# Università Ca'Foscari Venezia

## Master's Degree programme
## in Language Science

# Language Learning Skills - Classroom Research

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# Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the employment of language learning skills in the study of a foreign language in a High School, throughout a research conducted during an internship at "Ettore Majorana-Elena Corner High School" of Mirano (VE). The project of this thesis consists of the investigation of three research questions: the first, concerning the employment of language learning skills through the direct observation of an English teacher; the second, concerning the strategies adopted by students in their study of English language outside the school environment; the third, regarding the analysis of the learning style profile of a student. At the end, thanks to the use of graphs and tables, it will be provided a detailed analysis of the results achieved in 150 hours of observation through the employment of different instruments.

*Keywords*: foreign-language education, classroom research, language learning skills, language learning strategies, motivational strategies, language style profile.

# Contents

# Introduction

Over the centuries, the teaching field evolved, shifting the focus from the teacher to the subject to the learner. While not too many years ago the teacher was represented as an omniscient authority whose judgement and knowledge had not to be discussed, nowadays this figure is represented as a guide and support to the learning process. Each learner is different one another, from the age, to the objectives of learning to any special educational need, and it does not exist one teaching method valid and effective for anyone. This is true if one thinks that to learn a language does not exclusively mean to learn a series of grammatical rules, rather a multitude of different shapes of language concerning grammar, culture, civic education and inclusion. Specularly, the language teacher has to face with all these matters in addition to maybe the most important aspect of language: communication. The ability of learning a new language revolves around mainly four core-skills, namely listening, reading, speaking and writing. Depending on the reasons which lead to the study of the language and on its use and employment, these macro-skills can be developed to varying degrees, but all together contribute to the mastery of the new language. In this thesis, composed of 5 chapters, the aim is that of observing and studying the way in

which these core-skills are employed in a school environment and how much attention is given to the learner during the process.

In Chapter 1 it will be presented a theoretical overview about linguistic education, concerning both the sphere of teaching and learning, including some of the most important theories of the 20th century. Among these, it will be provided a brief explanation of the *Language Acquisition Device* theory of Noam Chomsky; the *Interlanguage* theory of Larry Selinker; the *Linguistic Interdependence* theory of Jim Cummins and last, but not least, the *Second Language Acquisition Theory* of Stephen Krashen. After this, it will be introduced the concept of language skill with particular emphasis on core skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing, focusing on their relation about the direction and method of communication. In addition, it will be provided a short list of techniques for each skill, which can be used for their development, and it will be inserted a small frame concerning the so called *integrated skills*. At the end of the chapter, the focus will shift from linguistic strategies to motivational strategies, important as the previous ones in the learning process, in consideration of students of different ages and respective needs, from children to adults.

In Chapter 2 it will be discussed the Case Study on which it is based the whole thesis, carried out during a first-hand experience of internship at *Ettore Majorana-Elena Corner* High school of Mirano (VE). Precisely, in this chapter the different aspects which concern the research project will be presented, underlining the main points of *Classroom Research*. This chapter is divided

into three phases, introduced by a preliminary one, phase 0, with accounts to the three questions that initiated the project of the case study, what it was meant to be explored and the connection with language learning skills. The first phase regards the description of the characteristics of the subjects starting from the teacher and concluding with the students; the second phase concerns the instruments employed during this period of direct observation, their description and use; the third phase relates to the type and duration of observation and the different modalities of data collection according to the subjects.

In Chapter 3 it will be presented the context of the observation, focusing on the main changes that occurred in the scholar field during Covid-19 pandemic, including the different dispositions that have been taken, especially during the first five months of the academic year 2020/2021, by the Ministry of Education. In consideration of this difficult situation, some schools launched a catch-up programme, including the school of the case study, with the aim of helping all those students affected by the consequences of the discontinuing first steps of online teaching. In relation to this topic, it will also be discussed the mean of technology, with its pros and cons and the way in which it can both help and, at the same time, hinder the learning process of the students.

In Chapter 4 it will be provided the presentation of the results obtained by the observation of the teacher and the questionnaires administered to students, with the analysis of the data collected synthesized through the use

of graphs. This chapter is divided into three parts, each focusing on one of the research questions presented in Chapter 2. Specifically, the first part will be focusing on the presentation of the different language learning skills employed by the teacher and the analysis of the strategies used during the lessons. The second part will be dedicated to the exposition of the questionnaire administered to part of the students concerning the use of language learning strategies, with particular emphasis on the fields concerning listening, vocabulary, speaking, reading, writing and translation. The third and final part will be focusing on the questionnaire administered to all students subjects of observation regarding the foreign language learning style, with particular attention towards sensorial modalities, cognitive styles and personal traits.

The conclusions of the research project will be discussed in Chapter 5, in consideration of all the previous chapters but with special attention to the three research questions. Specifically, in this chapter it will be figured out whether there are some language learning skills more employed during classroom lessons with respect to some others and if they differ from a grade to another; if there are some language learning strategies more employed by students during their study at home; what type of language learning style profile appear to mostly characterize the subjects of this research and if it differs from a grade to another.

# Chapter 1

# Foreign Language Education

In this chapter it will be provided a theoretical overview about linguistic education, concerning both the sphere of teaching and learning. In particular, in section 1.1 it will be exposed the thought of some of the major exponents of linguistic education, from Chomsky to Krashen in 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3 and 1.1.4. In section 1.2 will be introduced the language learning skills, central theme of the thesis, with particular emphasis on core skills. Lastly, after the introduction of language strategies, in section 1.3 the focus will be on motivational strategies, in consideration of some variables of the language learning process.

## 1.1 Theoretical framework

Differently from what it can be thought, education as we know it is a relatively recent discipline. Since ancient times, there are references on theories of education: one has just to think of sophists, whose pedagogical ideals of

the V century b.C. assumed that education is not a natural process, rather it has to be guided by experts and conducted in an appropriate environment which can favour the growing and harmonic development of the young learner [37]. In the same period one can recall Socrates, whose discussions aimed at leading to a recognition that true knowledge consisted in the awareness of not knowing. His theory justified his didactic methodology in never providing concepts, ideas or theories, rather in bringing out doubts and perplexities [28].

Over the centuries, many theories of education followed one another, differentiating more and more in different fields, among which the linguistic field. At first, the learner was considered as a vase to fill with rules and paradigms and the study was intended as a duty of the learner with no discussions and exceptions, all the more over about methods, objectives and contents. In this sense, the idea of Socrates seems more similar to the theories elaborated in the latest year with respect to way more recent studies which consider the learner as a "clean slate". His intention was that of stimulating the reasoning, logic and comparison on problematic situations [36]. However, in the last decades a new educational sphere has developed: indeed, it began to be taken in consideration also the psychological sphere, developing mostly in the Seventies-Eighties of the last century. Thanks to new theories and the contribution of Psychology, Psychodidactics and Neurosciences, it could be affirmed that the emotional dimension of a learner not only is an essential component, but is frequently prevalent [5].

### 1.1.1 Chomsky: Language Acquisition Device

One of the most important and revolutionary steps concerning the educational and linguistic sphere is the study of language acquisition and its operating mechanisms. During the XX century, different theories had been elaborated with respect to the language system, and one of these is Noam Chomsky's *Language Acquisition Device*. Chomsky examined the possible existence of universal principles to describe language acquisition, a sort of grammar which enables human beings to elaborate a rich language to an infinite potential of expression. Accordingly, it has been developed the *Universal Grammar theory* to explain the ability of the child to acquire the adult's language within a very short time.

The concept of Universal Grammar does not refer to a specific language, rather it aims at identifying a series of innate rules called *parameters* and *principles* [7]. To learn a language, it means to learn the way in which the principles of the Universal Grammar apply to a specific language and the values that its parameters assume. In this regard, the linguistic acquisition is not the result of an imitation or habit and does not totally depend on the environment exposition; rather, it is a human brain mechanism which enables the child to learn a language in a very short time thanks to the *Language Acquisition Device*.

## 1.1.2   Selinker: Interlanguage

Another important contribute on language learning can be found on Selinker's article *"Interlanguage"*; this term describes a process in which the learner gets closer to the target language through different stages of linguistic competence. In this sense, this concept explains how the acquisition of second language is not immediate, rather it requires many years. Moreover, the idea of Interlanguage sees the learner as an active subject who formulates hypotheses about the target language, trying to create transitional linguistic systems; these systems are based on few means available, but equipped with logic, functionality and inner coherence.

According to Selinker, it is not entirely negative to make mistakes, rather they are the reflection of the learning process advancement; indeed, in contrast with the thinking of few decades earlier, the frame of reference for the learning of a language is not simply the approximation to its correct form and the exclusion of mistakes. Reasonably, now mistakes are not just deviation from the standard form of the language, rather the regularity indicators within the interlinguistic system with which the learner tries to meet with his own communicative needs.

Since each language has its own crucial passages and steps independent from the language of origin of the learner, the learning process from the initial state to the complete proficiency can be represented as a series of intermediate systems, each with its rules. However, the Interlanguage has not to meant as an intermediate variety between the mother tongue and the target language,

rather as a *"simplified grammar"* [33]. An Interlanguage is a reworking of the principles and the natural processes, which can get more or less close to the target language.

### 1.1.3   Cummins: Linguistic Interdependence

Another language theorist is the Canadian scholar J. Cummins, the first to theorize the *"Linguistic Interdependence"* principle [9]:

*"Cognitive academic proficiency in the L1 and L2 are interdependent. Increases in the capacity for cognitive activity in one language also enhances the same capacity in the other. Consequently, learners who develop more cognitive skills through the use of their native language before beginning the acquisition of the L2 will develop the ability to manifest those skills in the L2 more rapidly than those who have not."*

According to this theory, all competences acquired in L1 can be transferred in L2: the linguistic knowledge and competences possessed by a child can be a tool for the development of the skills corresponding to L2. However, in order to guarantee this passage, it is necessary that all the aspects involved in the transition have been entirely acquired in L1.

Moreover, Cummins makes another distinction, which regards what are called BICS, *Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills* and CALP, *Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency* [10]. BICS represent the linguistic competence necessary to face all those difficulties concerning interpersonal communica-

tion; these are the "surface" skills of listening and speaking which are typically acquired quickly by many students; particularly by those from language backgrounds similar to English who spend a lot of their school time interacting with native speakers. On the other hand, CALP represent the expression of the linguistic competence which faces cognitively advanced tasks; in other words, it is the basis for the ability of a child to deal with the academic demands in the various subjects. Cummins states that while many children develop native speaker fluency (i.e. BICS) within two years of immersion in the target language, it takes between 5-7 years for a child to be working on a level with native speakers as far as academic language is concerned [11].

### 1.1.4  Krashen: Second Language Acquisition Theory

As stated before, Chomsky hypothesized the existence of a language device and studied its syntactic aspect. In this concern, Krashen elaborated his *Second Language Acquisition Theory* starting from the work of Chomsky, studying, in particular, the distinction between acquisition and learning, similar to the interpretation of Chomsky concerning *knowing* and *cognising*. Therefore, Krashen elaborates his five hypothesis, cardinal points of his theory [25].

1) *The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis.* Krashen makes a distinction between two fundamental processes through which a language can be learned: acquisition system and learning system. The first, is an unconscious process, which leads to the internalization of language in a stable and lasting way and to a progressive capability to understand and produce original phrases, recombining the absorbed notions and concepts. In other words,

it is the system thanks to which a child learns his/her own mother tongue, through an unconscious process which exploits intuition and the natural memorization of the learned input. On he other hand, the second system regards a conscious and rational process, which is normally used in a scholar learning process. It can lead to almost perfect competences, however it never stabilizes as in the acquisition process.

2) *The Monitor Hypothesis.* The monitor represents the control function of the notion's correctness which activates when we learn, by consolidating the notions which we verify as "correct" (which they provoke an approval reaction on the listener) and by fixing and verifying the incorrect expressions (which provoke specific reactions on the listener, such as the reformulation and correction). The monitor varies consistently in consideration of the age and the cognitive style of the learner.

3) *The Natural Order Hypothesis.* Krashen argues that the grammar of a language, namely the rules which lead to the formation of a correct and intelligible phrase, is acquired in a spontaneous way, which he defines as "natural": from the simplest to the most complex structures. Specifically, the natural order characterizes the automatic processes, i.e acquisition.

4) *The Input Hypothesis.* The exposition to the input is the only way in which it is possible, at any age, to learn a language. One has to consider language as a practical subject and, in order to acquire the notion, it is necessary for the learner to be physically exposed to the language. However, only a simple exposition is not sufficient to acquire nor learn: the input has to be comprehensible. In this, the input has to be proposed

in a moment in which the learner is able to understand its meaning and the intrinsic usefulness. Only in a second moment, the input can be effectively registered and store but if and only if the affective filter is lowered: indeed, when the learner is in an anxiety situation or fears to be negatively evaluated, it is not possible to learn or acquire. Krashen calls this natural knowing scale as *"+1"*, meaning that the exposition to new information and knowledge has to follow a progressive scale.

5) *The Affective Filter Hypothesis.* The affective filter represents one of the most inspiring intuitions of Krashen: with this fifth hypothesis, Krashen explains why one learner seems to learn in different ways according to the different teachers or contexts. The affective filter can be seen as a sort of defensive barrier which can be lifted or lowered according to the situation. It can be lifted in situations of hostility and danger, distrust or disharmony with the teacher. On the other hand, in relaxation and affection situations and harmony with the teacher, the filter allows the passage of the input, favouring the memorization.

## 1.2 Language Learning Skills

In this section, it will be provided an explanation about *language learning skills*, central theme of the thesis. Any learner who wishes to enhance the learning of a foreign language, has to develop mainly four language skills, known as *core skills*, considered as the central and very important ones, which are: listening, reading, speaking and writing. Among all skills concerning language, these four are called *macro-skills*, but there are also other

parameters to take into consideration, the so-called *micro-skills*, which can be components of one or more macro-skills, as for example: grammar, spelling, vocabulary and pronunciation.

There are two ways in which the core skills are related to each other:

a) *direction of communication*, in or out;

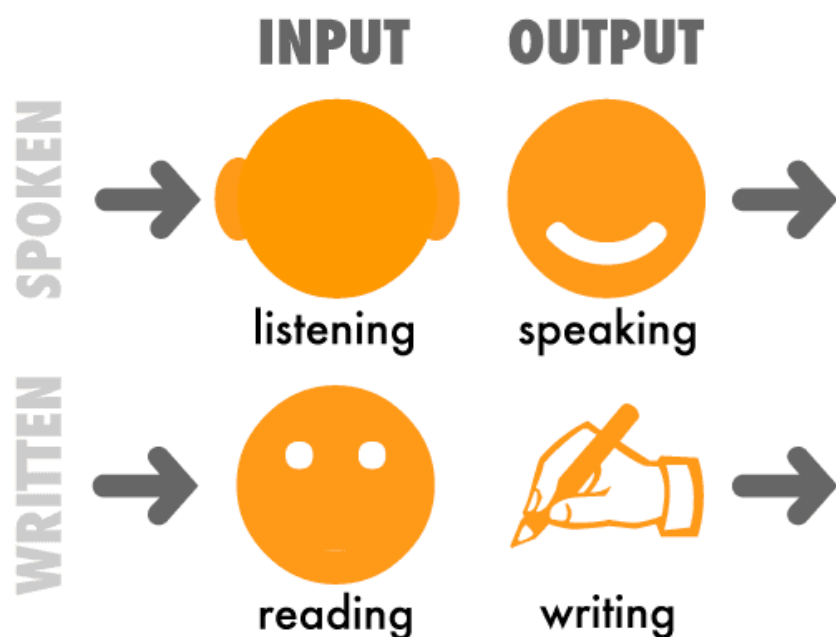b) *method of communication*, spoken or written.



Figure 1.1: Core language learning skills

As it can be seen from this image, the spoken method of communication is represented by *listening* and *speaking*, whereas the written one is represented by *reading* and *writing*. Moreover, another important aspect to take into con-

sideration consists on whether the direction of communication is *"in"*, repre-
sented by the receptive skills *listening* and *reading*, or *"out"*, represented by
the productive skills *speaking* and *writing*. In the following sections the four
macro-skills will be presented basing on this aspect, with some examples of
exercises and strategies which can enhance their development in a learning
context.

However, before the description of these skills, it is important to mention
that all these skills have to be known and exercised in order to learn a lan-
guage. At the same time, one can choose and focus on those skills more
relevant for a particular communicative need or linguistic interest, but the
most important thing is balancing the accuracy and the fluency among the
four skills. Indeed, language learning can be directed towards these two di-
rections, precisely: accuracy is oriented towards the correct use of grammar,
whereas fluency towards the development of a spontaneous communicative
skill. Both these parameters are important objectives in the teaching and
learning of a language, and there are some instruments and grids which can
help a learner to follow his learning process [17].

One of these instruments is the *Common European Framework of Reference
for Languages* (CEFR), an international standard for describing language
ability. It describes language ability on a six-point scale, from A1 for be-
ginners, up to C2 for those who have mastered a language, and it can help
all subjects of the learning process to see the level of different qualifications
[38]. In 1975, the *Council of Europe*, published *"The Threshold Level"* by

Dr. J. A. van Ek as a part of a project which aimed at investigating the feasibility of a unit system for adult language learning in Europe [15], and set out "to develop conceptual and planning instruments to assist teachers and course planners to analyse the needs of the learners towards whom they had responsibilities and to set, consciously and explicitly, appropriate learning objectives" [16].

However, in 1991 it was published a revised, corrected and extended version of the previous article in *"Threshold 1990"*, because the previous model for the specification of objectives did not exhaust the objectives which language learners should set themselves. In this version, the long list of functions concerning the use of language was reduced, and it was made the distinction between "productive" and "passive" level of competence: the first means that the learner is able, at the same time, to understand and produce language; whereas, in the second case the learner is able to understand the target-language, but not to produce it. In 2001, it was published by the Council of Europe an additional reduction of the levels to six: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2, with reference to listening, reading, speaking (interaction and production) and writing [40].

### 1.2.1 Input: reception

As mentioned, *listening* and *reading* are receptive skills, meaning that their role in the learning process contributes to the development of *comprehension*. The difference between the two skills lies in a perceptive level, since input can be conveyed through an acoustic or visual mean.

Generally speaking, all four core-skills together are fundamental to develop language proficiency, but listening contributes primarily for language expertise. Indeed, this receptive skill awakens awareness of the language since it is the first which develops in a human being; the auditory system in a newborn is completely developed and already active during gestation. A baby, before learning to speak listens to and imitates the parents and the sounds around him and, in this sense, a language learner has to be considered as a baby. Although the sensory and cognitive apparatus are more developed with respect to an infant, for a language learner the listening skill is at the basis of the process, and it has to be considered as the primary form of communication. The sound, rhythm, intonation, and stress of the new language can only be perfectly adapted through listening and, as one gets to understand spoken language by listening to it, it is easier to improve the other skills and gain confidence. As Professor Renukadevi states in his article about the role of listening in language acquisition, *"in terms of communicative language teaching, it is said that the basis for communicative competence is listening, as it provides the aural input and enables learners to interact in spoken communication"* [32], adding that language learning depends largely on listening.

However, in order to develop the listening skill, there are numerous strategies which can help the learning process, basing on the situation, the type of input and the purposes of the learner. Below are listed some of the possible strategies which can be employed in order to help the development of the listening learning skill:

a) cloze: an exercise formed by a portion of text in which some words have been removed, and it is required to the learner to fill the gaps while listening to an audio;

b) matching: exercise in which it is required to match an image to the heard description or a word to its definition;

c) completion/joint: while listening to an audio, the learner is required to complete the heard sentences or to join extracts of a text in a precise order;

d) open questions: after listening to an audio, the learner is required to answer to a question;

e) note-taking: while listening to an audio o to someone speaking, the learner is required to take notes about what is being said;

f) multiple choice: while listening to an audio, the learner is required to answer to one or more questions by selecting the right option among those listed.

The other receptive skill is *reading* which, along with *listening*, contributes to comprehension. Specifically, this skill refers to the ability to understand written texts and the process of decoding written symbols for the purpose of making meaning or getting information. In this concern, Oxford's Dictionary defines the verb "to read" as *"to look at and understand the meaning of written or printed words or symbols"* [21], and the word "reading" as *"the particular way in which you understand a book, situation, etc."* [21], after which is provided the synonym *"interpretation"*. Along with the listening

skill, reading activities contribute to comprehension and the development of cognitive processes which constitute what is called *"expectancy grammar"*. This concept means that a language learner understands better a text or more rapidly the new information conveyed by the text if it is predictable within a reasonable restricted range of possibilities [5]. This concept was introduced by John W. Oller stating that "a person listening or reading is constantly generating hypotheses about what will come next in the sequence in terms of what the writer or speaker is intending to say" [30]; in this concern, this expectancy enables the language learner to process in rapid rates the elements of a language. Below are listed some of the possible strategies which can be employed in order to help the development of the reading learning skill:

a) cloze: an exercise formed by a portion of text in which some words have been removed, and it is required to the learner to fill the gaps while reading a text;

b) matching: exercise in which it is required to match an image to the correct description or a word to its definition;

c) completion/joint: while reading a text, the learner is required to complete the dialogues or to join extracts of a text in a precise order;

d) open questions: after reading a text, the learner is required to answer to a question;

e) transcoding: after reading a text the learned is required to "translate" what just read into a drawing or to mimic some instructions;

f) multiple choice: while reading a text, the learner is required to answer to one or more questions by selecting the right option among those listed.

## 1.2.2   Output: production

In this subsection it will be analysed the counterpart of language skills, in particular the productive skills *speaking* and *writing*. As mentioned before, the first characterises the speaking way of communication along with the *listening* skill, whereas the second joins the *reading* skill in the development of the written way of communication. A language learner usually begins his process with the development of receptive skills through the acquisition of inputs, and just after some sessions he will proceed with productive skills. Generally, indeed, a language beginner aims at acquiring as many input as possible before starting to produce something new: for example, through listening the learner can understand the pronunciation of words, on which part of the sentence usually falls the stress, etc.; on the other hand, through reading the learner can better understand the structures of sentences, morphemes, hyphenation, the length of sentences, the style of the texts, etc.

When the time comes to employ productive skills, there is a generally acknowledged linear path to engage in both *speaking* and *writing* language skills: conceptualization, planning and realization [5]. The first phase consists of gathering ideas on what to say or to write through instruments such as brainstorming or diagrams; in the second phase all the gathered ideas are transformed and ordered into a scale or list in a specific order to follow during the third and final phase of spoken or written realization. This last step

can flow in a multitude of exercises and strategies to develop the productive skills, which can be employed in a group or individually with different grades of difficulty. Below, some of these strategies are listed.

Speaking skill strategies:

a) dialogues: usually employed during a group or couple learning session, in which the learner is required to speak with one or more interlocutors with (close dialogues) or without (open dialogues) a script o follow;

b) open questions: during this exercise the learner is required to provide a more or less short answers given by an oral or written direction;

c) role-play: usually employed during a group or couple learning session, in which the learner is required to take part of a simulation with (open simulation) or without (closed simulation) a context;

d) monologue: the learner is required to freely speak for a determined time;

e) description of image: the learner is required to orally describe one or more images, making specific use of vocabulary.

Writing skill strategies:

a) description of image: the learner is required to write the description one or more images, making specific use of vocabulary;

b) text with points to follow: the learner is required to write a text by following a list of instructions or topics;

c) text as an answer to a question: the learner is required to write a text with no points to follow if not the topic required by a question;

d) short sentences: usually employed at the beginning of the learning process, in which the learner is required to write some short sentences;

e) free composition: the learner is required to write a medium-long text about a desired topic.

One of the most important things to keep in mind, is that there is not a strict separation among the abilities, since one never employs just one skill at a time. In this sense, one refers to *integrated skills* in which more than one skill is needed in order to be able to use some of the strategies, as for example: dialogues, summaries, dictations, paraphrases, note-taking, translation, etc. [31]. In particular, these skills can combine two core skills at a time, one receptive and one productive, as it can be seen in the table below.

| **SKILLS** | Listening | Reading |
|---|---|---|
| Speaking | dialogue summary translation | summary translation |
| Writing | dictation note-taking summary translation | note-taking paraphrase summary translation |

Table 1.1: Integrated skills

As it can be observed, some skills appear in more than one box, as in the

case of summary and translation; in this concern, it has to be specified that the input of the receptive skill can be provided in certain cases both in oral and written form. Particularly:

a) *dialogue*: it consists of an interaction between two or more speakers (listening → speaking);

b) *dictation*: it consists of the transformation of an oral text into a written text word by word (listening → writing);

c) *note-taking*: it consists of a personalized form of summary from an oral or written input into a written output (listening → writing or reading → writing);

d) *paraphrase*: it consists of a transformation of a written text into another one with the same meaning and structure but with a different lexicon (reading → writing);

e) *summary*: it consists of the transformation of an oral or written text into another oral or written text basing only on the fundamental and central point of the original one (listening → writing or listening → speaking or reading → writing or reading → speaking);

f) *translation*: it consists of the production of an oral or written text language equivalent to the original one in a different language (listening → writing or listening → speaking or reading → writing or reading → speaking).

## 1.3 Motivational Strategies

In the previous section it has been provided a number of examples concerning what are called linguistic strategies in order to develop language learning skills. However, during the learning process these strategies are not enough to improve the language because there are some other factors to take into considerations: among these, the motivational factor.

Motivation is very important in the learning process, not only as far as languages are concerned, but in all the educational sphere. If one looked at the definition of *motivation* in the dictionary, he would read "the reason why somebody does something or behaves in a particular way; [the reason that leads] somebody want to do something, especially something that involves hard work and effort" [21]. When it comes to education and learning, the direct connection, for a young student, is school, a facility in which s/he is obliged to learn and study specific subjects for then being tested. However, it would be limited to think about learning only for the category of children and adolescents; there are, indeed, also adults with different needs and motives to learn a language. As it can be depicted, there are many variables to take into consideration when it comes to motivation in language learning, among these: the age of the learner and the objective(s) of the learning.

### 1.3.1 Children

A human being, before the acquisition and the development of language, already possess unconscious and implicit knowledge and, to acquire a lan-

guage it means to acquire all those skills. Indeed, no matter the complexities that some skills may convey, children are able to acquire them without an explicit teaching and without too many difficulties around two - two and a half years old [19]. An important factor to consider, is that the mind of a child is opened to a constant learning regardless of the language to which he is exposed to, reaching the pick around the eight year of life, in which every synapse in the brain work at maximum level [5]. Indeed, if children were provided with LASS (*Language Acquisition Support*) to their LAD (*Language Acquisition Device*) by creating all those conditions necessary for them to learn and avoiding the traditional "teaching", there would be the best results. In consideration of the subjects in analysis, a very good solution could be achieved through game, thanks to which children are the main characters and have fun.

In this phase are taken into consideration all those children under 12-13 years old, belonging to the preadolescence age group. There are many possibilities to activate stimulus on children through gaming and play, all the more over if one thinks that we are living in a digital era. On this regard, the American linguist and Professor James Paul Gee wrote many books concerning this topic, specifically gaming and its relationship with learning, among these: "Good video games and good learning" (2007), "Language and learning in the digital era" (2011), "Teaching, learning, literacy in our high-risk high-tech world" (2017). One of the most thought-provoking is "What video games have to teach us about learning and and literacy" (2003), in which Gee considers gaming the testing ground for the new theories concerning

the cognitive development: in his approach the author shifts the focus from technology to language with particular emphasis on the communicative system. In this book are analysed all those elements thanks to which the *player* learns efficiently and spontaneously with *motivation*; in a gaming situation the learner applies for hours, trying to overcome a problem until he finds a solution, as it should be at school. During this analysis, the author proposes 14 learning principles, among these [18]:

a) amplification of Input principle: for a little input, learners get a lot of output;

b) achievement principle: for learners of all levels of skill there are intrinsic rewards from the beginning, customised to each learner's level, effort, and growing mastery and signalling the learner's ongoing achievements;

c) practice principle: learners get lots and lots of practice in a context where the practice is not boring and where they spend lots of time on task;

d) multiple routes principle: there are multiple ways to make progress or move ahead, allowing learners to make choices, rely on their own strengths and styles of learning and problem-solving, while also exploring alternative styles;

e) incremental principle: learning situations are ordered in the early stages so that earlier cases lead to generalisations that are fruitful for later cases. When learners face more complex cases later, the learning space (the number and type of guess the learner can make) is constrained by the sorts of fruitful patterns or generalisations the learner has founded earlier;

f) transfer principle: learners are given ample opportunity to practice, and support for, transferring what they have learned earlier to later problems, including problems that require adapting and transforming that earlier learning.

## 1.3.2   Adolescents

As far as adolescents are concerned, ageing 13-19 years old, the study of a foreign language usually revolves around High School, so as a mandatory subject. In this sense, the learning of a new language, and not only this, is seen more as a duty rather than an opportunity: opportunity to communicate worldwide, opportunity to better fit the business and commercial exchange language, opportunity to even develop the understanding of the new technological means. One could say that the very fact of studying a new language, may this be English language as well as another one, opens people up to a different culture and helps them to integrate with the world. Many students at school may consider the study of a foreign language as a collection of grammatical rules in which, as far as English language is concerned, *"the third person requires an -s ending"*, or again, *"the past form of regular verbs requires an -ed ending"* and so on so forth.

