di realta
Omniumkontakt
Utilizzo frequentemente la modalità flipped per ridurre il tempo di frequenza in aula virtuale essendo la DaD obbligatoria.
Utilizzare i primi minuti di lezione per favorire la comunicazione orale in lingua tra studenti.
Realizzazione di prodotti reali in LS per finalità esterne alla lezione; confronto per la scelta degli argomenti; valutazione tra pari; process drama;
Utilizzo spesso giochi e quiz online, specialmente nelle classi del biennio.
Attività di riflessione individuale e di gruppo, attività di metariflessione sull'apprendimento della lingua
Non mi vengono in mente altre metodologie, ma trovo vincente far riflettere lo studente sulla lingua in tutte le sue forne, incoraggiandoli ad andare oltre il voto
MLTV per sviluppare pensiero critico e senso dell'osservazione
CLIL (storia in francese) anche se non è contemplato dalla normativa che un docente di LS insegni dei contenuti disciplinari
Analisi dei testi