In consideration of these subjects, it is extremely important to maintain a high motivational level, by introducing them to a different shape of a foreign language which is not only *grammar*. Although the basis of a language have to be respected, it may be a good solution to alternate the "boring" phase with something entertaining. Differently form the children case, the

compromise cannot be reached simply with a game. Indeed, the subjects in analysis consider themselves as young adults, as they actually are, and there is the risk for them to consider certain didactic activities as childish. There is the need, in this delicate stage, to find a balance between what the learner wishes to do and what is effectively applicable. The role of the teacher, in this concern, is to mediate between these two poles and trying to find the right solution in this "slippery slope"; indeed, the teacher should act as a guide during the activities, and should be responsible for establishing situations that are likely to promote communication. The role of the learner, on the other hand, should be that of communicator: in this sense, the attention should switch from the traditional teacher-centred class to a learner-centred classroom setting. In this concern, students interact with others, they have an opportunity to express themselves by sharing ideas and opinions and, most importantly, they are responsible for their own learning [4].

A class of students may want to see a movie, considered as involving, stimulating, maybe even undemanding, but a teacher knows that this type of activity con be employed only once, maybe twice. The ideal, in this case, would be to create a didactic unit incorporating a movie with related comprehension exercises and connections with a cultural frame. However, in consideration of the curricula to respect and the hours available, such activity, however interesting and stimulating, is hardly repeatable more than one a year. Let's think, for example, about a medium-length movie, 105 minutes more or less (1:45 hours), and the lessons duration, 50-55 minutes. Let's cut the phantom five minutes employed to change class and set up the devices

to watch the movie, and the available minutes are shorted to 45-50. At this stage, the point is that the solely vision of a medium-length movie would occupy no less than three lessons and, adding at least two or three lessons for the related activities, the number would increase to six. This means that in the Italian education system this activity would require two or three *weeks* of language lessons.

Another crucial aspect to take into consideration regards the evolutionary challenges of this age range, since the adolescent certainly needs more psychological and motivational concern in consideration of the changing and development of the body. In this phase the concept of *affective filter* mentioned in 1.1.4 is highly present, in which the adolescent is faced not only with the teacher approval, but also with the evaluation of the peers. In this sense, the fear of negative evaluation exponentially arises in this period, and an already existing communication apprehension of learners may be accentuated by their fear of making mistakes in front of other people, making it difficult to speak fluently. The same result can be obtained if they are afraid that the other students would laugh at them when they speak in the foreign language or, again, if they fear that their language teacher is ready to correct every mistake that they make. They, in a sense, may feel very uncomfortable when they are put in the spotlight.

### 1.3.3 Adults

The phase concerning adults comprehends all those learners with more than 20 years old; specifically, in this subsection will be considered all those learn-

ers who study a foreign language not because of an obligation deriving from an external agent, but because of their own choice. It is considered *adult*, in this context, that one learner who demonstrate an autonomous and responsible behaviour and interest towards his own choices. There are some characteristics of an adult learner who studies a foreign language, which distinguish him form children and adolescents[5]:

a) the adult learner wants to autonomously take decisions and take responsibilities;

b) the teacher/learner relationship is no more considered as educational, rather instructional;

c) according to the *value for money* principle, the learner does not attend a language course only for pleasure, but because by paying for it, he wants to achieve results;

d) according to the *time is money* principle, the adult learner wants to achieve results in the shortest time possible;

e) negotiations between teacher and learner are fundamental, including topics, methodologies and schedules;

f) at the beginning, the learning process of an adult is slower with respect to a younger learner, but in the long term the former reaches the latest;

g) the metalinguistic and grammatical needs of an adult learner are superior with respect to the ones of a younger learner, and he requests for a more explicit reflection on language.

An adult can decide to study a foreign language for different reasons: because of his job, requiring a specific use of the language and a restricted vocabulary and function, or because he wants to achieve a linguistic autonomy for travels and trips, or simply pleasure. There may be numerous other reasons for an adult to study a foreign language, and the level of competence required may be different according to the situation, from a survival level for trips to a more complex level for job. However, there are some techniques common for all adult students more appropriate in consideration of their age and their objectives: generally, all those techniques which sets the learner in front of his competence, considering him autonomous in deciding to face the tasks proposed. Among these techniques there is the *cloze* procedure, *matching* word-images and all *interlocking* exercises [5]. However, there are some techniques which, differently from younger learners, are not easily employable: generally, all those techniques which lead the learner to interact with peers. Among these there is the *role-play* simulation, *dramatization* and *dialogues*, because they can be perceived by adults as a risk of damage for their self-consideration or for the image they want to convey to others [5].

Moreover, as far as language acquisition is concerned, one of the most important concepts to consider is the once concerning *critical* and *sensitive* period of a human being. These two concepts refer to a period of time, which generally sets in the first life circle, in which the acquisition of a certain *ability* occurs optimally. Beyond this threshold, that ability cannot be acquired anymore, or not optimally; for example, if language exposition occurs later but within the critical period, the chances of recovery can be good or ex-

cellent but, if language exposition occurs also over the critical period, the type of language which can be acquired is rather rudimentary [19]. However, this situation applies for L1 contexts; is it the same for foreign languages acquisition? The answer is no. Indeed, as mentioned shortly above, a foreign language can be acquired also in adult age, even if the learning process is slower with respect to a young learner, whose mind is more elastic. Even if to learn a foreign language is more difficult, an adult learner is usually lead by a strong motivation, fundamental key to achieve any objective.

# Chapter 2

# Case Study

In this chapter it will be discussed the Case Study throughout a first-hand experience by attending an internship at *Ettore Majorana-Elena Corner* High school of Mirano (VE). Precisely, in 2.1 it will be explained the type of research, underlining the main points of *Classroom Research*; in 2.2 it will be introduced the first phase of the research, with accounts to the questions that initiated the project of the case study, what it was meant to be explored and the connection with Language Learning Skills. In 2.3 it will be provided an overview about the subjects of the research, starting from the Teacher in 2.3.1, concluding then with the students in 2.3.2. In 2.4 it will be provided a description of the instruments employed during this period of direct observation and the motives that led to the choice of making use of them. Finally, in 2.5 it will be explained the type of observation and modalities of data collection.

## 2.1 The research

As previously said in the introduction of this Chapter, in this Section it will be exposed the aim of the research and the connection with Language Learning Skills; however, it will be first provided the theoretical explanation of the type of research. Indeed, in *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics* Zoltàn Dörney gives a preliminary definition for two approaches in research methodology, as far as "primary research" is concerned [13]:

I) *quantitative research*, which "involves data collection procedures that result primarily in numerical data which is then analysed primarily by statistical methods";

II) *qualitative research*, which "involves data collection procedures that result primarily in open-ended, non-numerical data which is then analysed primarily by non-statistical methods".

However, even if this is generally the best-known distinction, this research is a combination of the two methods, a *mixed methods research* [1]. Indeed, in the case study it is involved a combination of the two types defined above, including both data expressed in numbers, addressed to the subject in 2.3.2, and spoken data from an interview with the Teacher, with further explanation in 2.3.1.

Considering the peculiarity of the research site, there are some unique aspects that occur while conducting a research in a classroom context, defining this investigation as "*Classroom Research*" [2, 13]:

I) *classroom observation*, data collection approach typical of examining learning environments;

II) *mixed methods research*, indispensable to be able to understand different classroom events;

III) *challenges*, since, no matter the planning, classroom events can be so intricate that one cannot really predict what it will be seen in advance.

For this reason, this research is a result of a combination of methods and approaches [23] that include, in observational terms, both structured and unstructured approaches. To conduct a structured observation, it means that the focus of the observation is specific, defined and concrete, and it is usually associated with quantitative data due to the use of instruments such as schemes or questionnaires. On the other hand, to conduct an unstructured observation, it means that the focus is not clear nor defined, and the only way to understand a specific item is to first observe the situation; therefore, usually this type of observation requires the use of instruments such as field notes or diaries in which the researcher has to take notes.

This typology of research requires obviously a multitude of devices that can provide both qualitative and quantitative data [20], and in 2.4 it will be explained in detail the instruments that have been used in order to conduct the research. However, while talking about *classroom research* one has also to consider that a part from a huge number of devices, it is necessary also a big amount of time. Indeed, as stated by van Lier, "a prominent area of classroom research involves ethnographic studies" [35]; this means that all

classroom participants have to be considered as subjects of different subcultures, with their complexities, behaviours, goals, social relations and values. In this sense, a researcher has to spend a lot of time with these subjects in their environment in order to disentangle from its complexities [13]. However, this research in particular has been conducted in only three months of observation, so it will not be presented a proper ethnographic research in which the social and emotional sphere of the subjects has been studied, but a more proper study based on strategies and learner profiles.

Particularly, this classroom research consists of 5 phases.

a) Phase 0: the formulation of *Research Questions*, in which are resumed the focal points of the work and from which all other parameters of the following phases depend.

b) Phase 1: the identification and selection of the *Subjects*, one teacher of English language and culture and 136 students of 14 to 19 years old divided into six classes.

c) Phase 2: the *Instruments*, chosen and modified in consideration of the research questions and the subjects, including interviews, a checklist, a diary and two questionnaires, thanks to which the questions of the research could be answered.

d) Phase 3: *Observation* and *data collection*, thanks to the auxiliary of the instruments, in consideration of the research questions, the subjects and the time and resources available.

e) Phase 4: final *Results.*

In this Chapter all the phases listed above will be taken into account and thoroughly examined, a part from the last phase concerning the results, that will be exposed in Chapter 4.

## 2.2   Phase 0 - Research Questions

The starting point of the research was thinking about the questions to investigate and the relative previsions about the results. As stated before, the research was conducted on occasion of an internship in a High School, precisely 150 hours, covering a period of approximately three months. For this reason, the questions to be investigated had to allow the researcher to find an answer in the time available [12]. The aim of the research was not that of globally generalise a result [14], rather to study a small community and see if for *that* community some theoretical principles were applicable. In other words, the research questions that will be shortly exposed are thought for specific subjects and, considering the small sample of this case study, this research has not the purpose of inferring, that is moving from particular premises to a universal conclusion.

After this premise, the steps of this preliminary phase of the research will now be exposed. To begin with, the questions at the basis of this project are three:

   I) which language learning skills are most employed by the teacher in an

English classroom? How do they differ from a grade to another?

II) Which foreign language learning strategies are more used by the students? How do they differ from a class to another?

III) What are the language learning style profiles of the students subjects of the research? How do they differ from a grade to another?

In Chapter 1.2 it has been provided a theoretical overview of what are called *Language Learning Skills*, their meaning and use. With this research, the aim is exploring whether these skills are employed and to what extent in the school field, specifically in an upper secondary school. Precisely, with the first question the focus is on the teacher and the classroom event: indeed, each class - as each student - has different needs, and it is the role of the teacher to employ the strategies that best fit the necessities of the students, and to develop them. For this reason, the classroom observation was centred on the teacher and the language learning skills that she decided to employ in each class; not only this, at the end of the observational period the aim was also that of comparing the strategies employed in the different classes to check the existence of differences from one grade to another.

As far as the second and the third research questions are concerned, the focus is on the students and their study at home event: the aim, indeed, was also that of investigating whether there are some peculiar strategies "more appreciated" by the students in order to develop autonomously these language learning skills. It is important to mention that "more appreciated" is put between quotes because there is no way to give a definite global answer

to the question of my research, but just as far as the subjects of this specific research are concerned. Not only this, with the third question it was aroused the interest in discovering the learning style profiles of the students, specifically as far as foreign language class is concerned. In this sense, one can say that questions I) and II) are related to each other, investigating the topic of language learning strategies employed in classroom with the guide of the teacher and at home autonomously. On the other hand, question III) slightly detaches itself from the other two, wanting to explore the approach of the students to the learning process leaving aside the strategies and the skills employed, and focusing on the general aspects of sensory modalities, cognitive stiles and personality traits.

In origin, this research included a fourth question, concerning another aspect of language education, that of "short teaching". Specifically, it addressed to what are called *catch-up courses* in schools and their objectives and modalities of employment, formulating the research question: *"What are catch-up courses? What is the approach to foreign language learning? What are the strategies adopted?"*. However, because of a series of circumstances including the small size of the sample [26] and the time available, this question was removed and not deeply investigated, but in 3.2 there is a full section concerning this topic and the problematic related to it.

In any case, the definitive three research questions revolving around the case study have been formulated considering four essential characteristics: practicability, clarity, significance and ethic [29]. To be more clear:

a) the question is *practicable* when it can be investigated without spending too much time, energy nor money. Indeed, the research was conducted in 150 hours deferred in three months of work without expenses;

b) the question is *clear* when all the interested and involved parties can understand the key words of the question;

c) the question is *significant* when it is worth investigation, both for the researcher and the subjects;

d) the question is *ethic* when it does not imply physical or psychological damages to the involved parties of the research, including the natural and the social environment to which they belong to.

## 2.3 Phase 1 - The subjects

In this section it will be provided an overview about the subjects of the research, how and why they were selected. Since the first choice of the subjects regarded the teacher, the explanation of her selection will start from her, why just one teacher and no more and her approach. Secondly, it will be provided a description of her students, how many of them took part of the research, their grade and level of competence.

### 2.3.1 The teacher

The focus of the entire research during the observational time was a teacher of the High School of the case study who, for privacy, will be called "Teacher". As previously mentioned, the possibility of this classroom research was given

thanks to an internship, consisting in supporting and assisting a member of the educational facility. Teacher not only offered this possibility to assist her, but also agreed in letting the researcher conduct the project, observing her lessons and answering any question.

Before explaining her role as subject of the research, it is important to mention the reason why the focus was only on her and not on other two, three or more teachers. First of all, since the objective of the research was not that of inferring, it was not necessary to have a huge sample composed of more teachers. In the second place, the research question referring to the direct observation of the teacher concerns the language learning skills employed by her and how they differ from a grade to another. In this sense, it is a comparison between classes and not between teachers; for this reason, in order to make a comparison, it was important to have a *"constant"*, in this case, Teacher.

Another reason that led to this choice, is the impossibility to observe more teachers at the same time since there was not a co-researcher. The only possible way to do that was to have more time available, and observe one teacher for the first three months, than another for the next three and so on. Thanks to the time of a whole academic year, the research would have been enriched with the perspective of other two teachers and their approaches to English language learning skills in addition to Teacher; however, this hypothetical availability would have required not only the study of these additional teachers, but also of their students. In this concern, the research would not be

practicable, for it would have required too much time, energy and work for only one researcher.

As far as the approach adopted by Teacher is concerned, one has to make a distinction, first, between two macro-areas of teaching: *deductive* and *inductive* approaches. First, when talking about approach, the meaning is that of "a way of dealing with something; a way of doing or thinking about something such as a problem or a task" [21]. In this connection, the type of approach that has to be taken into account, has to be considered as a way of dealing with the sphere of foreign language teaching. In numerous studies and researches the two main approaches which are compared and put in contrast are, precisely, the *deductive* and *inductive* approaches. Constance Shaffer defines the deductive approach as "one where, regardless of the timing relative to the practice part of the lesson, students are *given* an explanation"; on the other hand, he defines the inductive approach as one where "the students' attention is focused on the structure being learned", and "the students are required to formulate for themselves and then verbalise the underlying pattern" [34].

The study of English language in a High School is not always the study of grammar, but in some curricula it comprehends also the study of culture and literature, as in the case of this research. During her lessons, Teacher used both approaches depending on the topic dealt: she made use of the deductive approach in the teaching of grammar, and the inductive approach in the teaching of literature. Recent studies have revealed that over the years the

concept of grammar as a series of rules to passively learn and apply, evolved in that of linguistic reflection, favouring an inductive approach rather than a deductive one [27]. Generally speaking, to promote a linguistic reflection means favouring the autonomy of the learner, but this approach is highly time-consuming and, because of the restricted time available to the teaching of this subject in some curricula, it is not always possible to apply it. In this regard, a deductive approach is easier and faster to implement and administer, especially with only three hours a week available.

On the other hand, as far as the teaching of literature is concerned, Teacher favoured an inductive approach. While the teaching of grammar consisted of the explanation of the rules which the students had to apply, in the teaching of literature was favoured a freedom in expressing opinions and hypotheses by the students before the exposure of the topic. Indeed, most of the lessons observed concerning literature, had as subject the student and not the teacher; through an inductive approach, the teacher has the function of support to reflection and not of an authority whose rules have to be accepted unquestioningly. During these lessons, the teacher promoted the autonomy of the students by making them read a text or an extract for then asking for their opinions and thoughts, guiding them through the analysis. In this concern, Teacher underlined the fact that literature, in a way, is subjective, leading to different interpretations and different points of view acceptable. According to her perspective, the teaching of literature may not only offer the students the possibility to know more about the culture of a different civilisation, but also encourage the creative thought of the students.

One last consideration about Teacher concerns the language used during the lessons. Indeed, exception be made for the first grade, she makes use, almost exclusively, of the target language, with the objective of exposing the students to English language as much as possible. Moreover, her aim is encourage them in using it to the greatest extent possible, trying to bypass the employment of Italian. As mentioned, in the first grade there is not the exclusive employment of the target language; in this regard, Teacher explained that in the first months of the academic year, these students may not have the same level of competence and, in order to involve everyone, the use of the mother tongue is not excluded. The purpose, anyway, is encouraging the target language by gradually eclipsing the mother tongue in order to have a total exposure to English language during the lessons.

### 2.3.2   The Students

While Teacher was the subject of the observational time in order to be able to answer the first research question, students were the subjects "studied" in order to answer to the second and the third research questions. The verb "studied" is put between quotes because there has not been a direct observation towards them, rather an indirect one thanks to the use of questionnaires, which will be exposed in Chapter 2.4. In this section it will be provided a general overview of the students, which High School curricula they attend, how many of them took part of the research project, which grade they belong to and their level of competence.

First of all, the selection of the students for the project depended on the choice of Teacher as the main subject of the observation. Indeed, even if students come from different classes of different grade, they have in common the English teacher. At first, it was not clear whether to consider all of them or just a part, and this is the reason why, at the beginning, all classes took part of the research. While describing the main aspects of a classroom research, it has been explained how one of them consisted of challenges and that, no matter the planning, the researcher cannot predict what it will be seen in advance. For this reason, it has been decided to proceed with an eventual selection of students only in a second time, maybe by excluding the "double" grades, since Teacher had in charge, among the others, two classes of the third and the fourth grade. However, since students are different from one another and each class constitutes a sort of subculture, there were no valid assumptions to select one class as the representative of the other. In addition to this reason, by considering both classes of the same grade it would have been possible to compare their needs in English learning, as it will be seen in Chapter 4.

In the end, when it has been decided to include all classes as subjects of the second and third research questions, the number of students increased to 136, divided in six classes:

a) 1st grade, section "D", 28 students;

b) 3rd grade, section "B", 23 students;

c) 3rd grade, section "D", 23 students;

d) 4th grade, section "B", 18 students;

e) 4th grade, section "D", 25 students;

f) 5th grade, section "B", 19 students.

As it can be seen, students are divided in sections, precisely two: "B" and "D". What distinguishes one section from the other is the curriculum of the students and the consequent specialisation. In this case, the curriculum of the students is the scientific one, precisely *"applied sciences"* for both sections. Indeed, the division at the time had been made in order to size the number of students for class, in order not to have a class composed of more than 30 students. Generally speaking, this curriculum offers the students the specialisation of a scientific and technological background, with particular focus on disciplines such as Maths, Computer Science, Chemistry, Physics and Natural Sciences.

## 2.4   Phase 2 - The Instruments

In this section it will be explained the type of instruments that have been used during the observational time, their origin and their eventual adjustments in order to better fit the addressees of the research. As stated before, a classroom research requires a multitude of devices that enable the researcher to acquire both qualitative and quantitative data. For this reason, it has been decided to make use of five instruments: two in order to collect quantitative data, and three to collect qualitative data. Specifically, the firsts are two different questionnaires, and the other three are a checklist, the use of

diary and interview questions.

## 2.4.1  Checklist

According to Collins' English dictionary [39], a checklist is "a list of all the things that you need to do, information that you want to find out, or things that you need to take somewhere, which you make in order to ensure that you do not forget anything". In this sense, one can consider this device as a daily reminder of a list of actions we can observe with the possibility to check how many of these actions actually take place. By remaining on researching terms, the checklist employed for the research included a list of strategies that could be used during an English lesson, divided in four macro-skills: listening, reading, speaking, writing. Generally speaking, a checklist can collect both quantitative and qualitative data, but for this research purpose, this specific instrument is used to collect qualitative data, since the variables are of the qualitative type and cannot be ordered.

As far as the origin of this instrument is concerned, it was not preexisting, instead it has been decided to create a new one with the inclusion of some selected strategies which were thought of being more suitable to the subjects, and, for the same reason, the exclusion of some others. In the tables below, the checklist used during the observational time divided for macro-areas and relative strategies to observe:

| LISTENING | | day/month | day/month |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cloze | with box | | |
| | without box | | |
| Matching | language-image | | |
| | word-definition | | |
| Completion/joint | sentences | | |
| | texts | | |
| Open Questions | | | |
| Note-taking | | | |
| Multiple choice | | | |

Table 2.1: Checklist-listening skill

| READING | | day/month | day/month |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cloze | with box | | |
| | without box | | |
| Matching | language-image | | |
| | word-definition | | |
| Completion/joint | dialogues | | |
| | texts | | |
| Open Questions | | | |
| Transcoding | | | |
| Multiple choice | | | |

Table 2.2: Checklist-reading skill

| SPEAKING | day/month | day/month |
|---|---|---|
| Open dialogues (with a script to follow) | | |
| Open questions (short answer) | | |
| role-play (open simulation with a context) | | |
| Free speaking (3 or more minutes) | | |
| Description of images | | |

Table 2.3: Checklist-speaking skill

| WRITING | day/month | day/month |
|---|---|---|
| Description of images | | |
| Text with points to follow | | |
| Text as answer to a question | | |
| Short sentences | | |
| Free composition | | |
| Completion tab | | |

Table 2.4: Checklist-writing skill

As it can be seen, this list presents some of the strategies discussed in Chapter 1.2, as considered those who could be more employed in classroom events, but, as we will see in 4.1, not all of them have been used. Indeed, the choice of selecting these strategies was that of including all participants, meaning covering all the grades of the classes. It is quite expected that some techniques among those listed are more suitable for students of the first grade rather than those of the fifth and the other way round, so that in one case we can observe how in one grade a particular strategy is frequently employed

and in another not once. As just stated is fairly obvious since students attending different grades have different needs, and it would be strange and inappropriate to observe otherwise.

Another important consideration is that this checklist is not made up for the students, but for the teacher. Indeed, usually, an instrument such as a checklist is a schedule of different characteristics or activities presented to the subjects of a work project, which they are invited to study and put a sign next to a characteristic or an activity. While this type of instrument is usually administrated to the subjects as a sort of self-assessment of their performances, in this case it was idealised to study only one subject, and the assessment was made by an external person, precisely, the researcher. This instrument, indeed, is one of those used in order to answer the first research question:

I) which language learning skills are employed by the teacher in an English classroom? How do they differ from a grade to another?

As it will seen in 4.1, thanks to this instrument it could be observed the frequency with which different language skills have been employed in each class during the observational time in classroom event, day by day. Furthermore, since the teacher was the same for all the classrooms, it could also be noted how they differed from a grade to another, calculating the measurement using the same parameters.

### 2.4.2 Diary and Interviews

In order to collect some qualitative data, and justify the results obtained by the daily compilation of the checklist, it was necessary the use of other instruments: a diary and interviews. Usually, diaries are used as research instruments to collect detailed information about events and other aspects of observation[3], that can be used to supplement interview data to provide more information. Indeed, in this research the daily writing on a diary has often been followed by an interview with the teacher in order to increment or specify the notes about the observation on her teaching modalities and choices.

Precisely, such as the checklist, the diary was noted daily, and in it it was used to write not only specifics about the strategies employed by the teacher, but also events regarding all the classroom occurrences. In this sense, it was noted the date, the class observed, the time of the start and the end of the lesson, the number of participants, the topic - that is, if it concerned a grammar or literature topic - and if it was an online or face-to-face lesson. Most of the times, these were the only things noted down, but sometimes there was the necessity to ask for some additional information, and in that case there was the necessity to proceeded with a brief interview with the teacher at the end of the lesson.

As stated by the Senior Research Officer Louise Corti, "an interview is important for explaining the diary keeping procedures [...] and a concluding interview may be used to check on the completeness of the recorded entries"

[8]. For this reason, in a classroom research the bare notes on a diary may not be enough, and thanks to an oral interview some missing pieces on the field notes may be filled. By interview, it is not meant a formal one, but more a informal discussion about a confusing issue during the observation, almost as an exchange of opinions between colleagues.

As far as research is concerned, an interview may be of three types, requiring consequently answers more or less opened:

a) structured, when the answer of the interviewed has to fall into a specific category and requires a pre-coding of the possible answers;

b) semi-structured, when the researcher makes use of "probe questions" to elicit the answers of the interviewed towards determined topics;

c) unstructured, when the interviewed is completely free to express himself towards a central topic.

In this case the type of interview adopted was the unstructured one, leaving the teacher the possibility to express freely her own opinion towards an issue, and this moment of the research, when needed, occurred always at the end of the lesson. Usually, an interview is not wholly reliable, because the subject may not feel comfortable in answering, at the most with a stranger that observes him all the time. At the beginning, indeed, it was not easy to start a conversation, although the teacher has always been helpful and cooperative; this was probably because we did not know each other and it was the first time for both of us to conduct this project. Nevertheless, by being in constant close contact, this process became more natural, and, at the end,

it was often the teacher herself the one who initiated the conversation.

## 2.4.3   Questionnaires

As far as the data collected from the students is concerned, it was made the decision to do that through the use of questionnaires, specifically two. Both questionnaires were preexisting, but at the same time were modified in order to better fit the addressees subjects of the research, the students. These instruments were thought in order to answer the second and the third research questions.

The first questionnaire that will be analysed is called *Language Strategy Use Survey*, a survey of strategies elaborated by Andrew D. Cohen, Rebecca L. Oxford, and Julie C. Chi [24] with the objectives of helping students gain awareness of new strategies they can use in learning a foreign language and to enhance language learning. In this connection, this survey consists of a list of strategies concerning the use of listening, reading, vocabulary, speaking, writing and translation which can be used by language learners or can help them master a new language. In this respect, the survey was modified and adapted in the form of a questionnaire in order to answer the second research question:

II) which foreign language learning strategies are more used by the students? How do they differ from a class to another?

As it can be seen, this question resembles the first one, but the focus changes from the point of view of the teacher to the one of the students. The interesting point, in this sense, was that of investigating if students at home used strategies different from the ones employed by the teacher. One needs to keep in mind that most of the time students ageing from 14 to 19 years old may not know the multitude of strategies that exist in order to enhance a foreign language; on the other end, they may use them without even knowing. Nevertheless, even if the survey is very well done, some changes were made:

a) number of strategies listed;

b) type of possible answers;

c) simplification of the items.

The original survey consists of a list of 90 strategies, but the decision was made to "thin" this list to 60, mainly in consideration of the subjects. Indeed, young students such them may have felt bored and, at the end, there could have been the risk that they could answer casually in order not to read all the questions. This case was highly plausible, since the questionnaire was not translated to their mother language, Italian, but it was administrated in English, meaning that their level of attention could fall more easily.

Example of deleted item:
*Once I have written a draft essay: "I usually look for ways to get feedback from others, such as having a native writer put the text in his/her own words,*

*and then I compare it to my original version."*

Another change from the original to the adapted questionnaire regards the multiple choice answers: in the original one there was the possibility to choose between three options, whereas in the adapted one the number of answers increased to five. This is because it was made the decision to change the *attitude scale*, as we can see in 2.1:

a) I use this strategy and find it useful          a) Completely agree

b) I have tried this strategy, but welcome        b) Quite agree
learning more about it

                                                   c) Neither agree nor disagree

c) I have never tried this strategy               d) Quite disagree

                                                   e) Completely disagree

Figure 2.1: Original and adapted answers

The intention was that, among other things, of simplifying the answers and the meaning of the items proposed; in other words, the plan was creating a direct connection of *"If I used this strategy I would (not) learn more"* thought. On the other hand, if the students were administrated the questionnaire with the original answers, the response thought would be *"While studying English language I use (not) this strategy"*. In this concern, considering the age of the students and the reason why they study English language, the creation of the new answers aims at investigating a different shape of the use of strategies in language learning. Indeed, at their level of competence, students would not consider most of the item listed as strategies to use, and almost certainly at

the time of collecting the filled questionnaire the answers would be nearly all
*c)*.

Along with the answers, also some of the 60 items listed in the question-
naire were simplified. The adjustments were not drastic and the meaning
of the items was not affected but, in consideration of the addressees and
their level of competence, it was necessary in few cases to slightly modify
the vocabulary or the structure of the sentences. Moreover, since the lan-
guage to be referred to is English language, the decision was made to replace
*"target language"* with *"English"*, as we can see from the following examples.

Example 1
Original version: *"I **make an ongoing effort to** listen to talk shows on
the radio, watch TV shows, or go see movies in the new language."*
Adapted version: *"I listen to talk shows on the radio, watch TV shows, or
see movies in English."*

Example 2
Original version: *"It is common for me to use **reference materials such
as a glossary**, a dictionary, **or a thesaurus** to help me find or verify
words in **the target language**."*
Adapted version: *"It is common for me to use a dictionary to help me find
or verify words in English."*

Considering the potential complexity in understanding the list of items and

the fact that, in order to express an opinion about strategies in different fields of the foreign language learning process, a B1 level was required, it was decided to administer this questionnaire only to three classes: two of the fourth grade and one of the fifth.

The second questionnaire that will be analysed is taken from a website called *Learning Paths* [41], and consists of a list of 30 items that describe some study habits and ways to learn a language. Particularly, this questionnaire wants to investigate three areas of the learning style profile of a language learner: sensory modalities, cognitive styles and personality traits. This instrument was used to answer to the third research question:

III) what are the language learning style profiles of the students subjects of the research? How do they differ from a grade to another?

As mentioned in 2.2, this research question slightly detaches from the first two, since the focus is not on learning strategies but on learning styles. In particular, the investigation was about:

a) visual, auditory or kinesthetic *sensory modality*;

b) analytical or global and reflexive or impulsive *cognitive styles*;

c) introverted or extrovert *personal trait*.

The original questionnaire was divided in 9 subsections, that is, the number of modalities, styles and traits listed above. However, in order not to influence the answers of the students, it was decided to present the items

altogether without divisions. Differently from the previous survey, this one did not undergo any changes: the answers maintained the same attitude scale and, most importantly, the questionnaire was administered in the original language, Italian. The reason for this last decision is quite simple: in contrast to the strategy use survey, this instrument was administered to all students, from the first grade to the fifth. Indeed, the list of items was not complex at all, and its completion did not require a reflection on the language or a threshold level of the students, rather a reflection upon themselves and their approach to the study of a language.

Some examples:

*"Ricordo meglio quello che ho visto o letto."*
English translation: "I remember better what I could have seen or read."

*"Quando studio ripeto mentalmente o ad alta voce."*
English translation: "When I study, I repeat mentally or out loud".

*"Capisco e ricordo di più quando studio per conto mio."*
English translation: "I understand and remember better when I study by myself".

One last important thing concerning these instruments is that both were administered anonymously, in order to guarantee their privacy and to collect feedback as sincere as possible without feeling judged by the researcher or the teacher.

## 2.5   Phase 3 - Observation and data collection

As far as Phase 3 is concerned, the focus is on the observation and the data collection. Specifically, the observation has been conducted in 150 hours, divided in 25 hours for each class, as exposed in the table below.

| Class | total lessons | oral testing lessons | written testing lessons | teaching lessons | in-site lessons | online lessons |
|-------|---------------|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1D | 25 | 2 | 2 | 21 | 7 | 14 |
| 3B | 25 | 5 | 2 | 18 | 5 | 13 |
| 3D | 25 | 5 | 2 | 18 | 6 | 12 |
| 4B | 25 | 5 | 2 | 18 | 6 | 12 |
| 4D | 25 | 5 | 2 | 18 | 7 | 11 |
| 5B | 25 | 5 | 2 | 18 | 7 | 11 |

Table 2.5: Lessons distribution

As it is possible to observe, in this table are reported the total number of lessons, corresponding to the number of hours; indeed, for each lesson was scheduled one hour, which could be filled with an oral test, a written test, or a traditional teaching lesson. Moreover, in the last two columns are reported the lessons conducted in-site and online, with reference to the teaching lessons. In this concern, it is important to mention that in normal circumstances High Schools in Italy are conducted exclusively in-site at the educational facility; however, as it will be explained more in detail in Chapter 4, because of the pandemic situation different measures have been adopted.

As far as the data collection is concerned, in the previous section of this chapter it has been explained the modality of employment of the instruments. To be more specific, the data collected from the compilation of the checklist has been collected during the whole observational time, whereas the one concerning the questionnaires only at the end. The role of the researcher during the observational time was that of external observer, without any kind of interference during the lessons, seated silently on the sidelines of the classroom. Both teacher and students were explained the modalities of the project before the beginning of the project, and that the observation would have been exclusively on the teacher and not on students. In this way, they could have followed the lessons without the fear of judgements of their behaviour by the researcher, and the level of anxiety would not have raised further.

# Chapter 3

# School during Covid-19 pandemic

In this chapter the focus will be on the main changes that occurred in the scholar field during Covid-19 pandemic, including in 3.1 sources from the Ministry of Education and the Parliamentary Documentation and a general overview about the different dispositions that have been taken, especially during the first five months of the academic year 2020/2021. Secondly, in 3.2 the consequences of the discontinuing first steps of the online teaching will be discussed, which in some cases caused students to fall behind in one or more subjects with respect to their classmates; in this concern, it will be presented a programme organised by the same school of the case study in order to help this category of students, namely catch-up courses. In 3.3 it will deeply discussed the mean of technology, firstly in the sphere of teaching and classroom interactions; secondly, some considerations about the pros and cons of technology will be provided, the way in which it helped and at the

same time hindered the learning process of the students.

## 3.1 Coronavirus - measures adopted in the school field

As a result of Coronavirus emergency, starting from 5th March 2020 all the teaching activities in presence related to the academic year 2019/2020 have been suspended throughout the national territory in Italy. This disposal became active for educational services for children and schools of every order and degree, including Universities. Meanwhile, these different departments activated the modality of online-teaching. To respond to this pandemic situation, the Govern employed various measures and operations to reconcile the healthcare of students and school staff with the protection of the right to education, trying not to further affect them by the suspension of the teaching in presence with front lessons modalities. Students and teachers and, by extension, the whole educational system had to rapidly deal with this change and these dispositions to prevent a further spread of the virus. Although this seemed a temporary solution, from the 5th of March classrooms remained empty until the end of the academic year.

Only one exception has been made, the one regarding the graduation exams: indeed, it has been allowed, while respecting the social distancing rules, to attend this important exam in physical classrooms or, in some cases, school gyms. Generally speaking, the graduation exam marks the end of the first and the second cycle of education, and it a fundamental achievement of the

students' school career, aimed at examining the competences that students acquired at the end of this cycle. In normal circumstances, in order to attend this important exam, the student has to be previously admitted by the class council in the final school report. This big exam is articulated in three parts, the first two are written texts and the third is an oral text: in particular, the first is common to all school branches, whereas the second one is specific to the branch of study attended by the student. Once finished with the written parts of the examination, it starts the oral interview, which score will be added to the ones of the written parts to declare the final grade of the student in hundredths. Although some slight changes during the last years, the graduation exam has always included a written part, common to everyone, and an oral one.

As expected, the pandemic had consequences also in this students' final step. Although students could physically attend it, the modalities richly changed: all the students were admitted with no exceptions, and the two written parts were entirely abolished and replaced by a one hour oral maxi-interview, changing the evaluation system. On Wednesday, 17th of June 500 thousand of students started the graduation exam, and for the first time since March they could return to school and see their teachers after the national lockdown for Coronavirus emergency. In normal sanitary circumstances the commission of the examiners was composed by external and internal members, but in this occasion the commission was entirely composed by internal members with the only exception of the external president. As far as rules to follow are concerned, according to the safety protocol elaborated by the

technical-scientific Committee, both members of the commission and candidate were obliged to wear the face-mask protection and to maintain the social distancing of at least two meters one another; it was also mandatory the presence, in the common areas, of hand-sanitizing gel dispensers and the ban of gatherings. Moreover, in order to attend the exam and get to school, students had to download and compile a self-declaration attesting their state of health, that they did not had fever over 37,5° for the three days preceding the exam day, and that they were not in quarantine. In the end, these restrictions and dispositions marked the end of the academic year 2019/2020.

After this confusing and uncertain academic year, various dispositions have been introduced in order to guarantee the safety of the school activities in the classrooms for the new, and maybe even more aware, academic year 2020/2021. In the following tab are briefly resumed the main dispositions applied from the month of September to that of January, focusing on those regarding upper secondary schools, established by different DPCMs (*Decreto del Presidente del Consiglio dei Ministri* - Decree of the President of the Councils of Ministers)[42]:

| | |
|---|---|
| DPCM of August | All activities of upper secondary schools will be carried out in the measure of 25% throughout online lessons modality, and of 75% throughout on-site lessons in all educational facilities. |
| DPCM 24th of October | All activities of upper secondary schools will be carried out in the measure of 75% throughout online lessons modality, and of 25% throughout on-site lessons in all educational facilities. |
| DPCM 4th of November | All activities of upper secondary schools will be carried out in the measure of 100% throughout online lessons modality. (The Decree dispositions are applied from November 6th 2020, as a replacement for the ones of October 24th 2020, and are effective until December 3rd 2020.) |
| DPCM 4th of December | All activities of upper secondary schools will be carried out in the measure of 100% throughout online lessons modality, until Christmas break. From January 7th 2021, 75% of student population will return in all educational facilities taking on-site lessons |

Table 3.1: DPCM

As it can be seen, many changes occurred from the beginning of the academic year 2020/2021. Indeed, from October, in consideration of the particularly diffusive character of the epidemic and of the increasing number of positive cases on the National territory, new dispositions have been progressively introduced, and the traditional on-site lessons have been step by step replaced by online lessons.

## 3.2  Catch-up Courses

Another thing that has changed because of Covid-19 pandemic regards the admission of the students to the following year. As said in 3.1, all the students of the last year of their school career were admitted with no exceptions to the graduation exams, and in the same way, also the other students passed automatically to the next academic year. Indeed, in normal circumstances a student, at the end of the academic year, has three options based on the grades he achieved from the beginning, in other words if he faced with one or more failures or none.

a) More than 3 failures: the student has to repeat the year.

b) One to three failures: the student has to take one to three repair exam(s).

c) No failures: the student is promoted to the following year.

What changed because of the pandemic situation are options a) and b); indeed, the Govern considered that students had been strongly penalised from this situation, and that if they had had difficulties it was not their fault, so the decision was made to promote all the students to the following year,

no matter the number of failures. In normal circumstances, the school offers what are called "catch-up courses" during summer-time if the student, at the end of the academic year, belonged to case b). These courses consists of 8 hours of lessons to a small number of students in which the main points of the program are discussed and reviewed. The general idea is that of helping the student to prepare for the repair exam he has to take before the beginning of the following academic year in order to access to it. However, at the end of the academic year 2019/2020 no catch up courses were offered since all the student were promoted. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the new academic year (2020/2021) students still had some difficulties, some of them even deep ones, and the gap between them and their peers notably increased. In order to try to fill these, in some cases huge, gaps, the school offered the possibility for these students to take these catch-up courses shortly before the beginning of school on a voluntary basis.

The same teacher who gave the possibility to observe her classes during the internship was one of those who carried one of the catch-up courses in English language. These new courses differed from the traditional summer ones in which they did not provide a duration of 8 hours, but just 6, composed of four lessons of one hour and a half each, and just two students participated. During the academic year, teachers have a number of hours available thanks to which they can explain a rule and then making the students apply it, favouring a deductive teaching to an inductive one. Since the hours available to these catch up curses were strongly limited, Teacher decided to start from some global and general exercises and to stop and review a grammar rule

where the students seemed to have the biggest difficulties. Indeed, the first lesson was a global lesson, the only possible starting point in order to know the level of the student. Both students came from their third year of high school, so in few days they would have began the fourth one, meaning that they should have had a B2 level basing on the "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages", and more in particular they should have the following abilities:

| Basic Skill | B2 level |
| --- | --- |
| Listening Skill | "I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affair programmes. I can understand the majority of films in in standard dialect." |
| Reading Skill | "I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose." |
| Speaking Skill | "I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options." |
| Writing Skill | "I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interest. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences." |

Table 3.2: B2 level of CEFR

However, the abilities of the students were not on such a level, and Teacher wanted to try to exercise different skills during this course, trying, in this way, to cover the largest number of fields. Indeed, the first lesson was prepared by Teacher in order to train listening, speaking and writing skills and review vocabulary. These first two hours of catch up courses were divided in four parts: the first, concerning the listening skill, had the students watching a little cut of a TV series with the possibility of following what the actors said with the aid of a script, composed of 34 very short lines; the second part regarded the vocabulary overview, by making the students translate 20 expressions or words that appeared in the video; the third part, still linked to the previous activities, required the employment of the speaking language skill by answering to some questions about the cut and making them interact with each other; the forth and last part was similar to the third one, again concerning listening comprehension of the cut, but in this case the students had to answer to the questions in writing form.

All these exercises were presented to the students in a way to make them develop another skill, that of interaction and cooperation. Unfortunately, the response of the students was not the one that Teacher had expected, and they did not cooperate as hoped and required no matter the motivation exercised by the Teacher. Not all students respond to a precise stimulus and input in the same way, there are some that work for one student but this does not mean that will necessarily work for another, and during this first lesson the issue was evident. Moreover, these students in particular came from different classes and did not know each other, so they were diffident

and shy and hardly ever looked at each other or took the action to start a conversation.

Once asserted that this method was not proper for these two students, Teacher decided to configure the second lesson in a slightly different way: she decided to start with an individual task concerning a reading exercise. She gave instructions to the students to read a short text by themselves in about ten minutes, and then to independently complete a comprehension exercise in which they had to choose the right solution, out of four options, to fill in the gaps within the text with the addition of other ten minutes. At the end of the time given, Teacher decided to make the students read out loud a short extract each including the words they had chosen to fill in the gaps and, once finished to read, before giving the right solution herself, she asked the other student if he or she had filled the same word.

After this exercise, students still talked the bare minimum, but they seemed more comfortable in talking to Teacher than to the other schoolmate, so she decided not to force them and continuing the exercise in that way. In the remaining time, Teacher gave the student another reading task, similar to the previous one but with a "true or false" reading comprehension exercise instead of a filling in the gaps. In this case, however, she motivated them one last time to cooperate with each other, but the response was still negative, so, in order not to discomfort them, she opted for assigning them individual tasks for the rest of the lesson.

During these catch-up courses, it has been given the opportunity to speak with other teachers, observe in some cases their lessons, and listen to their opinion about the real impact of these lessons and their utility. What was interesting to notice was that everyone had a different opinion, but everyone agreed on one point: six hours are not enough. One has to keep in mind that these short courses had not been designed to fill all the gaps of a student, certainly not in few hours; a student with significant gaps or with learning disabilities needs more than short school catch-up curses to catch up with their peers, such as regular individual tutoring for a much longer period of time. The aim of these courses is, indeed, to review with the school teacher the whole scholarship programme and the topics faced during the academic year, putting particular emphasis in those in which the students had the biggest difficulties.

The real objective of these courses is to fill part of the deficiencies that led the students to the fail of a particular subject at the end of the academic year through exercises or theoretical explanations or both, considering that the methodology is at the discretion of the teacher in charge and in view of the different students of that course, each of them with a particular need. Generally speaking, during these courses one of the methods mostly shared is that of starting from global exercises for then focusing where the students seem to be lacking the most and resume the grammar rule. As said before, in normal circumstances, these courses are taken during summer, just after the end of the academic year, and even if eight hours are still not entirely enough, there is still time for the student to review autonomously the program during

summer. Unfortunately, it is not plausible in this particular scenario to help the students to catch-up, since these courses had been programmed just before the beginning of the new academic year. In this sense, many teachers have agreed in their scepticism about the utility of these lessons, that occurred too late and that granted just six hours.

## 3.3   Online and Frontal Lessons

Another important change to take into consideration is the one regarding the introduction of online lessons. As it will be seen in 3.1, since March 2020 it has been introduced a new typology of teaching that has never been employed in upper secondary schools, or lower grades, until that moment. Indeed, since the Coronavirus emergency broke out and all frontal lessons have been suspended, schools, with many difficulties, had to be equipped to engage a long-distance teaching.

One has to consider that this is a nearly new modality already implemented in some forms of teaching, but never on this large-scale. As far as Italy is concerned, as already mentioned above, in upper secondary schools and lower grades it has always been privileged a face-to-face teaching: one has to pay special attention to the type of students and the educational needs which are due to them. In this concern, it consists of a modality to which no one was used to, and even to which some were opposed to, a procedure that presents many issues, but may also offer some interesting points to reflect on.

### 3.3.1 Problems

One of the major problems about long-distance teaching is the one concerning the interaction, not only teacher-learner but also learner-learner. Even if in this type of teaching lessons are in live, human contact is completely lacking, and it is one of the learning fundamental aspects. A virtual classroom can be considered an aseptic environment, in which sensory stimulus are severely compromised: in a real classroom environment all these senses contribute in creating a sort of sphere in which the student not only is embedded, but above all it creates a peculiar familiar space in which the student feels to be part of a community. Therefore, the major risk in this situation is that the student can feel lonely, with potentially negative consequences for the learning process.

When interaction is one of the fundamental steps for the learning mechanism, one must not forget about communication: when the vehicle of interaction is technology, there is the risk that communication will result slower and more complicated. In this case, a strong impact is given not only by the device (may this be a computer rather than a tablet or smartphone), but also by connectivity, that if not good enough can influence negatively the acquisition of information, details, concepts and other important elements during a lesson. The issue, consequently, is not only what is being taught and explained by the teacher, but also what is being received by the learner through a technological resource.

Another important issue to take into consideration is the level of attention

of the students during the online lessons. Indeed, while before the pandemic situation students attended the lessons in a classroom, now they have to do it at home. In the best-case scenario, the student has his/her own device in the desk of his/her own room; however, in some cases the environment is different, in which it is difficult to stand outside disturbing factors, typical of home environments (noisy neighbours, little brothers or sisters, the sound of the intercom, etc.). By considering all these factors, one can imagine how the level of attention of a student may not be at 100%, hindering his/her learning process.

One last problem concerns two types of limitation: the first regarding technology, the last about possible cognitive disorders. These two aspects are fundamental, especially when the didactic era switched from in-site to online all of a sudden and it is difficult to give priority to an inclusive didactic. This concept is important, especially as far as students with special educational needs are concerned: if these students already had to face many difficulties before the pandemic situation, now they have to deal with a society which makes use of virtual devices to guarantee the right to education. When one talks about a student with special educational needs, it is not meant exclusively a student with cognitive disorders, but also with linguistic, economic and familiar disadvantages. In this sense, the technological limitation concerned all those students who do not have a personal computer or device with which attending the lessons; in a family with economic disadvantage composed of five members, there is a small possibility to have five different devices.

### 3.3.2 Opportunities

It is possible to suppose that an online lesson may not be the best way to teach or to learn, but in this dramatic special case, technology presented, among its problems, even some opportunities. First of all, despite all the limits imposed by the Coronavirus, students could still "attend" school, even if not physically, something possible only thanks to technology and the opportunity to make use of virtual classrooms. Moreover, even if it can be considered an obstacle for students and teachers with connectivity problems cutting them out of the lesson, online lessons can represent an opportunity for those who in normal circumstances could not physically attend school. In this regard, it can be provided a simple example basing on the experience during the internship: one of the students, during this period, unfortunately broke his leg and it would have been difficult for him to physically go to school, maybe for weeks. Nevertheless, he could participate online and did not loose a single lesson, without compromising his right to learn.

Another aspect can be detected on a psychological level: anxiety. Generally speaking, anxiety on learning occurs when a student has a feeling of fear or apprehension about an incoming test or even about a normal class lesson. This response to the stress may be because the student is shy to the point he does not feel at ease, for example, communicating with other people in the foreign language, or does fear the teacher or other student's judgements. In this concern, if the student is at home in a familiar isolated room, he can feel more comfortable, as if he were in a protected bubble. As far as foreign language lessons are concerned, it is important to mention one of

the three major areas of anxiety, according to Horwitz [22]: *communication apprehension*. Differently from *fear of negative evaluation* and *text anxiety*, communication apprehension is an anxiety area characterised by the fear of communicating with people in a variety of situations. This is one of the numerous characteristics that can be considered as an expression of social anxiety. For certain, communication apprehension plays an important role as far as foreign language anxiety is concerned, because people who find it difficult to speak or interact with others, are more likely to have trouble speaking in front of an entire foreign language class where they feel constantly observed and monitored by other students and the teacher. This state of strong shyness can be softened if the student is separated by the class from a monitor.

Despite all the difficulties, in such an unpredictable and critic situation, online lessons still guarantee a certain stability and balance thanks to the daily virtual meetings and interactions between teachers and students. On a psychological and social level, one can say that this continuity involve undeniable benefits.

# Chapter 4

# Results

In this chapter, the results obtained by the observation of the case study will be presented and discussed, focusing on different matters of the investigation. In particular, the analysis will start in 4.1 with the presentation of the different language learning skills employed by Teacher and, with references to Chapter 1.2, the strategies belonging to each macro-area will be discussed. In 4.2 and 4.3, there will be the exposition of the results of two questionnaires administered to the students at the end of the internship; specifically, in 4.2 the focus will be on the foreign languages strategies that they use outside the educational facility, whereas in 4.3 the foreign language learning styles of the students will be investigated.

## 4.1 Language learning skills employed

In 2.4.1 it has been provided an overview about the checklist instrument. As mentioned, this device was used in order to answer the first research question of the case study,

I) which language learning skills are most employed by the teacher in an English classroom? How do they differ from a grade to another?

and through its daily compilation and data analysis some conclusions have been made.

At the end of the period of observation, the first step was collecting data and dividing it for the six classes assigned to Teacher: 1D, 3B, 3D, 4B, 4D e 5B. After the observation of raw data, the following step has been synthesising it in six different graphs thanks to which it would be possible to compare the language learning skills employed at percentage level. Lastly, these six graphs have been united on a single one to better have an overall view. In the graph below are provided the four macro-areas of the study, comprehending all the techniques listed in tabs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 explained in section 2.4.1. The division of the techniques employed in a single language skill will be exposed later on this chapter, but now the focus will be uniquely on listening, reading, speaking and writing.
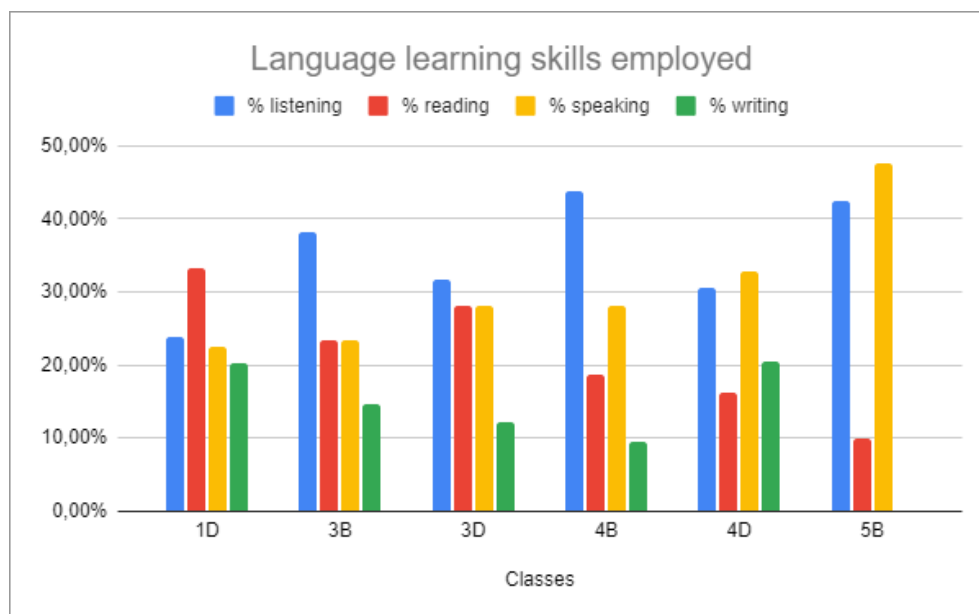
Figure 4.1: Language learning skills employed

The first thing that can be observed in the graph above, is that in five classes out of six the language learning skill that has been employed less is the *writing learning skill.* Through an interview with Teacher, the reason for these percentages has to be searched in the use of the time available. Indeed, activities such as writing and reading require a lot of time, which in some curricula is in short supply. Moreover, these tasks are commonly exercised individually, and the supervision of a teacher usually comes only after having completed the task assigned. For this reason, the employment of techniques concerning the written method of communication can be improved at home and autonomously, and the teacher can verify the tasks of the students in a second moment, therefore without "consuming" lesson time. On the other hand, skills concerning the input and output spoken method of communica-

tion as listening and speaking can be better developed with the guide of a teacher. In order to demonstrate as just found from another perspective, in the graph below the raw data of the different classes have been united by summing the number of times in which, for each class, a language skill has been employed by Teacher. As one can see, the skills which emerge more prominently are *listening* (97 times) and *speaking* (87 times), followed by *reading* (70 times) and *writing* (42 times).
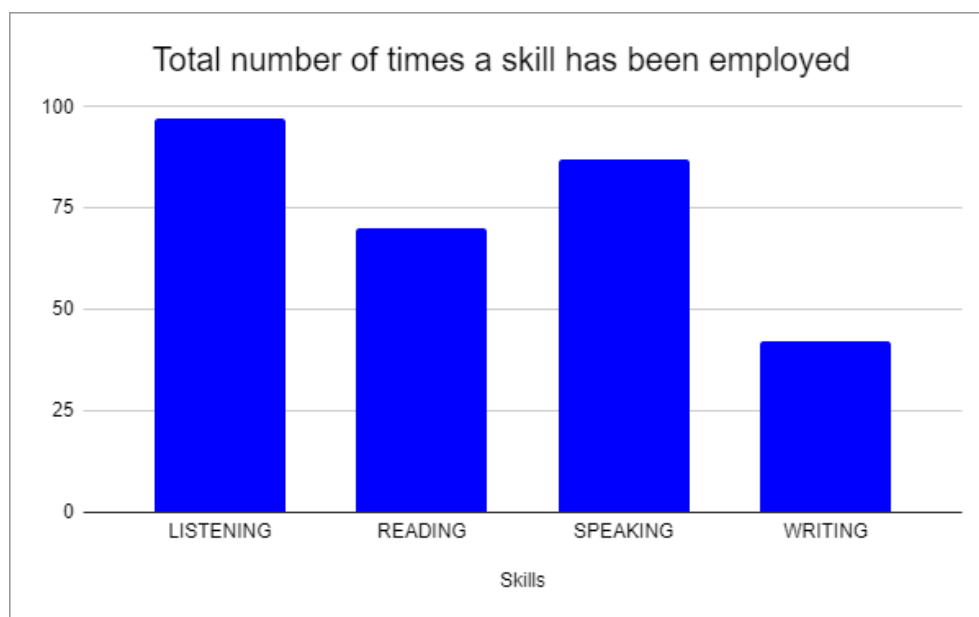


Figure 4.2: Total number of times a skill has been employed

Another result which can be depicted, regards the distribution of the employment of the different skills from the first grade to the fifth. In Figure 4.1, all classes are taken into consideration, and just by looking at that graph one can notice how the distribution becomes gradually less uniform as the

grade increases. If one considered only the first and the fifth grade, the range between the language skill most used and the one less used notably increases. In order to better observe the difference between the two grades considered, it has been created a graph in which are placed the language learning skills in an increasing order; the relevance has not been given to the type of language skills as in Figure 4.1, but to their percentage of employment.
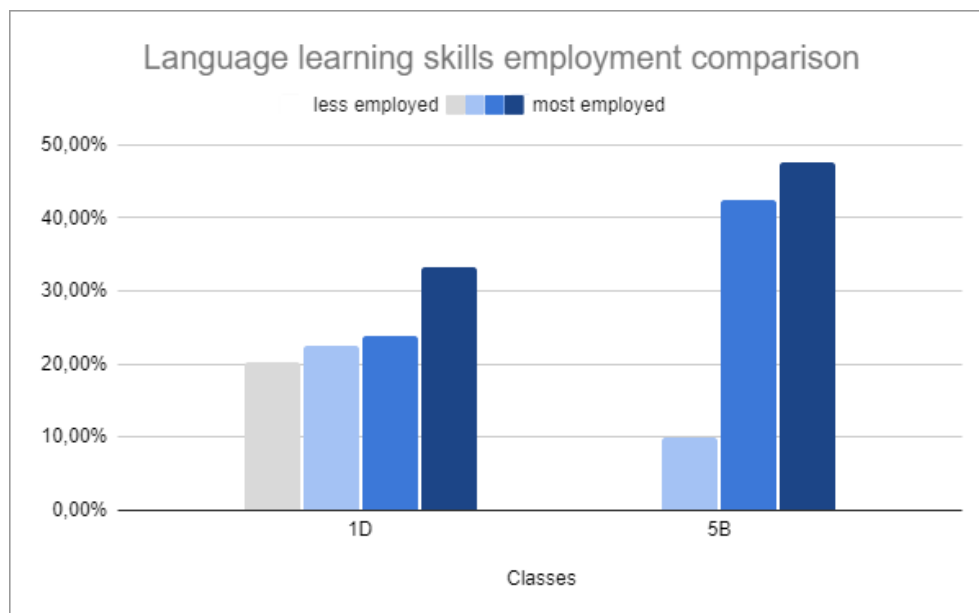


Figure 4.3: Language learning skills employment

The result obtained is not unexpected, because the data collected for this research dates to the first quarter of the academic year, meaning that the students of the first grade are not on the same level of competence since they come from different middle schools. In this sense, the job of a teacher is that of testing the students' level by employing as many techniques as possible

and valuing their competences in all fields of language learning. As it can be seen from the bars of the graph concerning 1D, the range from the language learning skill less employed during the lessons to the most employed is more or less 13%, which means that the use of the skills is almost equally distributed. On the other hand, the bars concerning 5B show a whole different scenario, in which the range from the the language learning skill less employed to the most employed is more or less 47%, since the less used is, actually, not used at all.

This significant difference describes the decision of Teacher of focusing, in the latest case, on determined skills which, with reference to the graph shown in Figure 4.1, are listening and speaking. In this concern, students attending the fifth grade of high school should have the competence to deal with a lesson based on carrying on a conversation or taking notes during a whole hour of listening. In the diary instrument, often has been noted how in the fifth grade one of the techniques employed by the teacher during the lesson consisted in improving the listening skill of communication of the students through watching a video, that could last even 20 minutes straight. A part from parameters as textual complexity or the sharpness of the audio, another aspect to take into consideration is how long a student is able to listen carefully. To be more clear, a fifth grade student is more trained to maintain high the degree of concentration compared to a first grade student. Obviously, this consideration is made by considering the competence level of the subjects of this research and by observing the classes as a whole, and not comparing student by student. Indeed, one does not have to take for granted

that a first grade student does not have a high level of linguistic competence, perhaps even higher than a fifth grade, but generally speaking s/he would be considered an outlier in this specific context.

One last consideration about the graph shown in Figure 4.1 regards the employment of language learning skills in the two classes of the fourth grade. Since the classes subject of my research were one of the first grade, two of the third, two of the fourth and one of the fifth, it has been possible to compare the third and the fourth grade: 3B with 3D and 4B with 4D. In the two graphs below are shown these classes in comparison.
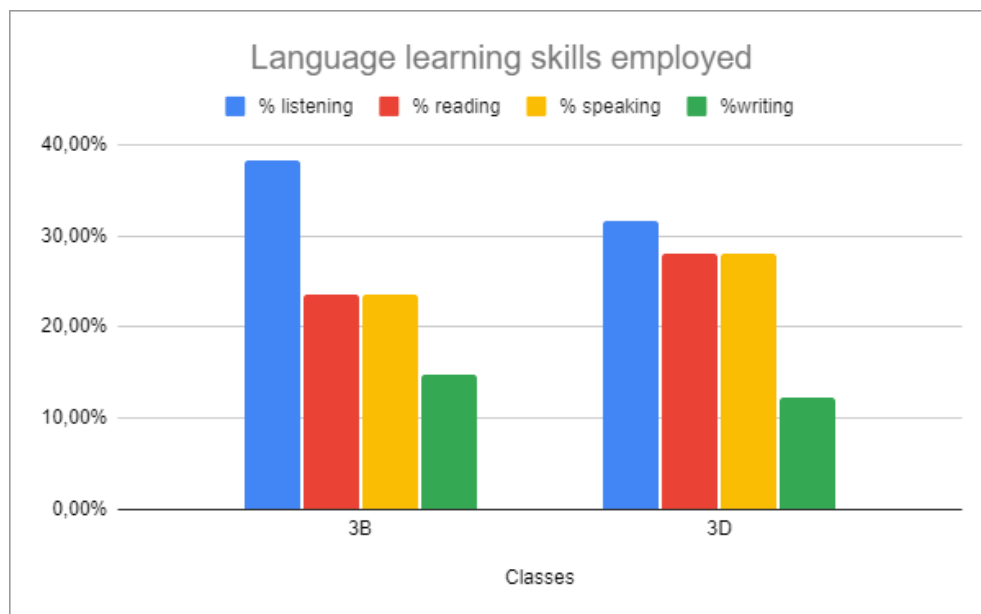


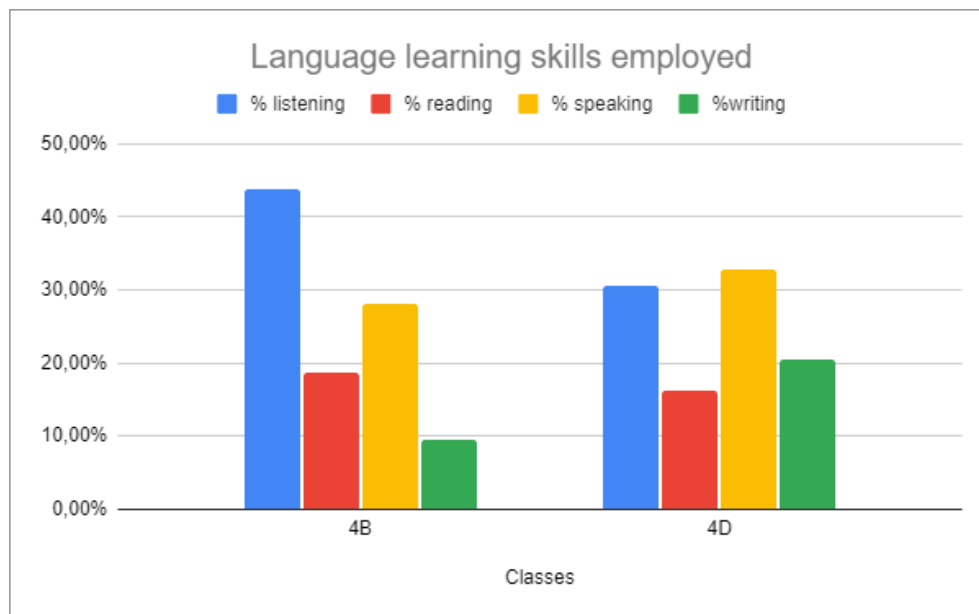Figure 4.4: Language learning skills employed - third grade

Figure 4.5: Language learning skills employed - fourth grade

As it can be seen, by comparing the two classes of the third grade it is possible to observe that the employment of the language learning skills is similar: at the first place listening, at the second and third place in equal measure reading and speaking, and lastly writing learning skill. On the other end, by looking at the graph concerning the two classes of the fourth grade, the employment of the four macro language learning skills differs considerably. The important consideration to make, in this regard, is that although 4B and 4D are of the same grade, they have different necessities, different strengths and weaknesses. By observing the columns of Figure 4.5, one can deduce that 4B needed the practice of listening and reading more than 4D or that, on the other hand, 4D needed the practice of speaking and writing more than 4B. These percentages refer to a period of time of three months, but the origin of

the decision of Teacher has to be searched in the results of the first written test of the two classes and the trend of the first lessons preceding the testing event.

As previously exposed in Chapter 3.2, Covid-19 pandemic affected to a great extent the field of didactic, which, during the last months of the academic year 2019/2020, was entirely held online. One of the aspects which was mostly affected was the one concerning written tests: indeed, the teacher could not entirely monitor the students during the test moment and, differently from the oral testing, the written one was strongly hindered by the online teaching. For this reason, after a short time from the beginning of the new academic year, Teacher decided to assign to her students a written test in order to assess the impact that online school had on her students. Specifically, the tests assigned to the fourth grade classes consisted of a reading and vocabulary cloze text, a multiple choice reading comprehension exercise and three open questions about topics dealt in class. From the correction of these written tests, it emerged the gap between the two classes as far as the written method of communication was concerned: 4D faced more difficulties in expressing an opinion or a topic than 4B, and its use of vocabulary and sentence structure on average emerged more lacking. The results of the written tests are given in the tab below.

| Range | 4B | 4D |
|---|---|---|
| 3 to 3.9 | 0 | 1 |
| 4 to 4.9 | 0 | 7 |
| 5 to 5.9 | 3 | 7 |
| 6 to 6.9 | 7 | 5 |
| 7 to 7.9 | 2 | 4 |
| 8 to 8.9 | 7 | 1 |
| | | |
| Mean | 7.1 | 6.01 |
| Median | 6.7 | 5.7 |

Table 4.1: Results first written test

The *"Range"* column lists the grades in tenths obtained by the students from the test, considering that in a range are comprehended five grades: *X*.00, *X*.25, *X*.50, *X*.70 and *X*.90. In the columns concerning classes 4B and 4D is reported the number of students who achieved a grade corresponding to the range. At the end of the table are indicated two statistic measures: mean and median, calculated for both classes. Specifically, the mean, by definition, is *"the value found by adding together all the numbers in a group, and dividing the total by the number of numbers"*, and the median *"the middle value of a series of numbers arranged in order of size"* [21]. By applying these definitions to this specific case, one can observe how, as far as 4D is concerned, the mean of the grades of the students results above the average, which in Italy is 6/10; however, the median of the class is insufficient, that is from 5.9/10 downwards. By correlating these two measures one could say

that, even if the mean of the tests is sufficient, in actual fact half of the class did not pass the test. Indeed, while the mean is affected by possible outliers, the median does not suffer their presence, so that the value to consider is the median. As far as 4B is concerned, one can observe how both mean and median are above the average, meaning that, overall, more of the half of the students passed the written test.

The difficulties of 4D in communicating through the written method, reflected also on the speaking way of communication. Indeed, when the students were asked by Teacher to engage a speech, lots of difficulties emerged, indicating the necessity to train more this skill. As far as 4B is concerned, since the test showed positive results for more than half of the students, Teacher decided to focus more on listening and speaking rather than writing and reading learning skills. In conclusion, these are the main reasons of the discrepancies between the two graphs of the fourth grades, meaning that the necessities of the students is put in the first place.

### 4.1.1 Listening Learning Strategies

In Section 4.1 it has been provided a general overview of the employment during the lessons of the four macro-areas of learning skills. In this and in the following subsections, these areas will be analysed in detail. For each area it has been created a graph in which is reported the extent of employment of the strategies already explained in Chapter 1.2. As we will see, not all the strategies exposed have been employed, some have been used only in some classes and some in all classes. The results are shown in the graph below.
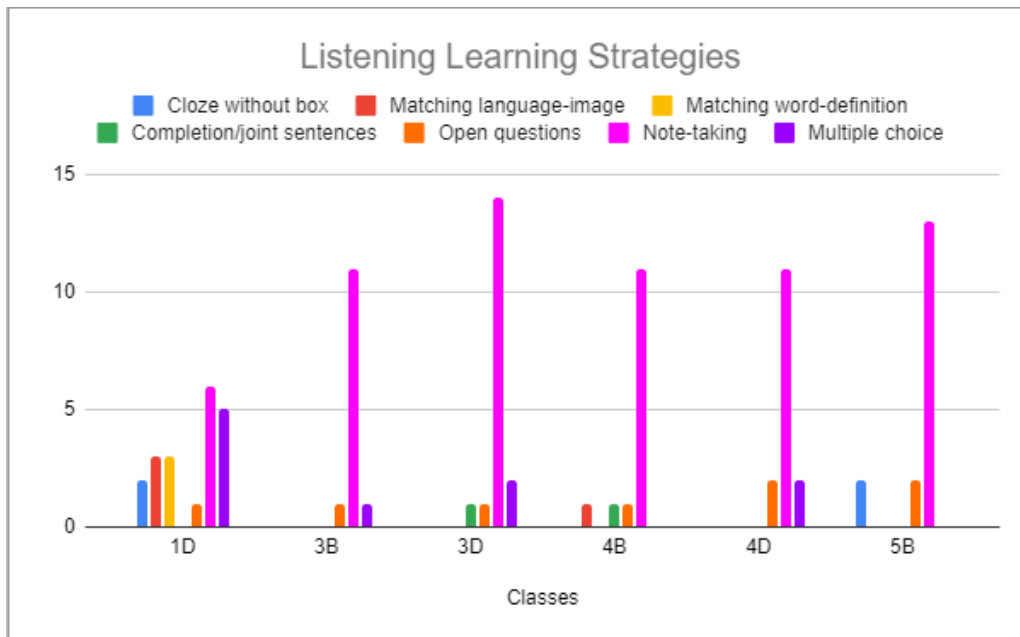
Figure 4.6: Listening learning strategies employed

The first thing which catches the eye is the distribution of the techniques: as it can be seen, in the first grade the strategies subjects of observation have been employed with a certain uniformity with respect to the other grades. This result emphasises the decision of Teacher of specialising her students as the grade increases. Indeed, in the first grade six different techniques have been employed, differently from the other grades in which the number swings from three to four. Moreover, 1D is the only class in which the range between the techniques most and less employed is lower than the total number of techniques employed. In the tab below are resumed the results.

| Class | Strategy | Times of employment | Range | Maximum range | Total Strategies |
|-------|----------|---------------------|-------|---------------|------------------|
| 1D | Note-taking | 6 | / | 5 | 6 |
| | Multiple choice | 5 | 1 | | |
| | Match language-image | 3 | 3 | | |
| | Match word-definition | 3 | 3 | | |
| | Cloze without box | 2 | 4 | | |
| | Open questions | 1 | 5 | | |

Table 4.2: Employment of strategies - 1D

| Class | Strategy | Times of employment | Range | Maximum range | Total Strategies |
|-------|----------|---------------------|-------|---------------|------------------|
| 3B | Note-taking | 11 | / | 10 | 3 |
| | Open questions | 1 | 10 | | |
| | Multiple choice | 1 | 10 | | |

Table 4.3: Employment of strategies - 3B

| Class | Strategy | Times of employment | Range | Maximum range | Total Strategies |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3D | Note-taking | 14 | / | 13 | 4 |
| | Multiple choice | 2 | 12 | | |
| | Completion/joint sentences | 1 | 13 | | |
| | Open questions | 1 | 13 | | |

Table 4.4: Employment of strategies - 3D

| Class | Strategy | Times of employment | Range | Maximum range | Total Strategies |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4B | Note-taking | 11 | / | 10 | 4 |
| | Match language-image | 1 | 10 | | |
| | Completion/joint sentences | 1 | 10 | | |
| | Open questions | 1 | 10 | | |

Table 4.5: Employment of strategies - 4B

| Class | Strategy | Times of employment | Range | Maximum range | Total Strategies |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4D | Note-taking | 11 | / | 9 | 3 |
| | Open questions | 2 | 9 | | |
| | Multiple choice | 2 | 9 | | |

Table 4.6: Employment of strategies - 4D

| Class | Strategy | Times of employment | Range | Maximum range | Total Strategies |
|-------|----------|---------------------|-------|---------------|------------------|
|       | Note-taking | 13 | / |    |   |
| 5B    | Open questions | 2 | 11 | 11 | 3 |
|       | Cloze without box | 2 | 11 |    |   |

Table 4.7: Employment of strategies - 5B

Another consideration about the listening leaning strategies, is that in the graph some techniques analysed in 1.2.1 have been excluded, specifically cloze with box and completion/joint of texts, because they have never been used by Teacher. On the other hand, there are some techniques which have been employed in all classes, note-taking and open questions. In this regard, these types of exercises are the most common, especially if one considers that in a deductive teaching most of the time is the teacher the one who speaks the most, and the job of the students is taking notes about what s/he is being taught. For this reason, among the strategies employed at least once by Teacher, that of note-taking is the most used, specifically 66 total times; this number, as it can be observed in the graph, distances itself a lot from the second most used technique, multiple choice, employed 10 times. In this concern, a part from note-taking, the employment of the other strategies among those used at least once is almost uniform, in which the less used is match word-definition employed only twice.

## 4.1.2 Reading Learning Strategies

As far as the reading area of study is concerned, the general distribution of the strategies among the classes results slightly more uniform than the listening one, meaning that there is not a particular technique which stands out on the others as note-taking in the previous graph observed. The results are reported in the graph below.
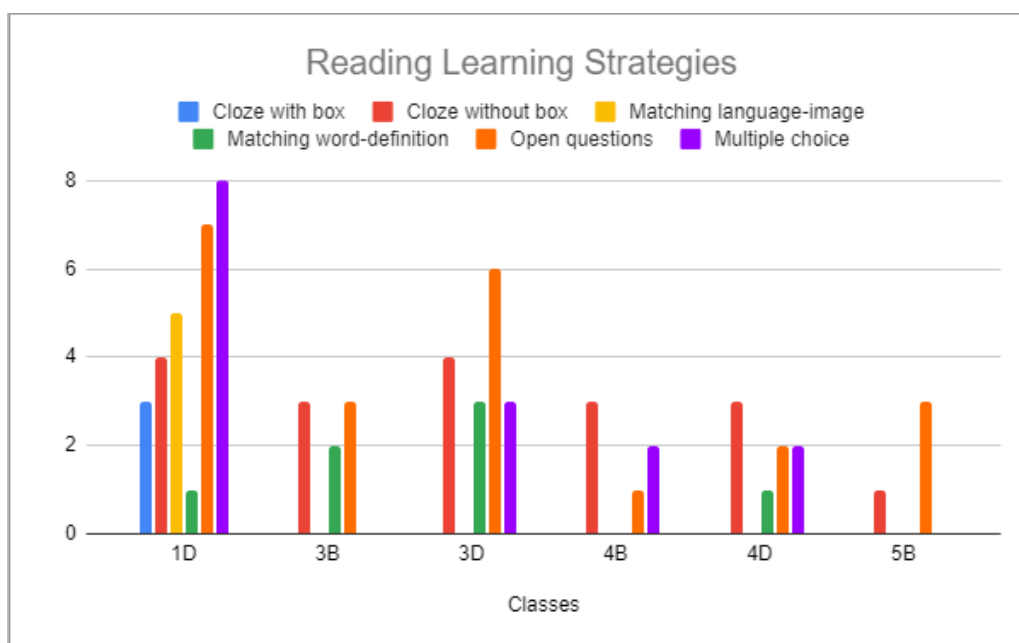


Figure 4.7: Reading learning strategies employed

As it can be depicted from this graph, the primacy of employment of reading learning strategies belongs to 1D, in which all the techniques have been employed. However, exactly as in the graph concerning listening learning strategies, some of the techniques included in the checklist have never been employed: specifically, completion/joint of dialogues and texts and transcod-

ing. By observing the graph, it can also be observed how also in this case some techniques have been employed in all the classes, which are cloze without box and open questions. It is common, in a didactic unit regarding reading comprehension, to start with open questions in order to summarise the content of the text, followed then by close-answers exercises. Indeed, among the techniques, open questions and cloze are the most used, on the contrary of the matching exercises, which are the less used.

As far as the distribution is concerned, in this case the non homogeneity among the employment of the techniques is not as marked as in the listening case. Indeed, the range between the most and less used techniques is not as high as in the previous case, in which the maximum registered was 13. A part from 1D, in which the range is 7, in the other classes it swings from 1 to 3, indicating a far more homogeneity in the employment of the different techniques.

## 4.1.3   Speaking Learning Strategies

If both listening and reading learning skills have been improved through the employment of not all the strategies listed, it cannot be said the same thing about the speaking one. Indeed, differently from the previous cases, all the speaking learning strategies have been used at least once, even if not in all the classes, as shown in the graph below.
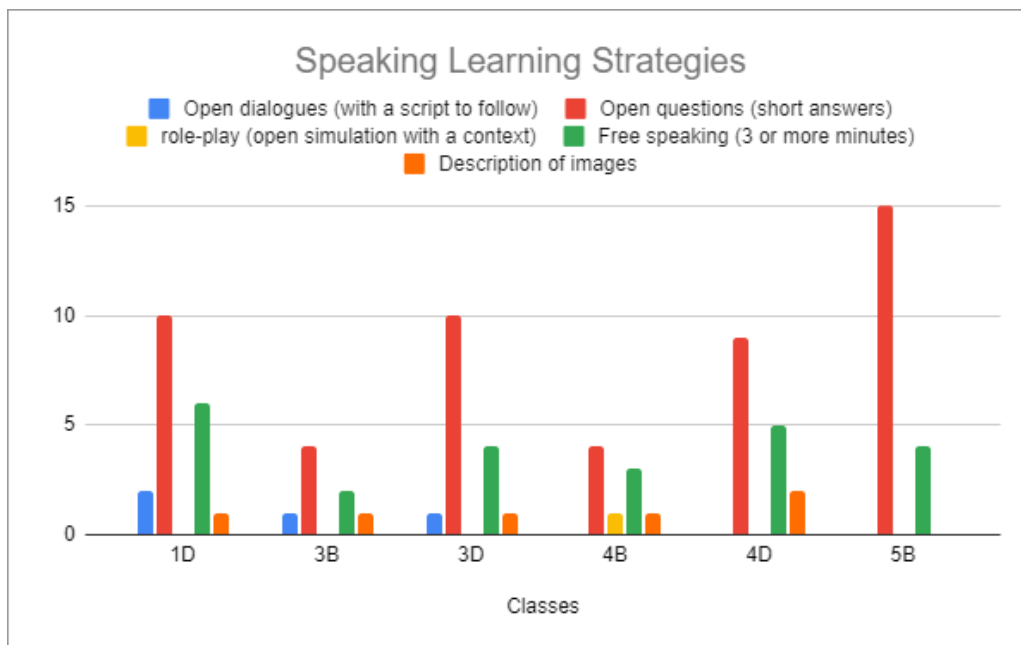


Figure 4.8: Speaking learning strategies employed

In the graphs concerning the listening and reading areas of investigation, two or three strategies have never been employed during the lessons, but here one can see how all of them are present despite their unequal distribution. However, this area has in common with the other two the fact that some of the techniques have been employed in all classes: open questions and free speak-

ing strategies. As it could be observed during the lessons, indeed, Teacher used to begin each lesson through questioning the students about what had been said during the previous lesson or what she called *"small talk"*. During the interview time she explained that the employment of this strategy served as support in breaking the ice and, as a consequence, helping the students feeling more at ease.

Moreover, Teacher's opinion regarding the improvement of the speaking skill consisted in giving the students as much freedom as possible about the topic to discuss. In this sense, hardly ever strategies such as open dialogues with a script to follow and role-play have been employed, and the graph demonstrates it. Indeed, the open questions technique results the most used (52 times), followed by free speaking (24 times), description of images (6 times), open dialogues (4 times), ending with the less used, role-play, used only once.

### 4.1.4 Writing Learning Strategies

In Section 4.1 it has been discussed the limited employment of the writing learning skill during the observation. As already explained, these types of activities require more time than the one available. For this reason, the results obtained for this skill highlight the preference of those strategies which can be employed in a short time.
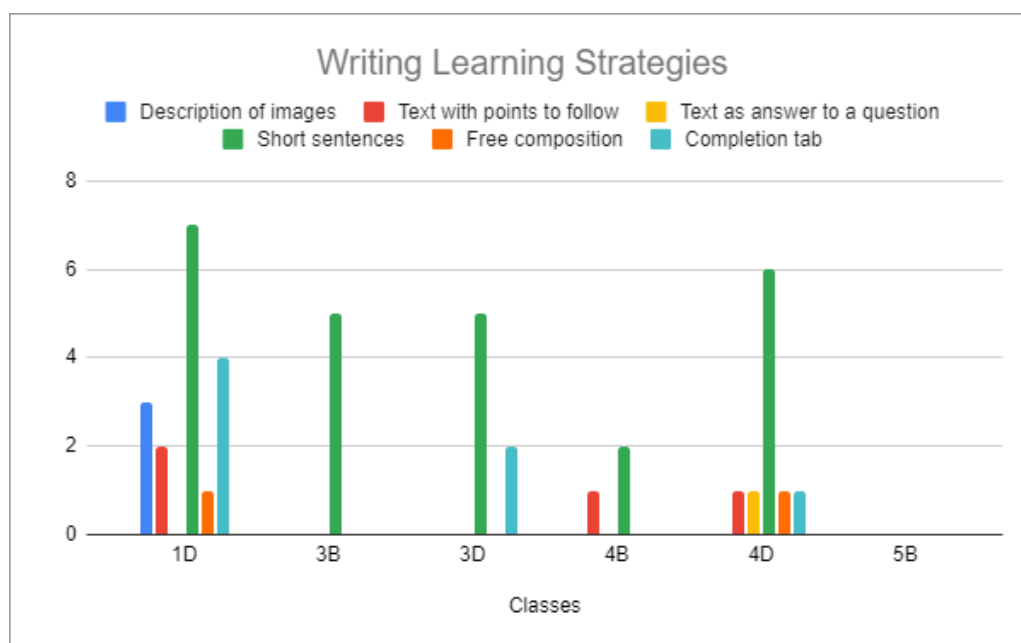


Figure 4.9: Writing learning strategies employed

As expected, the technique most used during the lessons is the one concerning the writing of short sentences, employed 25 total times, 18 times more than the second most used. Previously on this chapter it has been observed how in the fifth grade the writing learning skill has never been employed and, as an obvious consequence, neither its strategies. On the other hand, in 1D and

4D five strategies out of six have been used, even if their employment is not uniform, more evident in 4D, in which the range between the strategy more employed and the others is 5. In this concern, among the strategies listed, that of short sentences is the one which can be completed in the shortest time, even few minutes. Although tasks such as the composition of a text, guided or free, may be the most complete, they are also the most time-consuming. For this reason, it is not surprising that among all the activities, those concerning the writing of a text are the less employed, respectively: text with points to follow (4 times), text as an answer to a question (once) and free composition (twice).

## 4.2   Language Strategy Use Survey

In this Section the results obtained by one of the questionnaires administered to the students will be exposed, specifically the *Language Strategy Use Survey*, the instrument used in order to answer the second research question of the case study,

> II) which foreign language learning strategies are more used by the students? How do they differ from a grade to another?

compiled by the student at the end of the observational period.

This Section is composed of six different subsections concerning the skills present in the questionnaire: listening, vocabulary, speaking, reading, writing and translation. For each category will be reported the strategy which received the highest percentage of agreement and the highest of disagreement,

firstly in consideration of the totality of the 62 students, then dividing them by class. As already mentioned in 2.4.3, this survey was administered only to three classes, 4B (18 students), 4D (25 students) and 5B (19 students). Moreover, in order to obtain quantitative data and to facilitate the synthesis and the analysis of data, it has been decided to convert the expressions of the answers in numerical values. In this way, the answers obtained have been rendered more easily manageable and usable through statistical and mathematical formulas:

a) completely disagree = -2

b) quite disagree = -1

c) neither agree nor disagree = 0

d) quite agree = 1

e) completely agree = 2

### 4.2.1    Listening Strategy Use

The first section of the questionnaire concerns the listening learning skill, specifically a list of 12 strategies (see appendix). As already explained, the multiple choice answers provided were five: completely agree, quite agree, neither agree nor disagree, quite disagree, completely disagree. In order to provide a general overview, these answers were grouped into three, summing the two expressing agreement and the two expressing disagreement. In this

sense, while talking about the totality of the students, only these three options will be discussed. On the other hand, while talking about each class, it will be provided a graph including all five options.

In order to compare the results, it has been decided to create three tables in which are reported the percentages of agreement, neutrality and disagreement for each strategy divided into four columns: one considering the sum of all students, and the other three the division among classes.

| AGREEMENT | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| strategy | % total | % 4B | % 4D | % 5B |
| 1 | 43,55% | 44,5% | 32% | 57,9% |
| 2 | 70,97% | 50,0% | 76% | 84,2% |
| 3 | 43,55% | 38,9% | 36% | 57,9% |
| 4 | 46,77% | 55,6% | 48% | 36,8% |
| 5 | 62,90% | 66,7% | 52% | 73,7% |
| 6 | 75,81% | 88,9% | 72% | 68,4% |
| 7 | 75,81% | 72,2% | 76% | 78,9% |
| 8 | 91,94% | 88,9% | 88% | 100% |
| 9 | 70,97% | 77,7% | 68% | 68,4% |
| 10 | 56,45% | 61,1% | 56% | 52,6% |
| 11 | 58,06% | 50,0% | 64% | 57,9% |
| 12 | 64,52% | 55,6% | 64% | 73,7% |

Table 4.8: Percentages of Agreement - Listening

| NEUTRALITY | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| strategy | % total | % 4B | % 4D | % 5B |
| 1 | 24,19% | 22,2% | 36% | 10,5% |
| 2 | 8,06% | 16,7% | 8% | 0,0% |
| 3 | 16,13% | 22,2% | 20% | 5,3% |
| 4 | 17,74% | 11,1% | 28% | 10,5% |
| 5 | 20,97% | 11,1% | 40% | 5,3% |
| 6 | 12,90% | 5,6% | 24% | 5,3% |
| 7 | 9,68% | 5,6% | 12% | 10,5% |
| 8 | 4,84% | 11,1% | 4% | 0,0% |
| 9 | 16,13% | 16,7% | 24% | 5,3% |
| 10 | 14,52% | 5,6% | 28% | 5,3% |
| 11 | 22,58% | 22,2% | 32% | 10,5% |
| 12 | 11,29% | 22,2% | 12% | 0,0% |

Table 4.9: Percentages of Neutrality - Listening

| DISAGREEMENT | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| strategy | % total | % 4B | % 4D | % 5B |
| 1 | 32,26% | 33,3% | 32% | 31,6% |
| 2 | 20,97% | 33,3% | 16% | 15,8% |
| 3 | 40,32% | 38,9% | 44% | 36,8% |
| 4 | 35,48% | 33,4% | 24% | 52,6% |
| 5 | 16,13% | 22,2% | 8% | 21,1% |
| 6 | 11,29% | 5,6% | 4% | 26,3% |
| 7 | 14,52% | 22,3% | 12% | 10,5% |
| 8 | 3,23% | 0,0% | 8% | 0% |
| 9 | 12,9% | 5,6% | 8% | 26,3% |
| 10 | 29,03% | 33,3% | 16% | 42,1% |
| 11 | 19,35% | 27,8% | 4% | 31,6% |
| 12 | 24,19% | 22,2% | 24% | 26% |

Table 4.10: Percentages of Disagreement - Listening

As it can be seen in Table 4.8, to 9 strategies out of 12 corresponds a percentage of agreement over 50%, meaning that more than half of the students agrees with the statement proposed. To go into detail, the strategy which received the highest percentage of agreement is number 8: *"When I listen in the language I generally pay attention to the context of what is being said."*, which percentage of agreement is 91,94%, against 4,84% of neutrality and 3,23% of disagreement.

On the other hand, in Table 4.10 it is possible to notice that the strategy

which received the highest percentage of disagreement is number 3: *"I keep practicing all the sounds in English until I am comfortable with them."*, which percentage of disagreement is 40,32%, against 16,3% of neutrality and 43,55% of agreement.

In the first case, the difference between the percentages of agreement and disagreement is evident, however, in the second case it cannot be said the same thing. Indeed, even if among all strategies number 3 is the one with the highest percentage of disagreement, this result still is lower than the percentage of agreement. Thanks to this data one could state that, generally speaking, students had a positive response to the list of the listening strategies. Moreover, the conclusion which can be depicted is that they think that the use of these strategies would help them improve their listening skill, even if in varying degree.

As far as 4B is concerned, the highest percentage of agreement can be found in two statements, number 6 and 8, reported below with their respective graphs.

No. 6 *"When I listen in the language I usually listen for those key words that seem to carry the bulk of the meaning."*
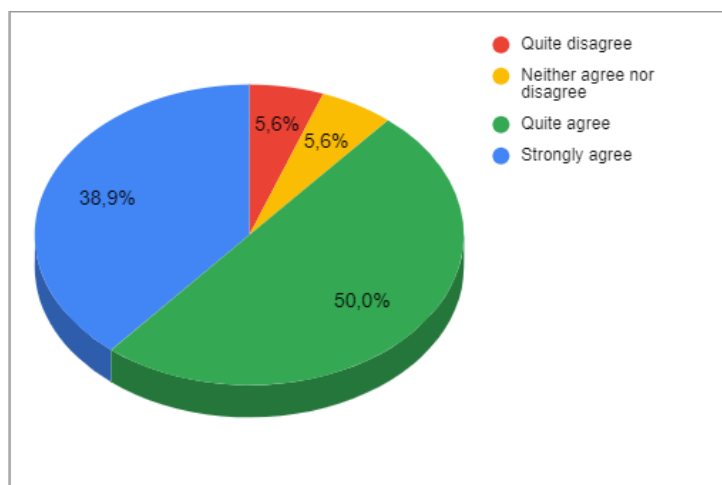


Figure 4.10: Answers - Strategy no.6

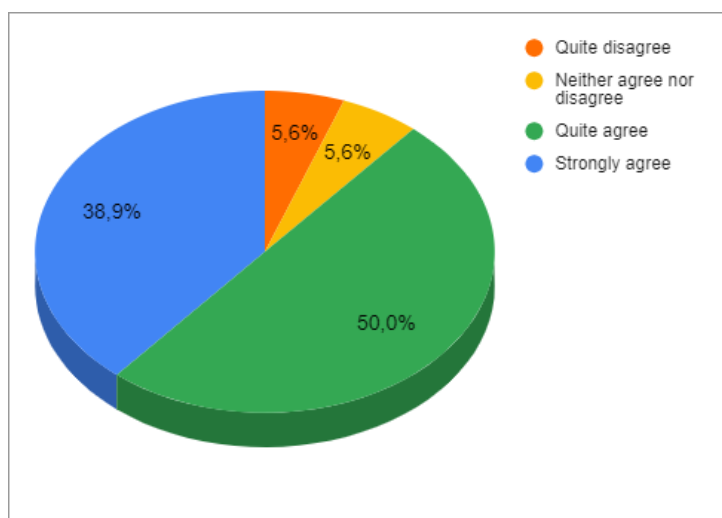No. 8 *"When I listen in the language I generally pay attention to the context of what is being said."*



Figure 4.11: Answers - Strategy no.8

As one can see, in both cases the percentage of agreement is 88,9%, specifically 50% quite agrees and 38,9% strongly agrees. This double positive outcome is understandable, since in both statements the idea is that of focusing not on all words but on part of them in a general way.

On the other hand, the strategy which received the highest percentage of disagreement is number 3, *"I keep practicing all the sounds in English until I am comfortable with them."*, which specifics are exposed in the graph below.
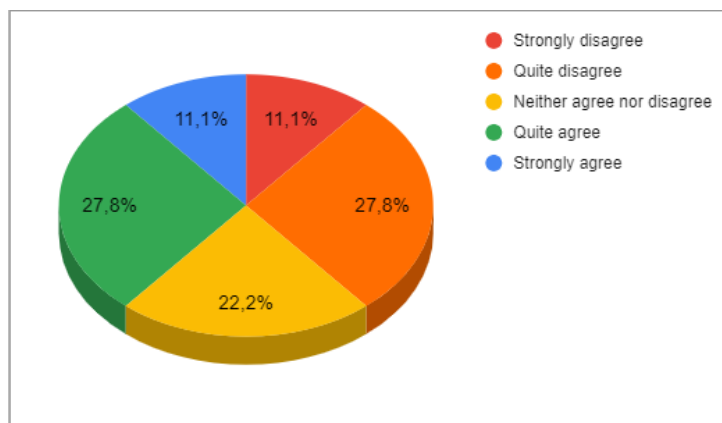


Figure 4.12: Answers - Strategy no.3

From the data collected in this class, it has been possible to notice that 10 strategies out of 12 obtained more than 50% of agreement, with the result that for half of the students not all strategies would help them to improve their listening learning skill. To be more precise, the two strategies which did not reach 50% are number 1 *"I occasionally attend out-of-class events where English is spoken."*, and number 3 *"I keep practicing all the sounds in English until I am comfortable with them."*.

As far as 4D is concerned, the strategy which shows the highest percentage of agreement is, again, number 8 *"When I listen in the language I generally pay attention to the context of what is being said."*, almost in the same measure as 4B, as shown in the graph.
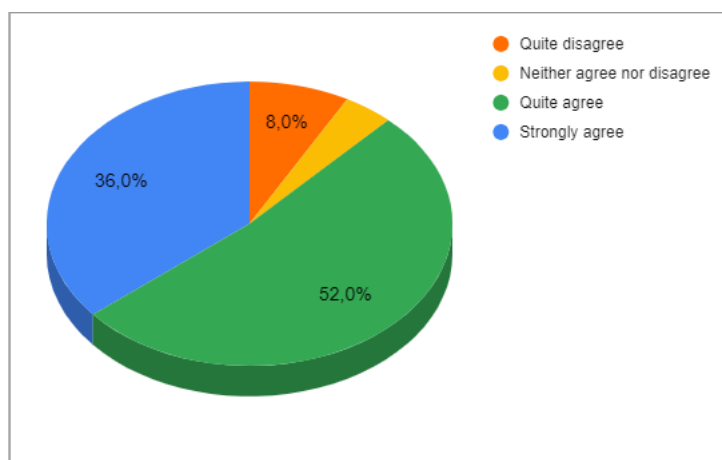


Figure 4.13: Answers - Strategy no.8

In the case concerning the highest percentage of disagreement as well, the strategy to take into consideration is number 3 *"I keep practicing all the sounds in English until I am comfortable with them."*. However, the specifics slightly change, from a percentage of 38,9% to 44%, as reported in the graph below.
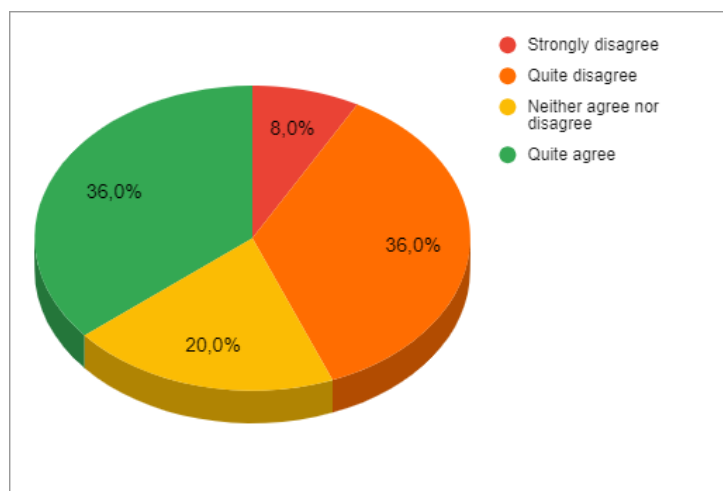
Figure 4.14: Answers - Strategy no.3

From the data collected in this class, it has been possible to notice that 9 strategies out of 12 obtained more than 50% of agreement, one less than 4B. The consequent conclusion is that for half of the students 3 of the strategies listed would not help them to improve their listening learning skill. To be more precise, these strategies are number 1 *"I occasionally attend out-of-class events where English is spoken."*, number 3 *"I keep practicing all the sounds in English until I am comfortable with them."* and number 4 *"I look for associations between the sound of a word or phrase in English with the sound of a familiar word."*.

As far as 5B is concerned, the strategy with the highest percentage of agreement is always number 8, *"When I listen in the language I generally pay attention to the context of what is being said."*, but in this case, as shown in the graph below, the percentage reaches the highest, 100%.
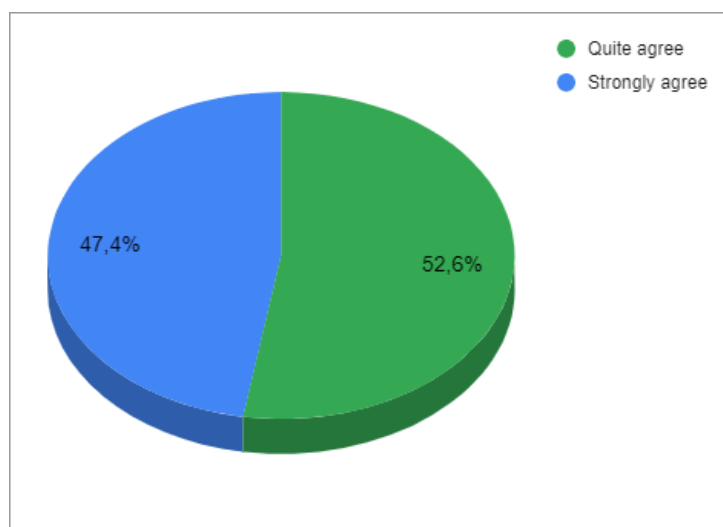


Figure 4.15: Answers - Strategy no.8

However, the strategy corresponding to the highest percentage of disagreement is different from the the other two classes; indeed, in this case the strategy is number 4 *"I look for associations between the sound of a word or phrase in English with the sound of a familiar word."*.
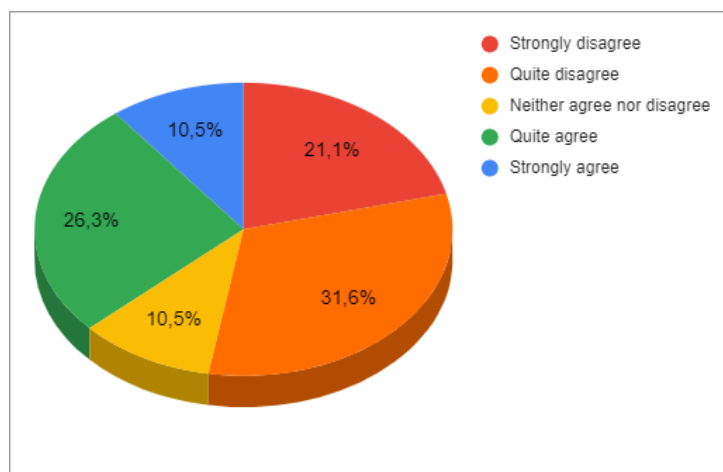
Figure 4.16: Answers - Strategy no.4

From the data collected in this class, it has been possible to notice that the number of strategies which obtained more than 50% of agreement, is the highest among all classes, specifically 11 out of 12. In this concern, one could say that for half of the students only one of the strategies listed would not help them to improve their listening learning skill. To be more precise, the strategy is number 4, the same which obtained the highest percentage of disagreement.

### 4.2.2 Vocabulary Strategy Use

The second section of the questionnaire consists of a list of 15 strategies which can be used in order to improve the vocabulary. As in the previous section, all the results of this category have been resumed in three tables.

| AGREEMENT | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| strategy | % total | % 4B | % 4D | % 5B |
| 1 | 61,29% | 55,5% | 56% | 73,7% |
| 2 | 74,19% | 77,8% | 68% | 78,9% |
| 3 | 27,42% | 27,8% | 24% | 31,6% |
| 4 | 46,77% | 44,4% | 56% | 36,8% |
| 5 | 29,03% | 16,7% | 40% | 26,3% |
| 6 | 62,90% | 66,7% | 52% | 73,7% |
| 7 | 70,97% | 77,8% | 56% | 84,2% |
| 8 | 30,65% | 33,3% | 24% | 36,8% |
| 9 | 54,84% | 55,6% | 56% | 52,6% |
| 10 | 40,32% | 55,6% | 36% | 31,6% |
| 11 | 51,61% | 50,0% | 40% | 68,4% |
| 12 | 58,06% | 33,3% | 76% | 57,9% |
| 13 | 48,39% | 33,3% | 60% | 47,4% |
| 14 | 58,06% | 50,0% | 52% | 73,7% |
| 15 | 48,39% | 38,9% | 44% | 63,2% |

Table 4.11: Percentages of Agreement - Vocabulary

| NEUTRALITY | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| strategy | % total | % 4B | % 4D | % 5B |
| 1 | 19,35% | 22,2% | 28% | 5,3% |
| 2 | 11,29% | 11,1% | 20% | 0,0% |
| 3 | 20,97% | 16,7% | 32% | 10,5% |
| 4 | 16,13% | 16,7% | 24% | 5,3% |
| 5 | 6,45% | 5,6% | 8% | 5,3% |
| 6 | 16,13% | 5,6% | 36% | 0,0% |
| 7 | 16,13% | 11,1% | 32% | 0,0% |
| 8 | 32,26% | 22,2% | 48% | 21,1% |
| 9 | 22,58% | 38,9% | 20% | 10,5% |
| 10 | 8,06% | 0,0% | 20% | 0,0% |
| 11 | 24,19% | 33,3% | 32% | 5,3% |
| 12 | 14,52% | 22,2% | 16% | 5,3% |
| 13 | 25,81% | 27,8% | 32% | 15,8% |
| 14 | 22,58% | 11,1% | 44% | 5,3% |
| 15 | 24,19% | 27,8% | 36% | 5,3% |

Table 4.12: Percentages of Neutrality - Vocabulary

| DISAGREEMENT | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| strategy | % total | % 4B | % 4D | % 5B |
| 1 | 19,35% | 22,2% | 16% | 21,1% |
| 2 | 14,52% | 11,1% | 12% | 21,1% |
| 3 | 51,61% | 55,5% | 44% | 57,9% |
| 4 | 37,10% | 38,9% | 20% | 57,9% |
| 5 | 64,52% | 77,8% | 52% | 68,4% |
| 6 | 20,97% | 27,8% | 12% | 26,3% |
| 7 | 12,90% | 11,1% | 12% | 15,8% |
| 8 | 37,10% | 44,4% | 28% | 42,1% |
| 9 | 22,58% | 5,6% | 24% | 36,8% |
| 10 | 51,61% | 44,4% | 44% | 68,4% |
| 11 | 24,19% | 16,7% | 28% | 26,3% |
| 12 | 27,42% | 44,4% | 8% | 36,8% |
| 13 | 25,81% | 38,9% | 8% | 36,8% |
| 14 | 19,35% | 38,9% | 4% | 21,1% |
| 15 | 27,42% | 33,3% | 20% | 31,6% |

Table 4.13: Percentages of Disagreement - Vocabulary

As it can be seen, the scenario is moderately different from the one concerning the listening strategy use. Indeed, as it can be seen in Table 4.11, the strategy which received the highest percentage of agreement does not reach the summit achieved by the listening category. Specifically, the strategy is number 2 *"To memorize new words I analyze words to identify the meaning of a part or several parts of them."*, with a percentage of agreement of

74,19%, against 11,20% of neutrality and 14,52% of disagreement.

Another aspect which differs from the listening area is the one concerning the highest percentage of disagreement. Indeed, while in the previous case the highest percentage of disagreement was lower than the percentage of agreement, here it is not the case. As Table 4.13 reveals, strategy number 5 *"I sometimes use rhyming to remember new words."* obtained a disagreement of 64,52%, against 29,03% of agreement and 6,45% of neutrality. Even if this is the most evident case, it is not the only one: in addition to strategy number 5, also number 3, 8 and 10 report a similar outcome.

No.3 *"I group the words according to the part of speech (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives)."*
No.8 *"I write the new word in a meaningful sentence."*
No.10 *"I go back periodically to refresh my memory of words I learned earlier."*

In this respect, if one considered only the strategies which obtained more than 50% of agreement, he could say that only the employment of 8 strategies out of 15 would help the students improve their use of vocabulary; still, these strategies swing from 51,61% to 74,19% of agreement.

As far as 4B is concerned, the highest percentage of agreement can be found, as in the previous case, in two statements, number 2 and 7, reported below with their respective graphs.

No.2 *"To memorize new words I analyze words to identify the meaning of a part or several parts of them."*
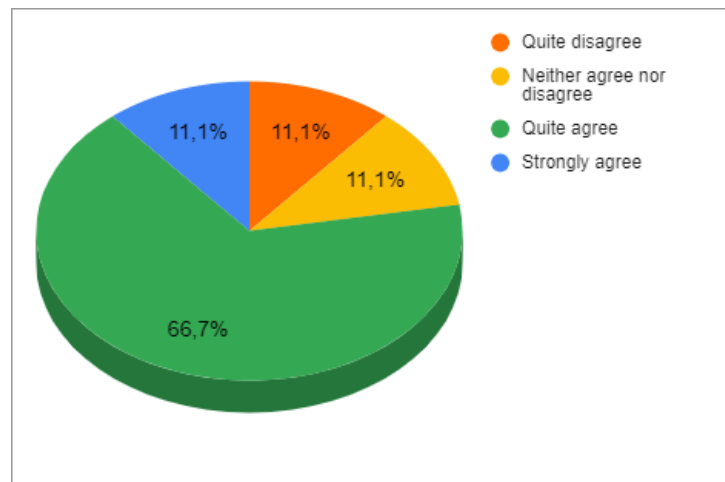


Figure 4.17: Answers - Strategy no.2

No.7 *"I sometimes learn a new word by listing it along with other words related to it by topic."*
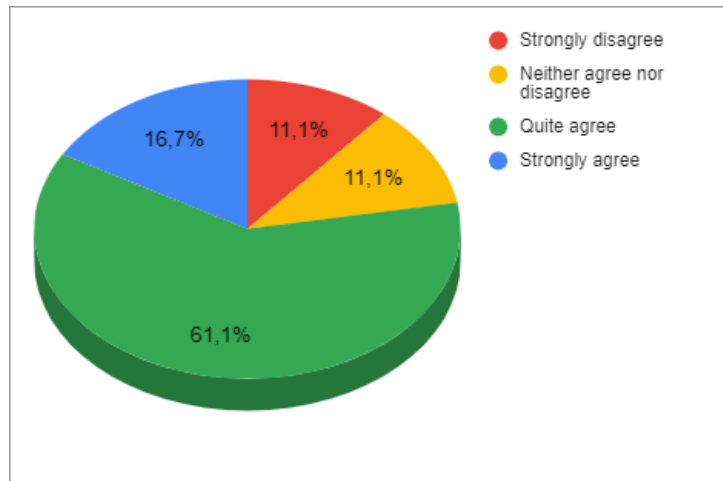


Figure 4.18: Answers - Strategy no.7

On the other hand, the strategy which received the highest percentage of disagreement is number 5, *"I sometimes use rhyming to remember new words."*, which specifics are reported in the graph below.
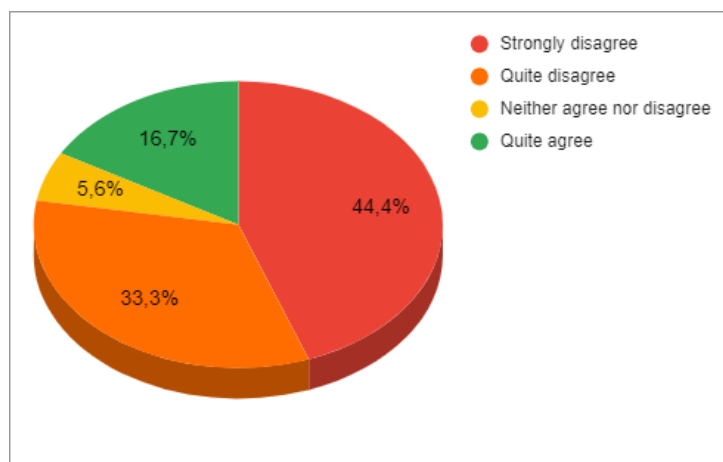
Figure 4.19: Answers - Strategy no.5

As it can be seen, 44,4% of the students strongly disagree with this statement, and 33,3% quite disagrees, with the conclusion of 77,7% of overall disagreement.

Moreover, from the data collected in this class, it has been possible to notice that only 8 strategies out of 15 obtained more than 50% of agreement. In this concern, one could say that for half of the students 7 of the strategies listed would not help them to improve their use of vocabulary. To be more precise, these strategies are number 3 *"I group the words according to the part of speech (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives)."*, number 4 *"I associate the sound of the new word with the sound of a familiar word."*, number 5 *"I sometimes use rhyming to remember new words."*, number 8 *"I write the new word in a meaningful sentence."*, number 12 *"I sometimes visualize the spelling of the new word in my mind"*, number 13 *"I use words just learned in order to see if they work for me"* and number 15 *"I make a real effort to use idiomatic*

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*expressions in English".*

As far as 4D is concerned, the strategy which shows the highest percentage of agreement is number 12, *"I sometimes visualize the spelling of the new word in my mind".*
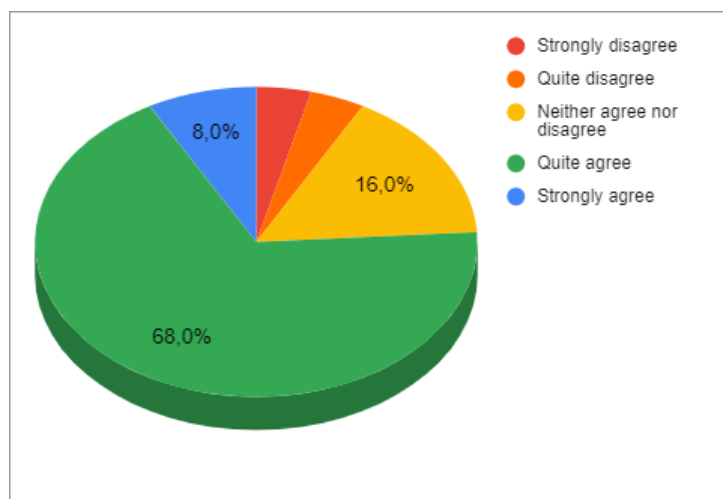


Figure 4.20: Answers - Strategy no.12

This result is highly interesting if one considers that this particular strategy did not receive the same approval in the other two classes; indeed, in 4B this strategy is found on 12th place, whereas in 5B on 8th place, respectively with 33,3% and 57,9% of agreement.

On the other hand, the strategy which obtained the highest percentage of disagreement is the same as 4B, strategy number 5, *"I sometimes use rhyming to remember new words.",* even if the level of disagreement is not as high as in the previous case, as it can be seen in the graph below.
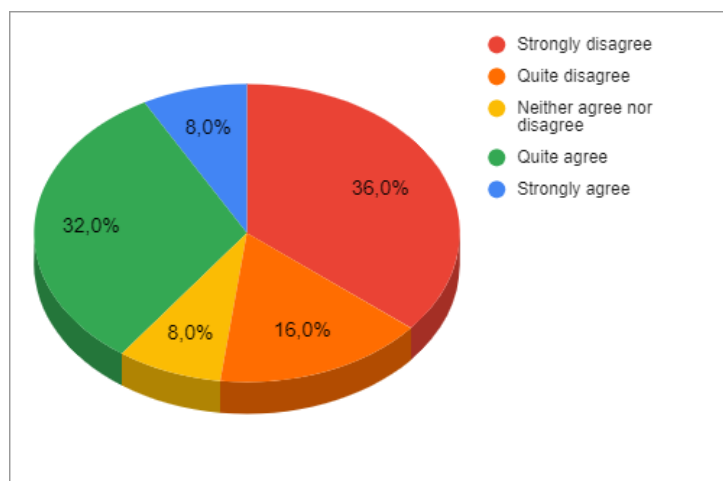
Figure 4.21: Answers - Strategy no.5

In addition, from the data collected in this class, it has been possible to observe that also in this case many of the strategies listed did not reach 50% of agreement. Precisely, the student think that 6 of the strategies listed would not help them to improve their use of vocabulary, specifically, strategies number 3 "I group the words according to the part of speech (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives).", number 5 "I sometimes use rhyming to remember new words.", number 8 "I write the new word in a meaningful sentence.", number 10 "I go back periodically to refresh my memory of words I learned earlier.", number 11 "I remind myself of a word meaning by first thinking of meaningful parts of the word (e.g. prefix or suffix)" and number 15 "I make a real effort to use idiomatic expressions in English".

As far as 5B is concerned, the strategy with the highest percentage of agreement is the same as one of 4B, strategy number 7, *"I sometimes learn a new word by listing it along with other words related to it by topic."*, slightly more marked with respect to 4B.
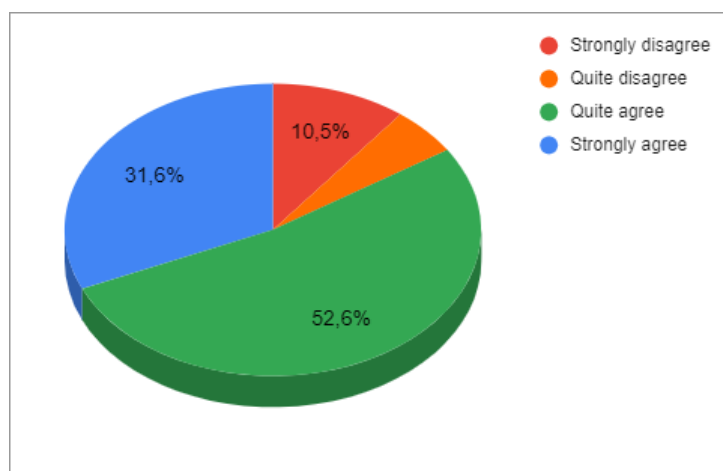


Figure 4.22: Answers - Strategy no.7

On the other hand, the highest percentage of disagreement can be found in two statements, number 5 and 10, reported below with their respective graphs.

No.5 *"I sometimes use rhyming to remember new words."*
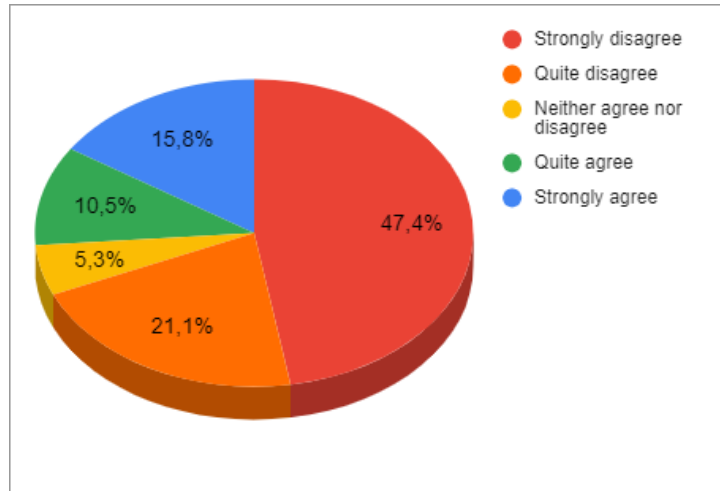


Figure 4.23: Answers - Strategy no.5

No.10 *"I go back periodically to refresh my memory of words I learned earlier."*
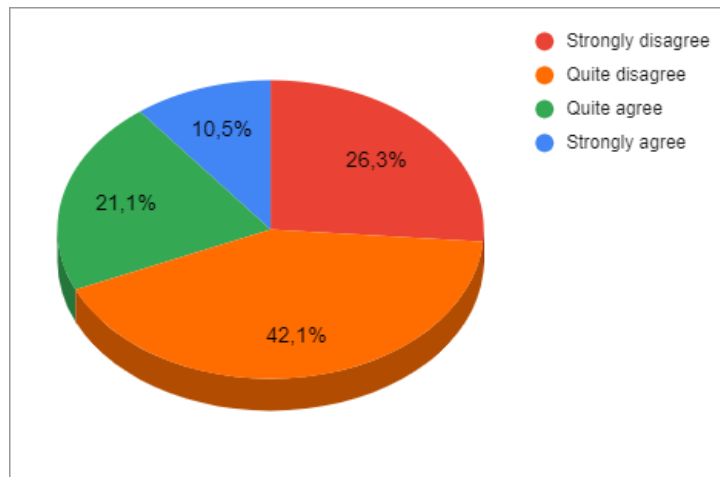


Figure 4.24: Answers - Strategy no.10

Moreover, from the data collected in this class, it has been possible to observe that, as in 4D, the number of strategies listed that did not reach 50% of agreement is 6. Precisely, the students think that among the strategies listed, the ones which would not help them to improve their use of vocabulary are number 3 *"I group the words according to the part of speech (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives)."*, number 4 *"I associate the sound of the new word with the sound of a familiar word."*, number 5 *"I sometimes use rhyming to remember new words."*, number 8 *"I write the new word in a meaningful sentence."*, number 10 *"I go back periodically to refresh my memory of words I learned earlier."* and number 13 *"I use words just learned in order to see if they work for me."*.

### 4.2.3 Speaking Strategy Use

The third section of the questionnaire consists of a list of 14 strategies which can be employed in order to improve the speaking learning skill. The following tables resume the data collected for this area of competence.

| AGREEMENT | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| strategy | % total | % 4B | % 4D | % 5B |
| 1 | 56,45% | 50,0% | 64% | 52,6% |
| 2 | 43,55% | 55,6% | 40% | 36,8% |
| 3 | 70,97% | 61,1% | 80% | 68,4% |
| 4 | 32,26% | 16,7% | 36% | 42,1% |
| 5 | 66,13% | 77,8% | 64% | 57,9% |
| 6 | 51,61% | 50,0% | 48% | 57,9% |
| 7 | 66,13% | 72,2% | 56% | 73,7% |
| 8 | 58,06% | 44,5% | 48% | 84,2% |
| 9 | 53,23% | 55,6% | 36% | 73,7% |
| 10 | 90,32% | 77,8% | 92% | 100% |
| 11 | 27,42% | 16,7% | 24% | 42,1% |
| 12 | 32,26% | 16,7% | 24% | 57,9% |
| 13 | 54,84% | 44,5% | 48% | 73,7% |
| 14 | 54,84% | 61,1% | 52% | 52,6% |

Table 4.14: Percentages of Agreement - Speaking

| NEUTRALITY | | | | |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| strategy | % total | % 4B | % 4D | % 5B |
| 1 | 11,29% | 16,7% | 12% | 5,3% |
| 2 | 20,97% | 16,7% | 32% | 10,5% |
| 3 | 6,45% | 0,0% | 12% | 5,3% |
| 4 | 11,29% | 5,6% | 20% | 5,3% |
| 5 | 11,29% | 11,1% | 16% | 5,3% |
| 6 | 24,19% | 33,3% | 32% | 5,3% |
| 7 | 14,52% | 5,6% | 28% | 5,3% |
| 8 | 25,81% | 33,3% | 40% | 0,0% |
| 9 | 14,52% | 11,1% | 28% | 0,0% |
| 10 | 0,0% | 0,0% | 0% | 0,0% |
| 11 | 6,45% | 5,6% | 12% | 0,0% |
| 12 | 20,97% | 22,2% | 24% | 15,8% |
| 13 | 14,52% | 11,1% | 20% | 10,5% |
| 14 | 12,90% | 22,2% | 8% | 10,5% |

Table 4.15: Percentages of Neutrality - Speaking

| DISAGREEMENT | | | | |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| strategy | % total | % 4B | % 4D | % 5B |
| 1 | 32,26% | 33,3% | 24% | 42,1% |
| 2 | 35,48% | 27,8% | 28% | 52,6% |
| 3 | 22,58% | 38,9% | 8% | 26,3% |
| 4 | 56,45% | 77,8% | 44% | 52,6% |
| 5 | 22,58% | 11,1% | 20% | 36,8% |
| 6 | 24,19% | 16,7% | 20% | 36,8% |
| 7 | 19,35% | 22,2% | 16% | 21,1% |
| 8 | 16,13% | 22,2% | 12% | 15,8% |
| 9 | 32,26% | 33,3% | 36% | 26,3% |
| 10 | 9,68% | 22,2% | 8% | 0,0% |
| 11 | 66,13% | 77,8% | 64% | 57,9% |
| 12 | 46,77% | 61,1% | 52% | 26,3% |
| 13 | 30,65% | 44,5% | 32% | 15,8% |
| 14 | 32,26% | 16,7% | 40% | 36,8% |

Table 4.16: Percentages of Disagreement - Speaking

These results are more similar to the ones obtained for the listening strategy use rather than the use of vocabulary. Indeed, in Table 4.14 it can be observed how the highest percentage of agreement reaches 90,32%, specifically in strategy number 10, *"When I can't think of a word or expression I will look for a different way to express the idea; for example, I use a synonym or describe the idea or object I want to talk about"*.

However, the result obtained for the highest percentage of disagreement is more similar to the vocabulary one, reaching 66,13%. In particular, this data refers to strategy number 11, *"When I can't think of a word or expression I use words from Italian, but I add vowels or consonants so that they seem like words in English"*, which percentage of agreement is 27,42%. As these tables reveal, this strategy is not the only one in which the percentage of disagreement is higher than the one of agreement: indeed, a similar result, even if less marked, can be observed in strategies number 4 and 12.

No.4 *"I regularly seek out people with whom I can speak the new language (friends, parents, classmates, etc.)"*
No.12 *"On occasion I may make up new words if I do not know the right ones."*

In consideration of the strategies which obtained more than 50% of agreement one could see from the tables that only the employment of 10 strategies out of 14 would help the students improve their speaking learning skill. Another aspect to underline is that of these 10 strategies, only 4 cross the threshold of 60%. These data do not show a complete positive response to the use of the strategies listed as for the listening ones, mostly, the scenario is more similar to the vocabulary's.

As far as 4B is concerned, the highest percentage of agreement can be found, once again, in two statements, number 5 and 10, which obtained 77,8% of agreement as it can be seen in the graphs below.

No.5 *"In order to engage in conversations I plan out in advance what I want to say."*:
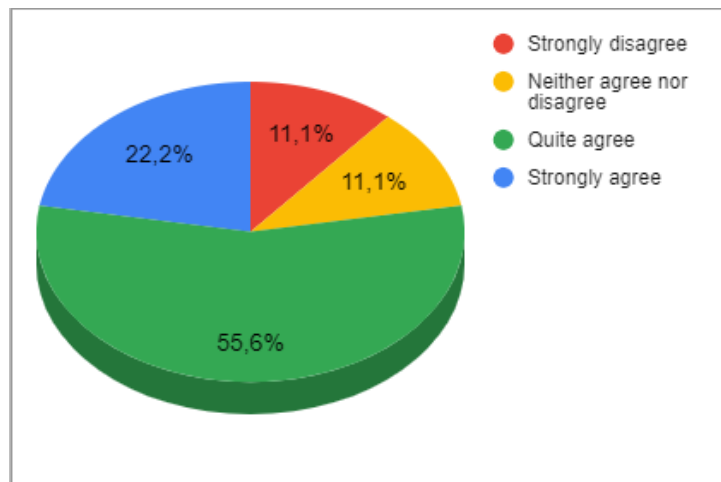


Figure 4.25: Answers - Strategy no.5

No.10 *"When I can't think of a word or expression I will look for a different way to express the idea; for example, I use a synonym or describe the idea or object I want to talk about."*:
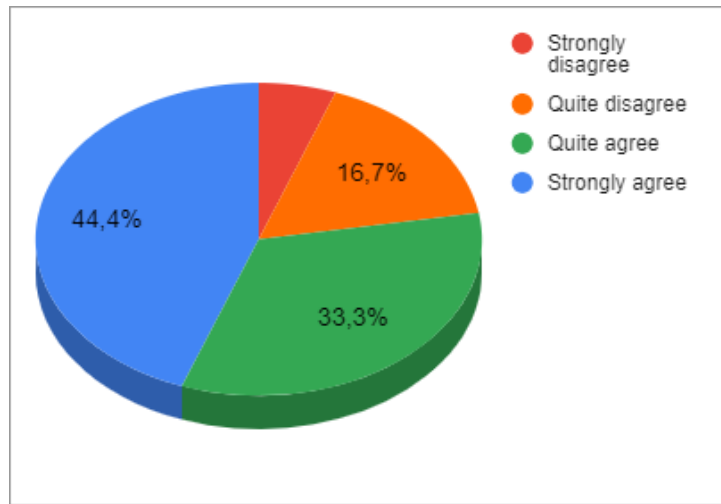


Figure 4.26: Answers - Strategy no.10

Moreover, also for what concerns the highest percentage of disagreement, the strategies to observe are two, number 4 and 11, with a percentage of disagreement amounting to 77,8%, which specifics can be observed in the graphs below.

No.4 *"I regularly seek out people with whom I can speak the new language (friends, parents, classmates, etc.)"*:
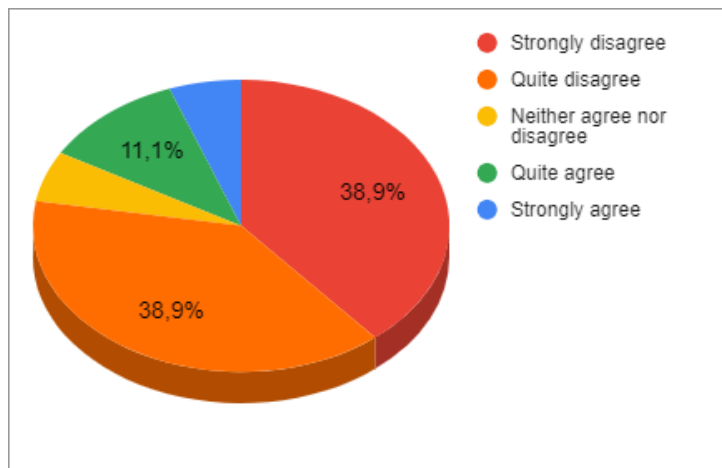


Figure 4.27: Answers - Strategy no.4

No.11 *"When I can't think of a word or expression I use words from Italian, but I add vowels or consonants so that they seem like words in English"*:
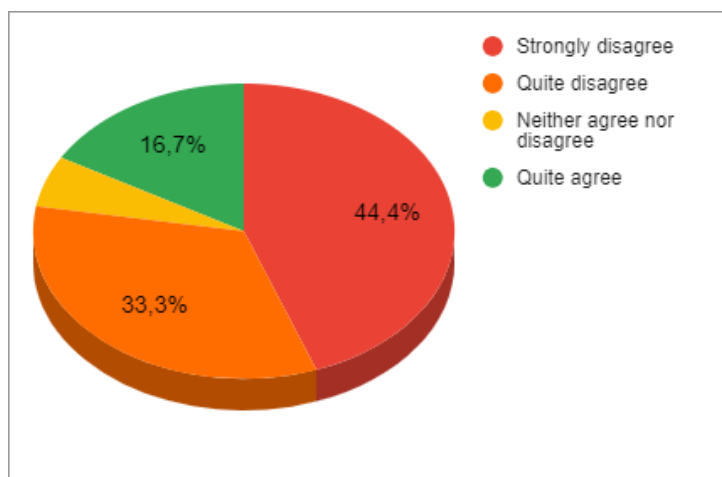


Figure 4.28: Answers - Strategy no.11

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Another consideration that can be made is that, from the data collected in this class, it has been possible to notice that only 9 strategies out of 14 obtained more than 50% of agreement. This result is similar to the one observed in the section concerning the use of vocabulary, in which many of the strategies listed would not help the students to improve their speaking skill. To be more precise, these strategies are number 4 *"I regularly seek out people with whom I can speak the new language (friends, parents, classmates, etc.)"*, number 8 *"I frequently use expressions that call for both language and cultural knowledge, such as requesting, apologizing, or complaining in English."*, number 11 *"I use words from Italian, but I add vowels or consonants so that they seem like words in English."*, number 12 *"On occasion I may make up new words if I do not know the right ones."* and number 13*"Whenever necessary I use gestures as a way of conveying my meaning."*.

As far as 4D is concerned, the highest percentage of agreement was reached only by one strategy, number 10, *"When I can't think of a word or expression I will look for a different way to express the idea; for example, I use a synonym or describe the idea or object I want to talk about."* with 92% of agreement against 8% of disagreement.
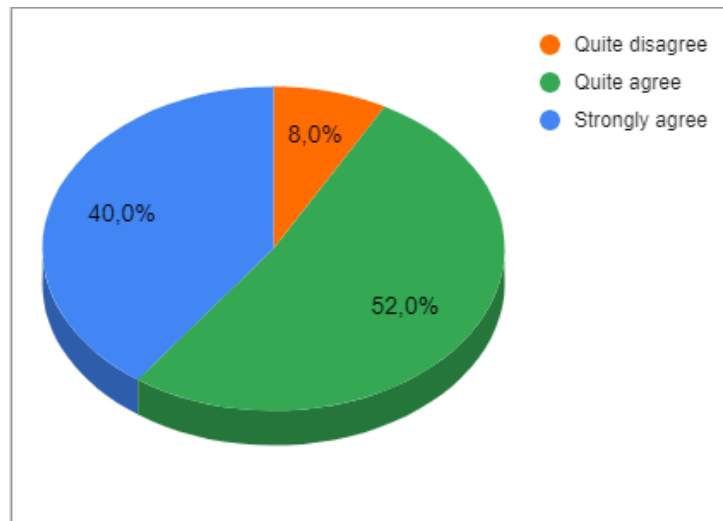
Figure 4.29: Answers - Strategy no.10

On the other hand, the strategy which reached the highest percentage of dis-agreement is, as 4B, number 11 *"When I can't think of a word or expression I use words from Italian, but I add vowels or consonants so that they seem like words in English."* with 64% against 12% of neutrality and 24% of agreement.
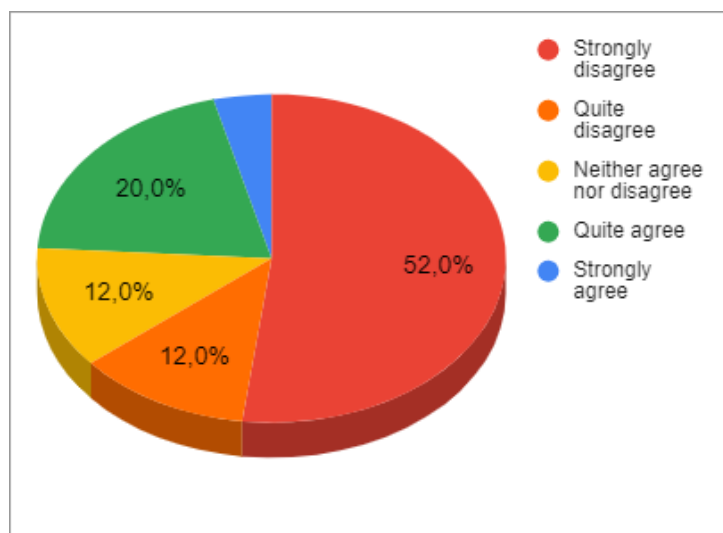
Figure 4.30: Answers - Strategy no.11

Moreover, from the data collected in this class, it has been possible to observe that the number of strategies listed that did not reach 50% of agreement is 8, three more than 4B. Precisely, the students think that among the strategies listed, the ones which would not help them to improve their speaking skill are number 2, *"I am likely to practice new grammatical structures in different situations to check out my confidence level with the structures."*, number 4 *"I regularly seek out people with whom I can speak the new language (friends, parents, classmates, etc.)."*, number 6 *"I anticipate what the other person is going to say based on what has been said so far."*, number 8 *"I frequently use expressions that call for both language and cultural knowledge, such as requesting, apologizing, or complaining in English."*, number 9 *"I often ask the person I'm talking with to help me out."*, number 11 *"I use words from Italian, but I add vowels or consonants so that they seem like words in English."*, number 12 *"On occasion I may make up new words if I do not know*

*the right ones."* and number 13*"Whenever necessary I use gestures as a way of conveying my meaning.".*

As far as 5B is concerned, the strategy with the highest percentage of agreement is, once again, strategy number 10, *"When I can't think of a word or expression I will look for a different way to express the idea; for example, I use a synonym or describe the idea or object I want to talk about.".* Differently from the other classes, the students of 5B agree with this statement at 100%, as it can be seen in the graph below.
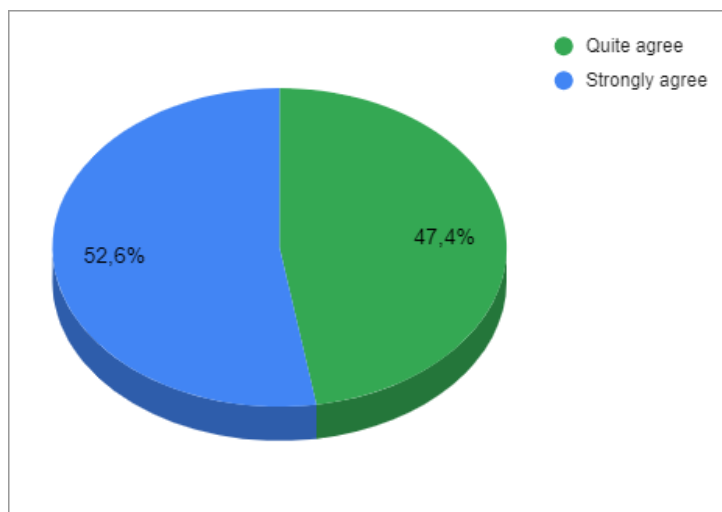


Figure 4.31: Answers - Strategy no.10

The same result cannot be observed also in the strategy with the highest percentage of disagreement, which reached, however, 57,9% against 42,1% of agreement. As for the other classes, this strategy is number 11 *"When I can't think of a word or expression I use words from Italian, but I add*

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*vowels or consonants so that they seem like words in English.".* In addition, from the data collected in this class, it has been possible to notice that, differntly from the other two classes, the number of strategies listed that did not reach 50% of agreement is 3. This result shows a more positive response to the speaking learning strategies with respect to 4B and 4D. Specifically, these students think that among the strategies listed, the ones which would not help them to improve their speaking skill are number 2, *"I am likely to practice new grammatical structures in different situations to check out my confidence level with the structures."*, number 4 *"I regularly seek out people with whom I can speak the new language (friends, parents, classmates, etc.)."* and number 11 *"I use words from Italian, but I add vowels or consonants so that they seem like words in English.".*
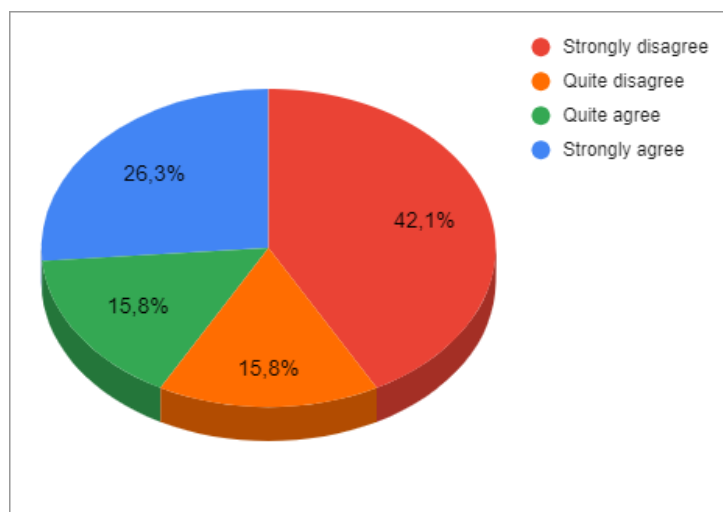


Figure 4.32: Answers - Strategy no.11

### 4.2.4 Reading Strategy Use

The fourth section of the questionnaire consists of a list of 7 strategies which can be employed during the study of a foreign language in order to improve the reading learning skill. As it can be seen, the list of these strategies is particularly reduced with respect to the previous sections. The reason has already been mentioned in Chapter 2.4, namely many strategies have been deleted from the original questionnaire because of their potential complexity. Moreover, in the original instrument the number of strategies listed was inferior than the previous sections and, as we will see, the same occurs for the writing and translation sections. Anyway, the results of this category have been resumed in the following tables.

| AGREEMENT | | | | |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| strategy | % total | % 4B | % 4D | % 5B |
| 1 | 46,77% | 50,0% | 44% | 47,4% |
| 2 | 40,32% | 44,4% | 32% | 47,4% |
| 3 | 58,06% | 83,4% | 44% | 52,6% |
| 4 | 58,06% | 61,1% | 48% | 68,4% |
| 5 | 46,77% | 44,4% | 48% | 47,4% |
| 6 | 80,65% | 77,7% | 80% | 84,2% |
| 7 | 51,61% | 61,1% | 40% | 57,9% |

Table 4.17: Percentages of Agreement - Reading

| NEUTRALITY | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| strategy | % total | % 4B | % 4D | % 5B |
| 1 | 24,19% | 22,2% | 40% | 5,3% |
| 2 | 25,81% | 16,7% | 44% | 10,5% |
| 3 | 14,52% | 5,6% | 24% | 10,5% |
| 4 | 11,29% | 5,6% | 16% | 10,5% |
| 5 | 14,52% | 16,7% | 12% | 15,8% |
| 6 | 9,68% | 16,7% | 12% | 0,0% |
| 7 | 12,90% | 5,6% | 20% | 10,5% |

Table 4.18: Percentages of Neutrality - Reading

| DISAGREEMENT | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| strategy | % total | % 4B | % 4D | % 5B |
| 1 | 29,03% | 27,8% | 16% | 47,4% |
| 2 | 33,87% | 38,9% | 24% | 42,1% |
| 3 | 27,42% | 11,1% | 32% | 36,8% |
| 4 | 30,65% | 33,3% | 36% | 21,1% |
| 5 | 38,71% | 38,9% | 40% | 36,8% |
| 6 | 9,68% | 5,6% | 8% | 15,8% |
| 7 | 35,48% | 33,3% | 40% | 31,6% |

Table 4.19: Percentages of Disagreement - Reading

As in the data collected for the listening and speaking sections, in Table 4.17 it can be seen that the highest percentage of agreement is considerable, specifically 80,65%. This result corresponds to strategy number 6 *"When*

*I encounter words and structures I do not understand I usually guess the approximate meaning by using clues from the surrounding context."*, which percentage of neutrality is 9,68% as the one of disagreement.

On the other hand, the result obtained for the highest percentage of disagreement is 38,71% on strategy number 5 *"I usually make predictions as to what will appear next."*. This scenario is similar to the one presented in the listening section, in which, even if among all strategies this has the highest disagreement percentage, the value is still lower than the agreement one. Thanks to this observation, one could state that, generally speaking, students had a positive response to the list of reading strategies. In this concern, students would consider these strategies as a help during their study, even if only 4 strategies out of 7 cross the threshold of 50%.

As far as 4B is concerned, the highest percentage of agreement can be found in strategy number 3 *"I will usually read a story or dialogue several times until I can understand it."*, with the 83,4% of agreement against 5,6% of neutrality and 11,1% of disagreement. The specifics are reported in the graph below.
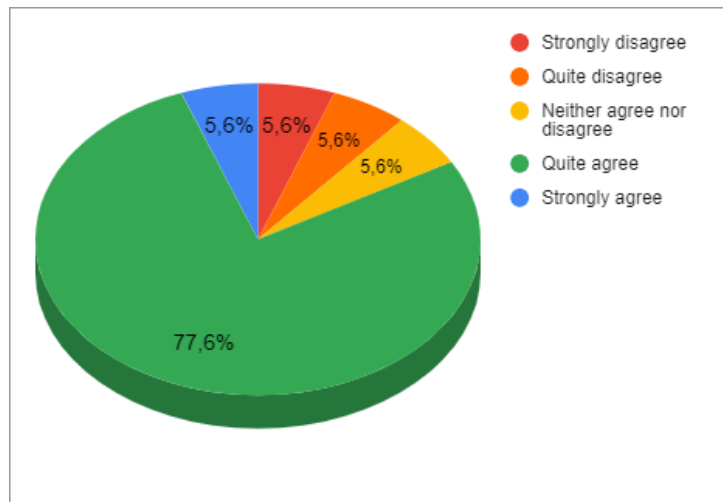
Figure 4.33: Answers - Strategy no.3

On the other hand, while searching the highest percentage of disagreement, the outcome is double, precisely on strategies number 2 and 5, reported below with their respective graphs.

No.2 *"I often read for pleasure in English."*



Figure 4.34: Answers - Strategy no.2

No.5 *"I usually make predictions as to what will appear next."*
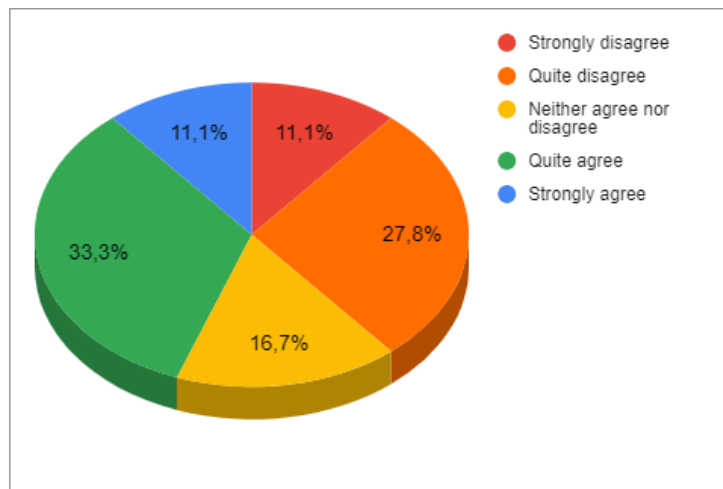


Figure 4.35: Answers - Strategy no.5

From the data collected in this class, it has been possible to observe that

5 strategies out of 7 obtained more than 50% of agreement, with the result that for half of the students not all strategies would help them to improve their reading learning skill. To be more precise, the two strategies which did not reach 50% are the ones just observed, number 2 and 5.
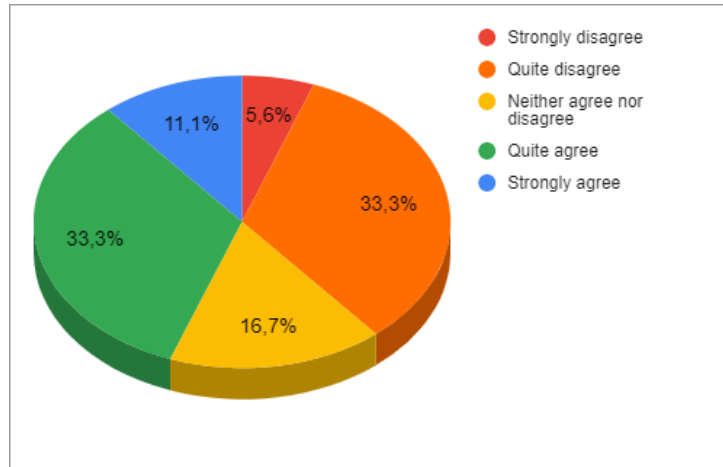
As far as 4D is concerned, the strategy which shows the highest percentage of agreement is number 6 *"I usually guess the approximate meaning by using clues from the surrounding context."*, with 80% of agreement against 12% of neutrality and 8% of disagreement.



Figure 4.36: Answers - Strategy no.6

As for 4B, also the data collected from this class show that there are two strategies which obtained the highest percentage of disagreement, specifically, number 5 and 7, reaching 40% as shown below.

No.5 *"I usually make predictions as to what will appear next."*
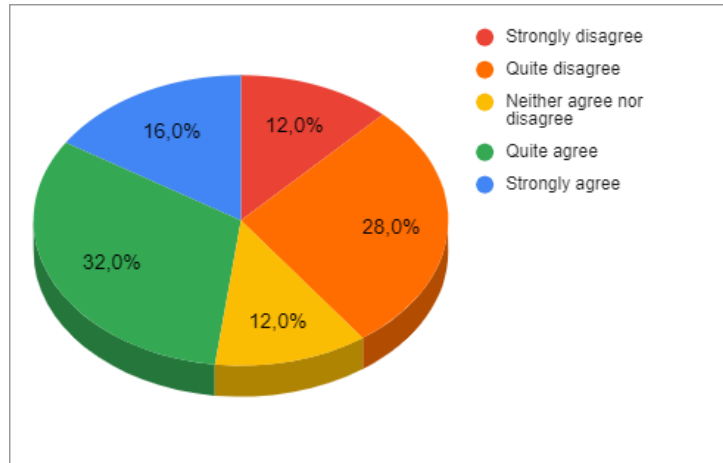


Figure 4.37: Answers - Strategy no.5

No.7 *"I generally use a dictionary so that I can get a detailed sense of what individual words mean.".*
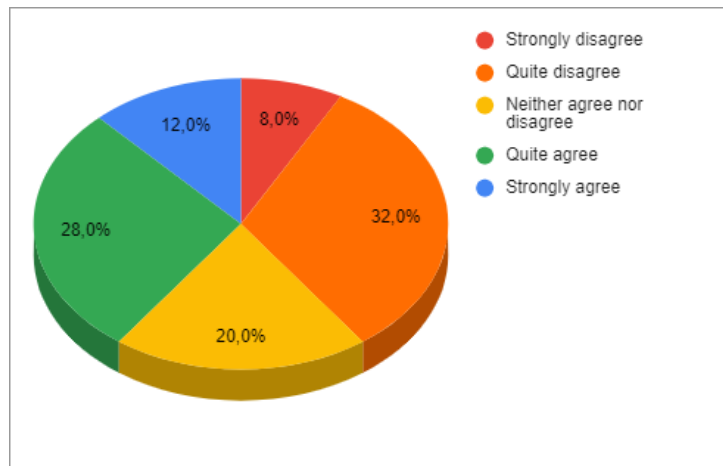


Figure 4.38: Answers - Strategy no.7

From the data collected in this class, it has been possible to observe that

only one strategy obtained more than 50% of agreement, precisely, strategy number 6 analysed earlier. This result may seem paradoxical if one considers that, as just seen, the highest percentage of disagreement is 40%. The solution to this problem can be found in the analysis of the neutral answers. Indeed, in some cases it has been observed that some strategies obtained 40% or 44% of neutrality, no less. Respectively, these strategies are number 1 *"I make it a point to read extensively in English"*., with 44% of agreement and 16% of disagreement, and number 2 *"I often read for pleasure in English"*, with 32% of agreement and 24% of disagreement.

As far as 5B is concerned, the strategy with the highest percentage of agreement is, as 4D, number 6 *"I usually guess the approximate meaning by using clues from the surrounding context."*, with 84,2% of agreement against 15,8% of disagreement.



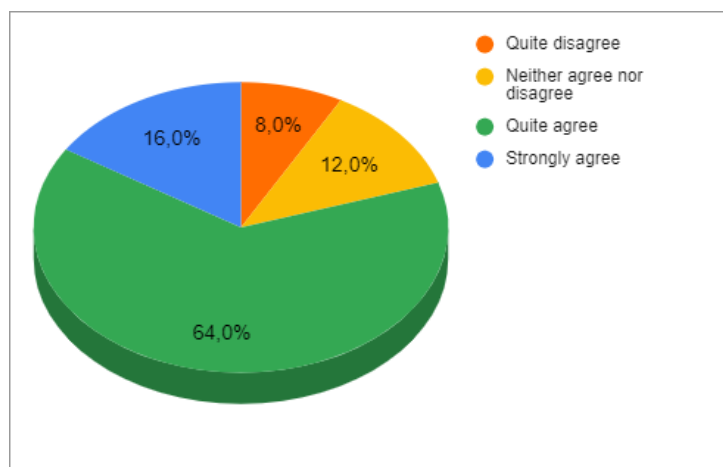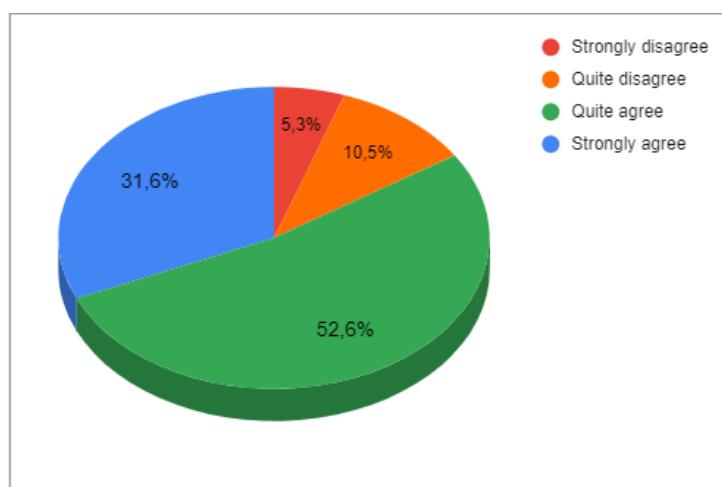Figure 4.39: Answers - Strategy no.6

On the other hand, differently from the other two classes, there is only one strategy which obtained the highest percentage of disagreement, specifically, number 1 "I make it a point to read extensively in English.", with 47,4% of disagreement.
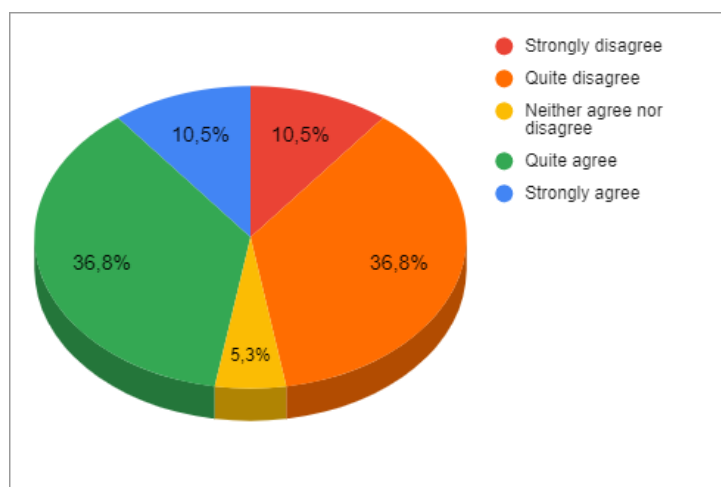


Figure 4.40: Answers - Strategy no.1

By looking carefully at the graph above, it is possible to notice how the percentage of disagreement is identical to the one of agreement. In this concern, even if this strategy is the one with the highest percentage of disagreement, the students of this class are equally divided with respect to the usefulness of this strategy. Moreover, the data collected from all the strategies shows how this occurs similarly also in strategy number 2 "I often read for pleasure in English.", with 47,4% of agreement and 42,1% of disagreement. In addition, a part from strategies number 4 "It is common for me to make summaries either in my mind or in the margins of the text" and 6, already mentioned,

all the other strategies swing from 47,4% to 57,9% of agreement. The conclusion which can be depicted, is that the students did not have a properly positive response to this list of strategies.

## 4.2.5   Writing Strategy Use

As for the reading category, the fifth section of the questionnaire consists of a list of 7 strategies, which can be employed during the study of a foreign language in order to improve the writing learning skill. As we have seen in Chapter 4.1, during the lessons in class this strategy is the less employed. In this concern, it is important to observe how students answered to this section, especially the students of the fifth grade. However, as for the other sections, it will be first provided a general overview of the answers, resumed in the following tables.

| AGREEMENT | | | | |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| strategy | % total | % 4B | % 4D | % 5B |
| 1 | 56,45% | 66,6% | 52% | 52,6% |
| 2 | 64,52% | 66,6% | 56% | 73,7% |
| 3 | 85,48% | 100% | 72% | 89,5% |
| 4 | 66,13% | 50,0% | 64% | 84,2% |
| 5 | 56,45% | 55,6% | 44% | 73,7% |
| 6 | 66,13% | 66,6% | 64% | 68.4% |
| 7 | 56,45% | 72,3% | 48% | 52,6% |

Table 4.20: Percentages of Agreement - Writing

| NEUTRALITY | | | | |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| strategy | % total | % 4B | % 4D | % 5B |
| 1 | 24,19% | 11,1% | 40% | 15,8% |
| 2 | 14,52% | 16,7% | 20% | 5,3% |
| 3 | 8,06% | 0,0% | 16% | 5,3% |
| 4 | 14,52% | 22,2% | 20% | 0,0% |
| 5 | 16,13% | 5,6% | 28% | 10,5% |
| 6 | 12,90% | 16,7% | 16% | 5,3% |
| 7 | 19,35% | 11,1% | 24% | 21,1% |

Table 4.21: Percentages of Neutrality - Writing

| DISAGREEMENT | | | | |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| strategy | % total | % 4B | % 4D | % 5B |
| 1 | 19,35% | 22,2% | 8% | 31,6% |
| 2 | 20,97% | 16,7% | 24% | 21,1% |
| 3 | 6,45% | 0,0% | 12% | 5,3% |
| 4 | 19,35% | 27,8% | 16% | 15,8% |
| 5 | 27,42% | 38,9% | 28% | 15,8% |
| 6 | 20.97% | 16,7% | 20% | 26,3% |
| 7 | 24,19% | 16,7% | 28% | 26,3% |

Table 4.22: Percentages of Disagreement - Writing

As it can be observed in Table 4.20, the highest percentage of agreement can be found in strategy number 3 *"When I cannot think of the correct expression to write, I usually find a different way to express the idea; for example, I use*

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*a synonym or describe the idea.*"; specifically, the result obtained is 85,48% of agreement against 8,06% of neutrality and 6,45% of disagreement.

On the other hand, the result obtained for the highest percentage of disagreement is 27,42% in strategy number 5 *"It is common for me to use a dictionary to help me find or verify words in English."*. However, as far as this strategy is concerned, the percentage of agreement is far more high, specifically, 56,45%. Moreover, all the strategies listed cross the threshold of 50% of agreement, meaning that, generally speaking, students had a positive response to all the strategies included in the writing list. In this concern, the conclusion is that the employment of these strategies would help the students to improve their writing skill.

As far as 4B is concerned, the highest percentage of agreement can be found in strategy number 3 *"When I cannot think of the correct expression to write, I usually find a different way to express the idea; for example, I use a synonym or describe the idea."*, reaching the top with 100% of agreement.
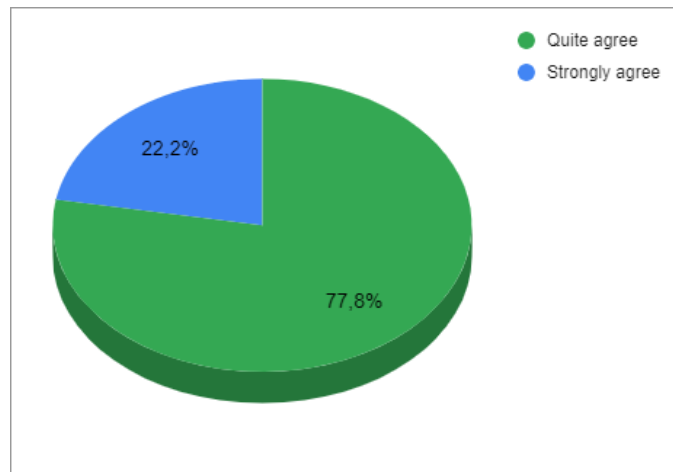
Figure 4.41: Answers - Strategy no.3

On the other hand, the highest percentage of disagreement can be found on strategy number 5 *"It is common for me to use a dictionary to help me find or verify words in English."*, with 38,9% of disagreement against to, however, 55,6% of agreement.
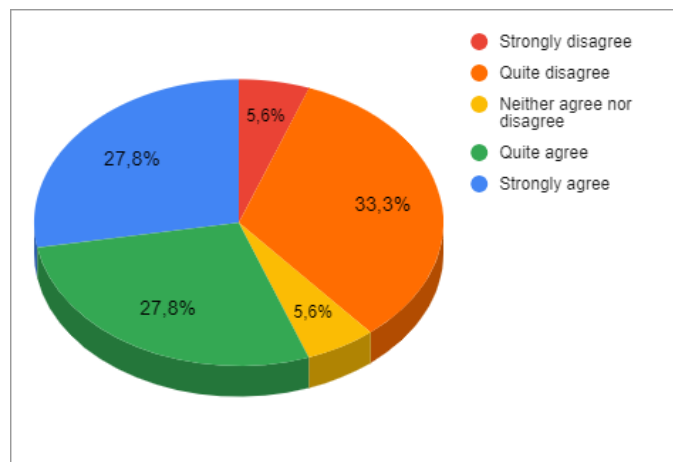


Figure 4.42: Answers - Strategy no.5

From the data collected in this class, is has been possible to observe that all strategies obtained more than 50% of agreement, meaning that for more than half of the students all these strategies would help them to improve their writing skill.

As far as 4D is concerned, the strategies to which students agreed the most is, again, number 3, but in this case they did not agreed at 100%, but at 72%, against 12% of disagreement, as shown in the graph below.
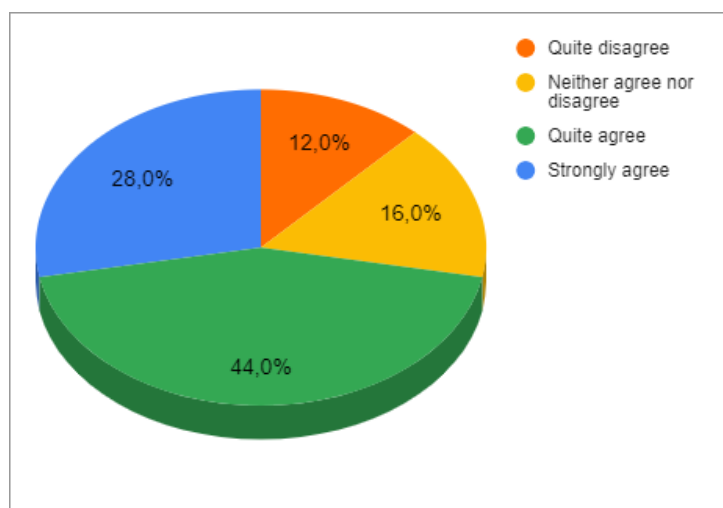


Figure 4.43: Answers - Strategy no.3

On the other hand, while looking for the highest percentage of disagreement, the outcome is double, precisely on strategies number 5, as 4B, and number 7, reported below with their respective graphs.

No. 5 *"It is common for me to use a dictionary to help me find or verify words in English."*
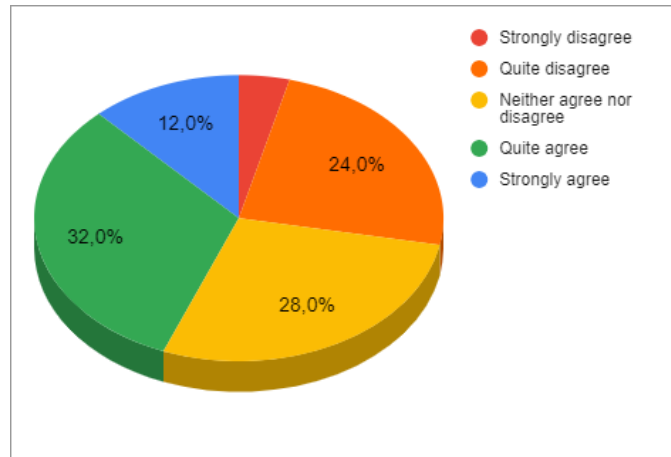


Figure 4.44: Answers - Strategy no.5

No.7 *"I usually look for ways to get feedback from others, may them be friends or the teacher."*
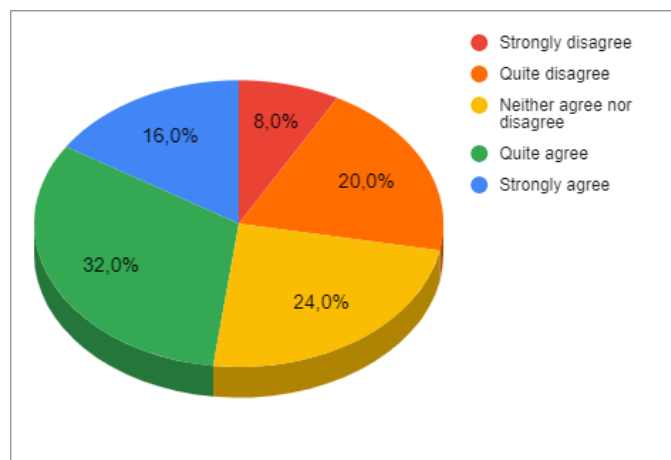


Figure 4.45: Answers - Strategy no.7

Moreover, from the observation of the data collected in this class, it has been possible to notice that 5 strategies out of 7 obtained more than 50% of agreement, meaning that for more than half of the students, these strategies would help them to improve their writing skill. To be more precise, the two strategies which did not reach 50% are the ones just observed, number 5 and 7.

As far as 5B is concerned, the strategy which shows the highest percentage of agreement is, once again, number 3, with 89,5% of agreement against 5,3% of neutrality and, in equal measure, of disagreement.
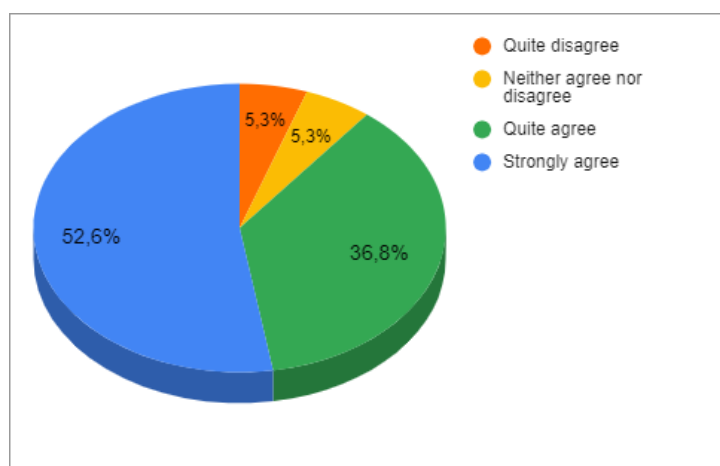


Figure 4.46: Answers - Strategy no.3

As for the highest percentage of disagreement, the strategy to observe is, differently from the other two classes, number 1 *"I plan how I am going to write an academic essay, monitor to see how my writing is going, and then check to see how well I wrote what I wanted to."*, with 31,6% of disagreement

against, however, 52,6% of agreement and 15,8% of neutrality, as shown in the graph below.
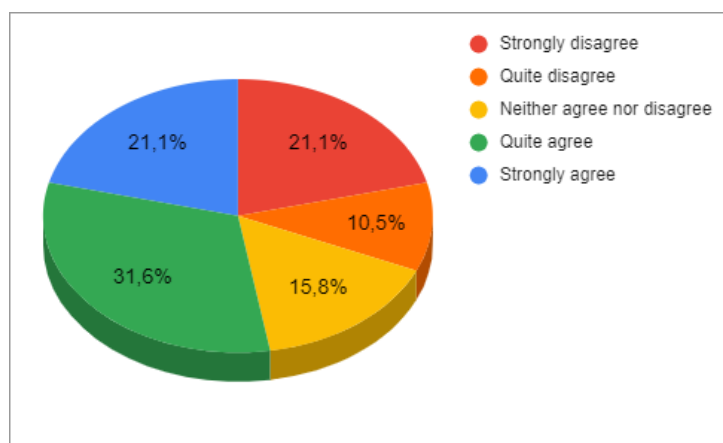


Figure 4.47: Answers - Strategy no.1

In addition, from the observation of the data collected in this class, it has been possible to notice that, as in 4B, all strategies obtained more than 50% of agreement. This result means that for more than half of the students all these strategies would help them to improve their writing skill.

### 4.2.6 Translation Strategy Use

The sixth and last section of the questionnaire is the one which analysed the least number of strategies, 5, concerning the strategic use of translation. As for all the previous sections, the results are reported in the following tables.

| AGREEMENT | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| strategy | % total | % 4B | % 4D | % 5B |
| 1 | 40,32% | 55,5% | 32% | 36,8% |
| 2 | 53,23% | 61,1% | 48% | 52,6% |
| 3 | 43,55% | 50,0% | 36% | 47,4% |
| 4 | 59,68% | 50,0% | 52% | 78,9% |
| 5 | 72,58% | 66,6% | 76% | 73,7% |

Table 4.23: Percentages of Agreement - Translation

| NEUTRALITY | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| strategy | % total | % 4B | % 4D | % 5B |
| 1 | 17,74% | 11,1% | 24% | 15,8% |
| 2 | 19,35% | 22.2% | 24% | 10,5% |
| 3 | 11,29% | 11,1% | 12% | 10,5% |
| 4 | 20,97% | 27,8% | 24% | 10,5% |
| 5 | 9,68% | 5,6% | 12% | 10,5% |

Table 4.24: Percentages of Neutrality - Translation

| DISAGREEMENT | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| strategy | % total | % 4B | % 4D | % 5B |
| 1 | 41,94% | 33,3% | 44% | 47,4% |
| 2 | 27,42% | 16,7% | 28% | 36,8% |
| 3 | 46,16% | 38,9% | 52% | 42,1% |
| 4 | 19,35% | 22,2% | 24% | 10,5% |
| 5 | 17,74% | 27,8% | 12% | 15,8% |

Table 4.25: Percentages of Disagreement - Translation

As it can be observed from the tables, the use of translation as a strategy did not obtain an evident positive response; on the contrary, it is possible to notice how only one strategy out of five presents a significant percentage of agreement. Particularly, the strategy concerned is number 5 *"I do all I can to understand what I have heard or read without translating it word-for-word into Italian."*, with 72,58% of agreement. Indeed, by analysing the answers of the students, only three of the strategies listed would help them improve their strategic use of translation. In addition, if one compared the tables reporting the percentages of agreement of all sections, he would notice that this strategy is the one which obtained the lowest value.

On the other hand, the result obtained for the highest percentage of disagreement is in the middle of all the ones observed until now. Specifically, it can be found on strategy number 3 *"While I am listening to someone, I often translate parts of what they have said into my own language to help store the concepts in my mind."* with 45,16% of disagreement, against 43,55% of

agreement and 11,29% of neutrality. As it can be observed from the tables, this is not the only strategy in which the percentage of disagreement is higher than the one of agreement; indeed, a slightly similar result can be observed also in strategy number 1 *"I often plan out what I want to say or write in Italian and then translate it into English."*.

As far as 4B is concerned, the highest percentage of agreement corresponds to strategy number 5 *"I do all I can to understand what I have heard or read without translating it word-for-word into Italian."*, with 66,6% of agreement, against 5,6% of neutrality and 27,8% of disagreement.
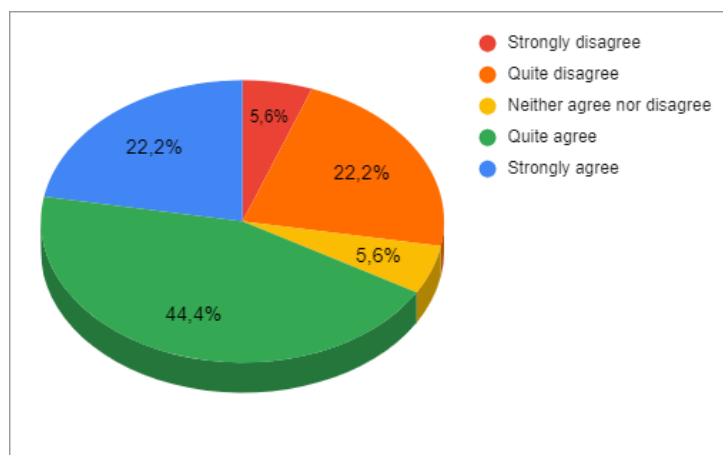


Figure 4.48: Answers - Strategy no.5

On the other hand, the highest percentage of disagreement can be found on strategy number 3 *"While I am listening to someone, I often translate parts of what they have said into my own language to help store the concepts in my mind."*, with 38% of disagreement against, however, 50% of agreement and

11,1% of neutrality, as shown in the graph below.
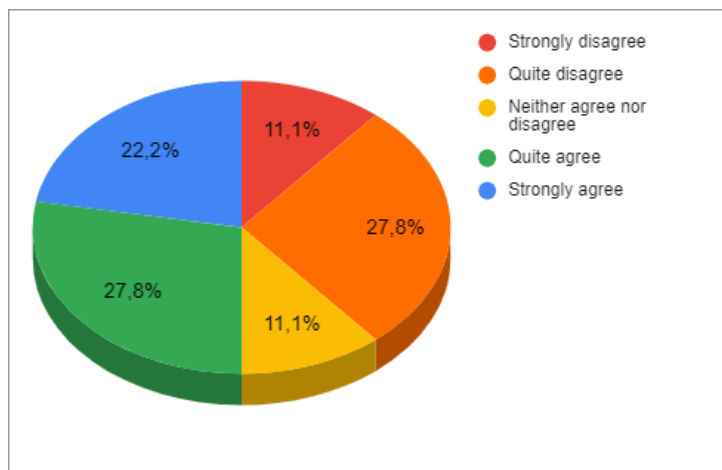


Figure 4.49: Answers - Strategy no.3

From the data collected in this class, it has been possible to observe that all the strategies listed obtained more than 50% of agreement, meaning that for more than half of the students all these strategies would help them to improve their strategic use of translation.

As far as 4D is concerned, the highest percentage of agreement corresponds, again, to strategy number 5, with 76% of agreement against 12% of neutrality and, in equal measure, of disagreement.
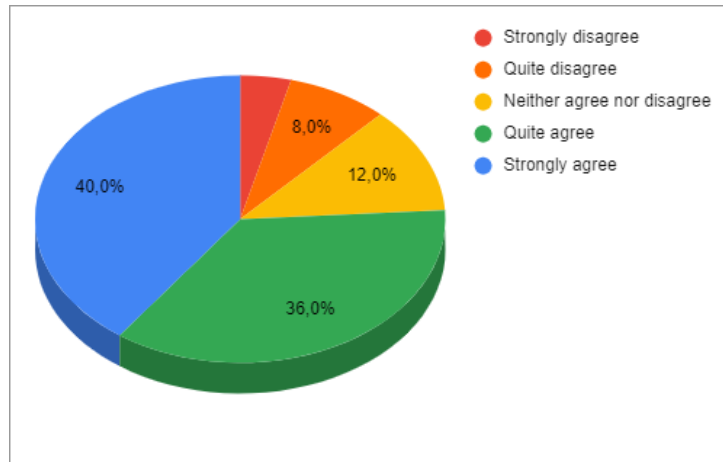
Figure 4.50: Answers - Strategy no.5

Also in the case regarding the highest percentage of disagreement the strategy identified is the same as 4B, number 3, with 52% of disagreement against 36% of agreement and 12% of neutrality.
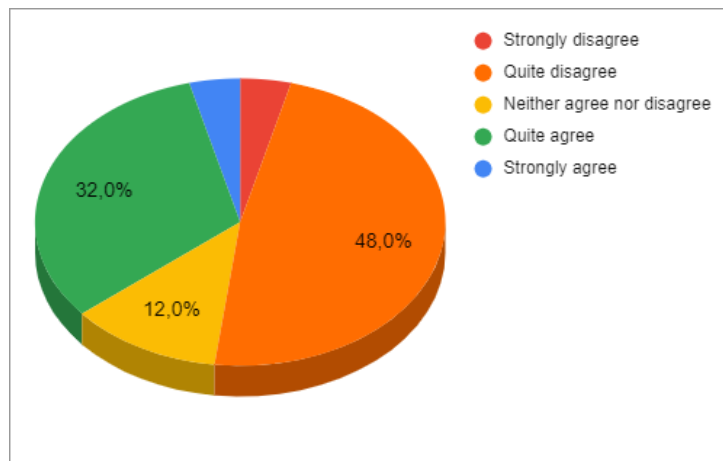


Figure 4.51: Answers - Strategy no.3

Even if the strategies analysed until now correspond to the ones of 4B, from the data collected in this class, it has been possible to observe a different scenario. Indeed, not all the strategies listed obtained more than 50% of agreement, on the contrary, only 2 strategies correspond to this criteria. Specifically, the ones to take into consideration, in this case, are number 4 *"I make every effort to put Italian out of my mind and think only in English."* and number 5, already mentioned. This means that for more than half of the students, only 2 strategies out of 5 would help them to improve their strategic use of translation.

As far as 5B is concerned, the highest percentage of agreement is not the same as the other two classes, on the contrary, it corresponds to strategy number 4 *"I make every effort to put Italian out of my mind and think only in English."*, with 78,9% of agreement, against 10,5% of neutrality and, in equal measure, of disagreement.
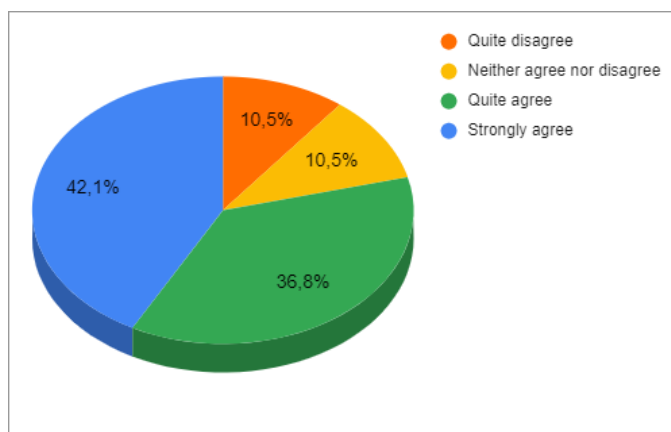


Figure 4.52: Answers - Strategy no.4

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Also in the case regarding the highest percentage of disagreement the strategy identified is different from the previous cases, specifically, number 1 *"I often plan out what I want to say or write in Italian and then translate it into English."*. In particular, the percentage of disagreement reaches 47,4%, against 15,8% of neutrality and 36,8% of agreement, as it can be seen in the graph below.
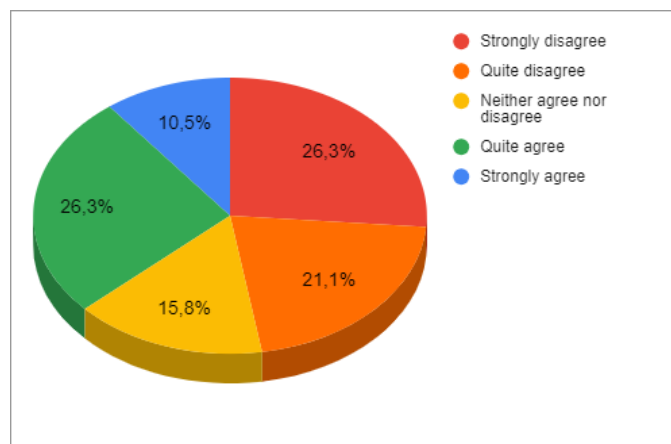


Figure 4.53: Answers - Strategy no.1

Moreover, from the data collected in this class it is possible to notice that only 3 strategies out of 5 obtained more than 50% of agreement, in particular number 2 *"I tend to translate when reading in order to keep my train of thought and basically make the text more comprehensible to me."*, number 4 and 5, already mentioned. This means that for more than half of the students, only 3 of the strategies listed would help them to improve their strategic use of translation.

## 4.3 Foreign Language Learning Style Questionnaire

In this Section, the results obtained by the second questionnaire administered to the students will be exposed, specifically the *Foreign Language Learning Style*, the instrument used in order to answer the third and last research question of the case study,

III) what are the language learning style profiles of the students subjects of the research? How do they differ from a grade to another?

which was compiled by the students at the end of the observational time along with the *Language Strategy Use Survey*.

This final section is composed of three different subsections, which refer to the three areas of the learning style profile of a language learner investigated in the questionnaire: sensory modalities, cognitive styles and personality traits. As for the previous questionnaire, it has been decided to convert the expressions of the answers in numerical values in order to obtain quantitative data. Specifically, the numbers corresponding to each answer are:

a) (*) completely disagree = -2

b) (*) quite disagree = -1

c) (*) neither agree nor disagree = 0

d) (*) quite agree = 1

e) (*) completely agree = 2

Differently from the exposition of the results obtained in the previous questionnaire, all items which will be presented from now on, will be preceded by an asterisk (*). Indeed, since the original items and answers are in Italian, this symbol signifies that, what will be written immediately after it, is a translation. However, the original questionnaire can be seen in the appendix.

## 4.3.1   Sensorial Modalities

The first section of the questionnaire which will be analysed is the one concerning the sensorial modalities, specifically visual, auditory and kinesthetic. As for the previous questionnaire, it has been decided to create some summary tables in which are reported the percentages of agreement, neutrality and disagreement for each sensorial modality. However, at the end of the analysis it will be included a graph only in consideration of the agreement data collected, comparing all three sensorial modalities. Moreover, these results have been calculated for all classes and, in the last raw, in consideration of all students. Finally, it will be provided a general overview about the meaning of a visual, auditory and kinesthetic profile.

| VISUAL | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| CLASS | agreement | neutrality | disagreement |
| 1D | 72,32% | 16,96% | 10,71% |
| 3B | 70,65% | 13,04% | 16,30% |
| 3D | 85,87% | 0,00% | 14,13% |
| 4B | 77,78% | 11,11% | 11,11% |
| 4D | 79,00% | 14,00% | 7,00% |
| 5B | 89,89% | 1,32% | 15,79% |
| **ALL** | **77,63%** | **9,98%** | **12,38%** |

Table 4.26: Percentages of Agreement - Visual

As it can be seen from the table concerning the visual sensorial modality, in all classes the percentage of agreement is above 70%. In particular, among all classes, 3D is the one which shows the highest value, reaching 85,87%. This means that students, while reading the items listed, widely reflected themselves in the visual learning profile. Specifically, a student with a visual learning style prefers to see what s/he has to learn; s/he finds useful, for example, read the instructions of a task rather than just listen them. Moreover, s/he prefers to take notes of what has being said in class, to study written texts, to see illustrations, graphs, videos and so on so forth. What follows, is an example of the items proposed for this modality.

Example of visual item:
(*)"When I study, I like to underline, take notes, make a drawing or diagrams."

| AUDITORY | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| CLASS | agreement | neutrality | disagreement |
| 1D | 66,96% | 16,96% | 16,07% |
| 3B | 64,13% | 27,17% | 8,70% |
| 3D | 78,49% | 1,08% | 20,43% |
| 4B | 55,56% | 12,50% | 31,94% |
| 4D | 56,00% | 21,00% | 23,00% |
| 5B | 67,11% | 6,58% | 26,32% |
| **ALL** | **64,95%** | **14,68%** | **20,37%** |

Table 4.27: Percentages of Agreement - Auditory

The table concerning the auditory sensorial modality shows a general slight decrease of the percentages of agreement. Indeed, while in the previous case all percentages of agreement were above 70%, in the present one only 3D crosses that threshold, with 78,49%. This means that, even if all percentages of agreement are above 50%, students reflected themselves slightly less in this learning profile with respect to the visual one. However, a student who feels to belong to the auditory profile, prefers to hear what s/he has to learn: s/he finds useful, for example, to listen to instructions and explanations, to read out loud or listen to recordings, to participate to debates or conversations and so on so forth. What follows, is an example of the items proposed for this modality.

Example of auditory item:

(*)"I find it useful to make someone give me verbal explanations."

| KINESTHETIC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| CLASS | agreement | neutrality | disagreement |
| 1D | 55,26% | 21,93% | 22,81% |
| 3B | 57,61% | 23,91% | 18,48% |
| 3D | 68,48% | 5,43% | 26,09% |
| 4B | 50,00% | 12,50% | 37,50% |
| 4D | 53,00% | 22,00% | 25,00% |
| 5B | 64,47% | 5,26% | 30,26% |
| **ALL** | **58,06%** | **15,93%** | **26,01%** |

Table 4.28: Percentages of Agreement - Kinesthetic

The table concerning the last sensorial modality, concerns the kinesthetic learning profile. This modality is the one which obtained the lowest percentage of agreement among all. Indeed, by looking at the table above, none of the percentages of agreement reaches 70%. Particularly, the class which received the highest percentage of agreement is, once again, 3D, with 68,48%. However, all classes show a percentage of agreement over 50%, meaning that students still reflect themselves on this profile, but in minor degree with respect to the other two. Anyway, a student who feels to belong to the kinesthetic profile, prefers to conduct concrete activities which imply physical movement and a strong involvement and does not hesitate in using gestures and facial expressions in a conversation. S/he prefers, for example, to play games, participate to dramatisations, to gain experience from activities in and out the school environment, and so on so forth.

Example of kinesthetic item:

(*)"*I like to do researches, visit museums, visit libraries, laboratories, etc..*"

In conclusion, one could say that the difference among the three modalities
is not distinctly marked; indeed, it does not mean that a student with a pre-
disposition for the visual sensorial modality could not possess one or more
characteristics of the auditory or kinesthetic one. The only conclusion which
can be depicted in this specific case is which of the modalities proposed, seems
to better characterise students. In this specific case, the sensorial modality
which obtained the highest percentage of agreement is the visual one, as it
can be observed in the graph below.
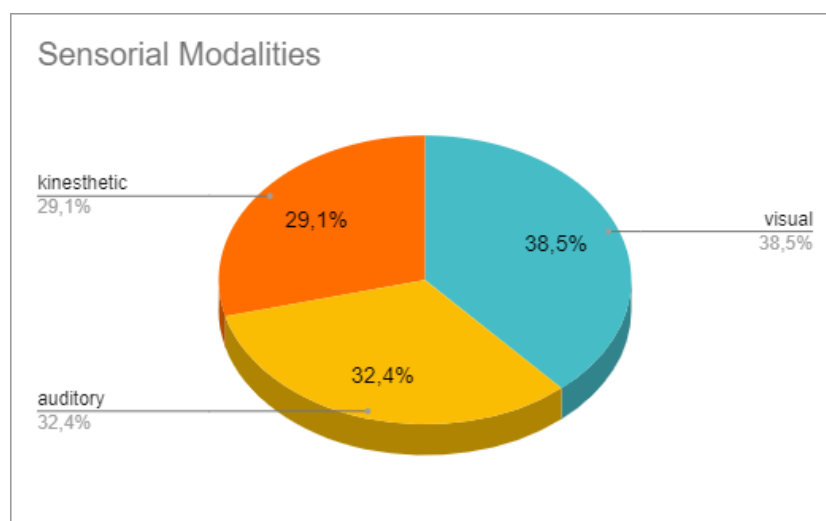


Figure 4.54: Sensorial modalities

## 4.3.2 Cognitive Styles

The second section of the questionnaire which will be analysed is the one concerning the cognitive styles of a learner, specifically analytic or global and reflexive or impulsive. In the previous section it has been provided a comparison among all three visual modalities, but in this case it will be provided a double analysis: the first, concerning the global and the analytic cognitive styles, and the second concerning the reflexive and impulsive cognitive styles. At the end of each analysis it will be included a graph reporting the results observable in the tables regarding the percentages of agreement obtained for each category.

| ANALYTIC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| CLASS | agreement | neutrality | disagreement |
| 1D | 52,38% | 29,76& | 17,86% |
| 3B | 53,26% | 21,74% | 24,64% |
| 3D | 57,97% | 1,45% | 40,58% |
| 4B | 53,70% | 16,67% | 29,63% |
| 4D | 46,67% | 28,00% | 25,33% |
| 5B | 50,88% | 5,26% | 43,86% |
| **ALL** | **52,45%** | **18,14%** | **29,41%** |

Table 4.29: Percentages of Agreement - Analytic

| GLOBAL | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| CLASS | agreement | neutrality | disagreement |
| 1D | 55,95% | 27,38% | 16,67% |
| 3B | 55,07% | 23,19% | 21,74% |
| 3D | 73,91% | 2,90% | 23,19% |
| 4B | 59,26% | 16,67% | 24,07% |
| 4D | 66,67% | 16,00% | 17,33% |
| 5B | 61,40% | 3,51% | 35,09% |
| **ALL** | **62,01%** | **15,96%** | **22,30%** |

Table 4.30: Percentages of Agreement - Global

As it can be observed from Tables 4.29 and 4.30, the difference among the two cognitive styles is not excessively marked, however, the results show a slight predominance of global cognitive style among students. By comparing the two tables, it is possible to observe that this preference emerges in each class, even if the percentage differs in some cases only at 2-3%. The class in which the contrast is more evident is 3D, which reaches 73,91% percentage of agreement for the global cognitive style with respect to 57,97% of agreement for the analytic cognitive style.

Specifically, a student who belongs to the analytic cognitive style category, is led to analyze the language s/he is learning, and tends to give attention to the comprehension of the grammatical rules and the specific meaning of words. Generally, s/he tends to focus on details and to proceed step by step towards the comprehension and the production of a text.

Example of analytic cognitive style item:

(*) *"When I have to narrate something I tend to dwell a lot on details."*

On the other hand, a student who belongs to the global cognitive style category, is led to assimilate the foreign language by listening or reading, without reflecting excessively on grammar or the specific meaning of words. S/he tends to grasp the global meaning of a text s/he is listening to or reading, and tends to use platitudes and memorized expressions rather than construct sentences word by word.

Example of global cognitive style item:

(*) *"While reading or listening to something, I am satisfied, at least in a first moment, with grasping the main ideas."*

In conclusion, one could say that the difference among these two styles is not distinctly marked; in this case students appear divided, almost equally, as it can be depicted from the graph below.
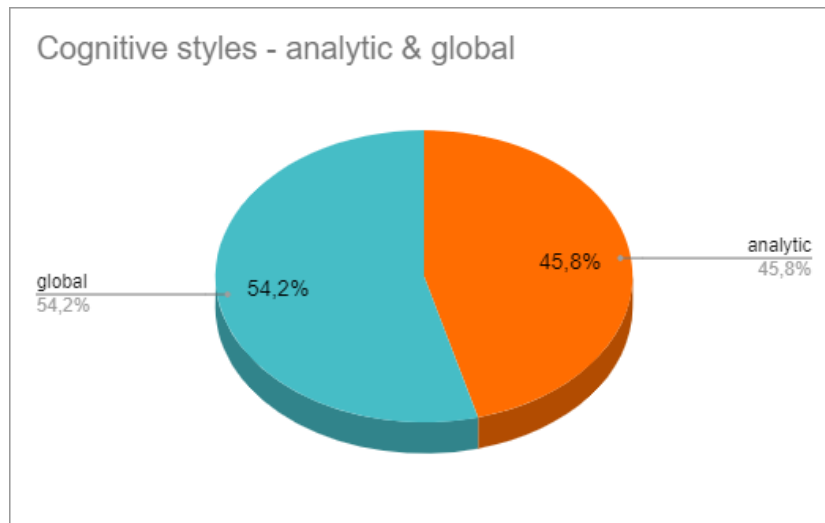
Figure 4.55: Cognitive styles: analytic and global

A completely different view concerns the other two cognitive styles compared: reflexive and impulsive.

| REFLEXIVE | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| CLASS | agreement | neutrality | disagreement |
| 1D | 77,65% | 14,12% | 8,24% |
| 3B | 75,36% | 20,29% | 4,35% |
| 3D | 85,51% | 1,45% | 13,04% |
| 4B | 87,04% | 5,56% | 7,41% |
| 4D | 76,00% | 12,00% | 12,00% |
| 5B | 82,46% | 3,51& | 14,04% |
| **ALL** | **80,20%** | **10,02%** | **9,78%** |

Table 4.31: Percentages of Agreement - Reflexive

| IMPULSIVE | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| CLASS | agreement | neutrality | disagreement |
| 1D | 34,52% | 21,43% | 44,05% |
| 3B | 43,48% | 23,19% | 33,33% |
| 3D | 55,07% | 2,90% | 42,03% |
| 4B | 42,59% | 11,11% | 46,30% |
| 4D | 45,33% | 18,67% | 36,00% |
| 5B | 77,19% | 1,75% | 21,05% |
| **ALL** | **48,53%** | **13,97%** | **37,50%** |

Table 4.32: Percentages of Agreement - Impulsive

As it can be observed from Tables 4.31 and 4.32, the difference among the two cognitive styles is more marked with respect to the previous case; indeed, it is possible to notice that the table concerning the reflexive cognitive style shows that the percentage of agreement is above 75% in all classes. On the other hand, the table concerning the impulsive cognitive style shows a whole different scenario, never crossing the 56% threshold, exception be made for 5B. In this concern, students of the fifth grade show a marked division: the results of their questionnaire highlights a strong presence of both categories in the class, with a slight more evident propensity towards the reflexive style. Anyway, by looking at the rows concerning the totality of the students, it is noticeable the division between the two cognitive styles, with 80,20% of agreement for the reflexive cognitive style against 48,53% of the impulsive one.

Specifically, a student who belongs to the reflexive cognitive style category, feels the necessity to reflect before using the foreign language. This type of student would prefer to have more time available in order to prepare what s/he wants to say or write, and tends to avoid taking risks by using structures or words s/he does not know well. This student needs to feel sure that what s/he is conveying is appropriate, and tends to immediately correct him/herself if s/he has made a mistake.

Example of reflexive cognitive style item:
(*) *"I prefer, if possible, to prepare in advance what I want to say and how to say it."*

On the other hand, a student who belongs to the impulsive cognitive style category, tends to favour the expression of his/her ideas at he expense of language correctness. S/he prefers to focus on meaning rather than form, and tends to correct mistakes at a later time rather than planning in advance what to say or write.

Example of impulsive cognitive style item:
(*) *"When I talk, I focus more on the content I want to convey than on the correct form."*

In conclusion, one could say that the difference among these two styles is more marked with respect to the previous ones; in this case, students show mostly a reflexive cognitive style, as it can be depicted from the graph below.
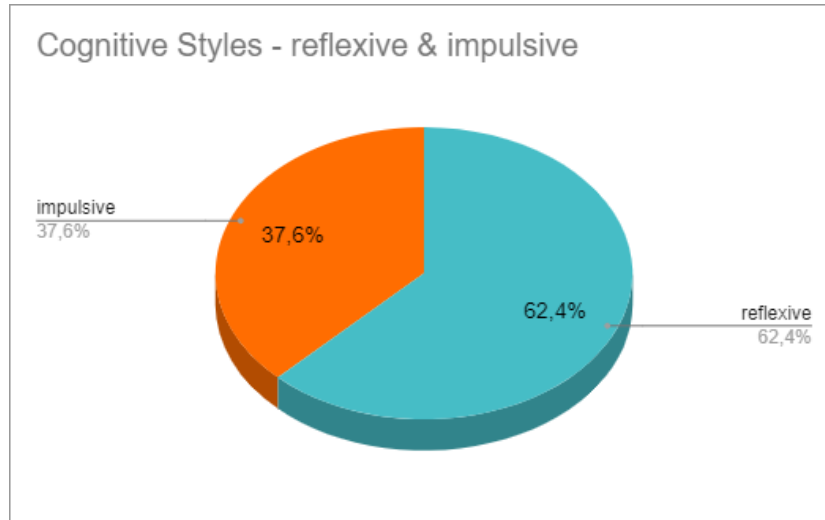
Figure 4.56: Cognitive styles: reflexive and impulsive

### 4.3.3 Personal Traits

The third and last section of the questionnaire which will be analysed is the one concerning the personal traits of a learner, specifically introverted and extroverted. The results obtained for this category are reported in the two tables below.

| INTROVERTED | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| CLASS | agreement | neutrality | disagreement |
| 1D | 51,19% | 33,33% | 15,48% |
| 3B | 55,07% | 36,23% | 8,70% |
| 3D | 73,91% | 2,90% | 23,19% |
| 4B | 51,85% | 25,93% | 22,22% |
| 4D | 61,33% | 28,00% | 10,67% |
| 5B | 84,21% | 1,75% | 14,04% |
| **ALL** | **62,25%** | **22,30%** | **15,44%** |

Table 4.33: Percentages of Agreement - Introverted

| EXTROVERTED | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| CLASS | agreement | neutrality | disagreement |
| 1D | 54,76% | 22,62% | 22,62% |
| 3B | 46,38% | 31,88% | 21,74% |
| 3D | 66,67% | 10,14% | 23,19% |
| 4B | 59,26% | 12,96% | 27,78% |
| 4D | 42,67% | 21,33% | 36,00% |
| 5B | 52,63% | 3,51% | 43,86% |
| **ALL** | **53,43%** | **17,89%** | **28,68%** |

Table 4.34: Percentages of Agreement - Extroverted

By observing the last raw of both tables concerning the totality of students, one can see that the difference between the two traits is not excessively pronounced, instead, the percentage of agreement varies from 53,43% to 62,25%

in favour of the introverted personal trait. While in the previous categories all classes showed the preference for the same sensorial modality and cognitive styles, in this one it can be detected otherwise. Indeed, 3B, 3D, 4D and 5B delineate an inclination to the introverted personal trait; on the other hand, 1D and 4D show a propensity for the extroverted one. In addition, a part from 5B who appears strongly introverted, all other classes reveal a similar outcome in both categories. Indeed, while in 5B the difference between the two agreement percentages is 30,78, whereas in the other classes the difference swings from 3,57 to 18,66.

Anyway, a student who feels to possess an introverted personal trait, tends to work better alone and to prefer an individual study at home rather than group activities in class. S/he prefers to organize and manage the work to do his/her own way and to correct autonomously his/her own mistakes rather than asking for external help. Moreover, there is the tendency to be less tolerant about mistakes and the things s/he does not understand.

Example of introverted personal trait item:
(*) *"I understand and remember more when I study by myself."*

On the other hand, a student who feels to possess an extroverted personal trait, tends to work better in class in pairs or groups rather than individually at home. S/he prefers to debate with others about a topic and to be helped by others in correcting his/her mistakes with an external opinion in order to be sure of his/her work. Moreover, there is the tendency to be more relaxed

in the use of the language and to be more tolerant about mistakes and the things s/he does not understand.

Example of extroverted personal trait item:
(*) *"I like working in group and it seems to me to learn more this way."*

In conclusion, one could say that, in consideration of the totality of students, the difference between these two personal traits is not excessively marked. Anyway, the graph below shows the tendency of students to possess more an introverted personal trait.
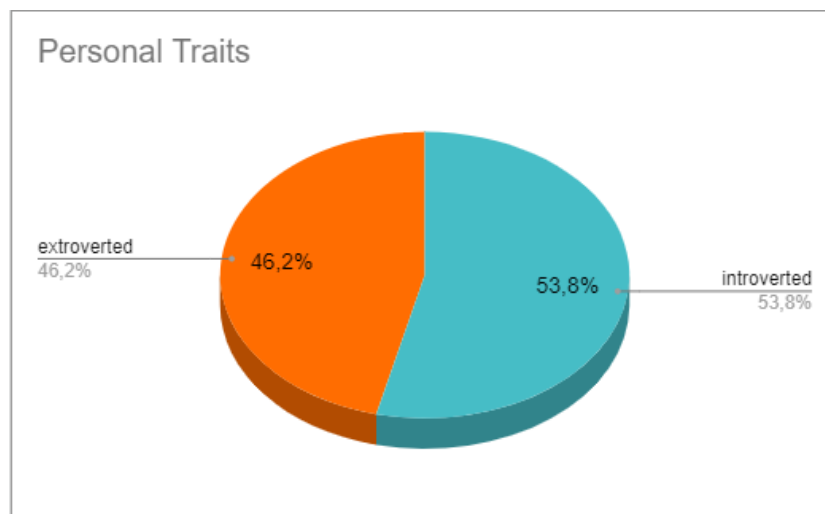


Figure 4.57: Personal traits

# Chapter 5

# Conclusions

*Which language learning skills are most employed by the teacher in an English classroom? How do they differ from a grade to another?*

During the observational time, all language learning skills have been employed, even if in different measure. Indeed, in five classes out of six the language learning skill that has been employed less is the *writing* learning skill, while the most employed is the *listening* learning skill. As mentioned Chapter 4.1, activities such as writing and reading require a lot of time, which in some high school curricula is not available, and can be improved at home and autonomously. Indeed, these types of task are commonly exercised individually anyway, and the supervision of a teacher usually comes only after having completed the task assigned; in this sense, the teacher can verify the tasks of the students in a second moment, occupying the time lesson in another way. If this is true for reading and writing, it is not the same for

the skills concerning the input and output spoken method of communication as listening and speaking, which can be better developed with the guide of a teacher. This is the reason why, in consideration of all classes, the skills which emerge more prominently are *listening* (97 times) and *speaking* (87 times), followed by *reading* (70 times) and *writing* (42 times), as it can be observed in the table below.

| Skill | 1D | 3B | 3D | 4B | 4D | 5B | TOT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Listening | 20 | 13 | 18 | 14 | 15 | 17 | 97 |
| Speaking | 19 | 8 | 16 | 9 | 16 | 19 | 87 |
| Reading | 28 | 8 | 16 | 6 | 8 | 4 | 70 |
| Writing | 17 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 10 | 0 | 42 |

Table 5.1: Times of employment of language skills in class

As far as the second part of the first research question is concerned, from the results it has been possible to notice how the distribution of the employment of the language skills becomes gradually less uniform as the grade increases, so from the first grade to the fifth. Not only this, from the results it has also been possible to notice that also among classes of the same grade the employment of strategies has been different. This result shows how the teacher conducted her lessons basing on the different needs of the students, focusing on their weaknesses and strengths, meaning that the relevance has been given to the students.

***Which foreign language learning strategies are more used by the students? How do they differ from a class to another?***

Thanks to the administration of the *Language Strategy Use Survey* to three classes, so in consideration of 62 students, it has been possible to answer to the second research question. Specifically, it has been possible to observe which strategy, among those proposed, received the highest percentage of agreement for each category: listening, vocabulary, reading, speaking, writing and the use of translation, as reported below, followed by the respective percentage.

**Listening**: *"When I listen in the language I generally pay attention to the context of what is being said."* (91,94%).

**Vocabulary**: *"I analyze words to identify the meaning of a part or several parts of them."* (74,19%).

**Speaking**: *"I will look for a different way to express the idea; for example, I use a synonym or describe the idea or object I want to talk about."* (90,32%).

**Reading**: *"I usually guess the approximate meaning by using clues from the surrounding context."* (80,65%).

**Writing**: *"When I cannot think of the correct expression to write, I usually find a different way to express the idea; for example, I use a synonym or*

*describe the idea"* (85,48%).

**Translation**: *"I do all I can to understand what I have heard or read without translating it word-for-word into Italian"* (72,58%).

Even if these listed are the strategies which received the major agreement, there are many others which received a high level of agreement; in some categories none of the strategies received more than 50% of disagreement. This is the case of the *listening*, *reading*, *writing* and *translation* skills. The meaning of this result is that students had a positive response to the list of the strategies of these categories. Moreover, the conclusion which can be depicted is that they think that the use of these strategies would help them improve these skills, even if in varying degree. Encouraging results have been obtained also for the *vocabulary* and *speaking* category, even if some of the strategies listed received a high percentage of disagreement, crossing the 50% threshold. However, the number detected is relatively small: 3 out of 15 as far as *vocabulary* is concerned and 2 out of 14 as far as *speaking* is concerned, as reported below, followed by the respective percentages of disagreement.

**Vocabulary**:

1. *"I sometimes use rhyming to remember new words."* (64,52%);

2. *"I group the words according to the part of speech (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives)."* (51,61%);

3. *"I go back periodically to refresh my memory of words I learned earlier."*

(51,61%).

**Speaking**:

1. *"I use words from Italian, but I add vowels or consonants so that they seem like words in English."* (66,13%);

2. *"I regularly seek out people with whom I can speak the new language (friends, parents, classmates, etc.)."* (56,45%).

As it can be observed, these percentages do not reach too high peaks, however, it means that, for more than half of the students, these strategies would not help them improve these skills.

As far as the second part of the research question is concerned, there are no particular differences about the strategies most agreed by students. Indeed, for almost all categories the strategy most agreed is the same, exception be made for *reading* and *translation*. As it can be seen below, however, at least two classes out of three share the same preference.

**Reading**:

4B): *"I will usually read a story or dialogue several times until I can understand it."*;

4D) & 5B): *"I usually guess the approximate meaning by using clues from the surrounding context"*.

**Translation**:

5B): *"I make every effort to put Italian out of my mind and think only in*

*English*";

4B) & 4D): *"I do all I can to understand what I have heard or read without translating it word-for-word into Italian"*.

Instead, what can be observed that distinguishes one class from the other is the total number of strategies which the students consider as useful in the study of English language. Specifically, 4D is the class which agrees with the minor number of strategies at least at 50%, whereas 5B the major, as it can be observed in the table below. Each raw indicates the number of strategies with 50% or more of agreement in consideration of the total number of strategies listed.

| Skill | 4B | 4D | 5B |
|---|---|---|---|
| Listening | 10/12 | 9/12 | 11/12 |
| Vocabulary | 8/15 | 9/15 | 9/15 |
| Speaking | 9/14 | 6/14 | 11/14 |
| Reading | 5/7 | 1/7 | 4/7 |
| Writing | 7/7 | 5/7 | 7/7 |
| Translation | 5/5 | 2/5 | 3/5 |
| **Total** | **44/60** | **32/60** | **45/60** |

Table 5.2: Strategies with 50% or more of agreement

*What are the language learning style profiles of the students sub-jects of the research? How do they differ from a grade to an-other?*

Thanks to the administration of the *Foreign Language Learning Style* questionnaire to all six classes, so in consideration of 136 students, it has been possible to answer to the third research question. Specifically, it has been possible to observe which profile seem to characterize the students, according to three parameters: sensorial modalities (visual, auditory, kinesthetic), cognitive styles (global, analytic and reflexive, impulsive) and personal traits (introverted, extroverted). In the table below are reported the results obtained from the questionnaire, divided by classes.

| Class | Sensorial modality | Cognitive style 1 | Cognitive style 2 | Personal trait |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1D | Visual | Global | Reflexive | Extroverted |
| 3B | Visual | Global | Reflexive | Introverted |
| 3D | Visual | Global | Reflexive | Introverted |
| 4B | Visual | Global | Reflexive | Extroverted |
| 4D | Visual | Global | Reflexive | Introverted |
| 5B | Visual | Global | Reflexive | Introverted |

Table 5.3: Learning style profile for class

As it can be seen the sensorial modality which appear to characterize the students the most is the visual one, meaning that students, while reading

the items listed, widely reflected themselves in the visual learning profile. Specifically, students with a visual learning style prefer to see what they have to learn; they find it useful, for example, to read the instructions of a task rather than just listen to them. Moreover, they prefer to take notes of what has being said in class, to study written texts, to see illustrations, graphs, videos and so on so forth. In this case, all classes obtained the same result, meaning that there is no difference among grades.

The same occurs for what concerns the cognitive styles, which resulted equal for all classes, specifically global and reflexive. In particular, students who belong to the global cognitive style category, are led to assimilate the foreign language by listening or reading, without reflecting excessively on grammar or on the specific meaning of words. They tend to grasp the global meaning of a text they are listening to or reading, and tend to use platitudes and memorized expressions rather than constructing sentences word by word. In addition, students belonging to the reflexive cognitive style category, feel the necessity to reflect before using the foreign language. This type of students would prefer to have more time available in order to prepare what they want to say or write, and tend to avoid taking risks by using structures or words they do not know well. These students need to feel sure that what they are conveying is appropriate, and tend to immediately correct themselves if they have made a mistake.

As far as the personal trait is concerned, one can observe how the result is not the same among classes. Indeed, 1D and 4B are characterized by an

extroverted personal trait, meaning that they tend to work better in class in pairs or groups rather than individually at home. They prefer to debate with others about a topic and to be helped by others in correcting their mistakes with an external opinion in order to be sure of their work. Moreover, there is the tendency to be more relaxed in the use of the language and to be more tolerant about mistakes and the things they do not understand. On the other hand, students who feel to possess an introverted personal trait, tend to work better alone and to prefer an individual study at home rather than group activities in class. They prefer to organize and manage the work to do their own way and to correct autonomously their own mistakes rather than asking for external help. Moreover, there is the tendency to be less tolerant about mistakes and the things they do not understand.

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# Appendices

# Language Strategy Use Survey

The following is a survey of strategies that you may use frequently (or perhaps not at all) in your efforts to learn or enhance your language skills: listening, vocabulary, speaking, reading, writing and translation.

Instructions:
Read the description of the strategies in each category and, for each strategy, mark if you: strongly disagree, quite disagree, neither agree nor disagre, quite agree, strongly agree.

There are no "right" or "wrong" answers. It is simply an opportunity for you to see what kind of a language learner and language user you are.

The survey is made up of 60 statements, and it will require more or less 15 minutes. It is completely anonymous and no one will see your answers, so I ask you to answer it as honestly as you can! Thank you for your collaboration :)

Listening Strategy Use

**Strategies I use to increase my exposure to English language:**

1.  I occasionally attend out-of-class events where English is spoken. *

    *Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

    ( ) Strongly disagree

    ( ) Quite disagree

    ( ) Neither agree nor disagree

    ( ) Quite agree

    ( ) Strongly agree

2. I listen to talk shows on the radio, watch TV shows, or see movies in English. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

( ) Strongly disagree

( ) Quite disagree

( ) Neither agree nor disagree

( ) Quite agree

( ) Strongly agree

**Strategies I use to become more familiar with the sounds in English:**

3. I keep practicing all the sounds in English until I am comfortable with them. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

( ) Strongly disagree

( ) Quite disagree

( ) Neither agree nor disagree

( ) Quite agree

( ) Strongly agree

4. I look for associations between the sound of a word or phrase in English with the sound of a familiar word. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

( ) Strongly disagree

( ) Quite disagree

( ) Neither agree nor disagree

( ) Quite agree

( ) Strongly agree

5. I do my best to imitate the way native speakers talk. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

○ Strongly disagree

○ Quite disagree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Quite agree

○ Strongly agree

**Strategies I use for better understanding English in conversation:**

6. I usually listen for those key words that seem to carry the bulk of the meaning. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

○ Strongly disagree

○ Quite disagree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Quite agree

○ Strongly agree

7. I make every effort to understand what I have heard without translating it word-for-word into Italian. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

○ Strongly disagree

○ Quite disagree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Quite agree

○ Strongly agree

8.  I generally pay attention to the context of what is being said. *

    *Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

    ( ) Strongly disagree

    ( ) Quite disagree

    ( ) Neither agree nor disagree

    ( ) Quite agree

    ( ) Strongly agree

**If I do not understand some or most of what someone says in English:**

9.  I ask the speaker to repeat if the message isn't clear to me. *

    *Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

    ( ) Strongly disagree

    ( ) Quite disagree

    ( ) Neither agree nor disagree

    ( ) Quite agree

    ( ) Strongly agree

10. I ask the speaker to slow down if I think s/he is speaking too fast for me. *

    *Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

    ( ) Strongly disagree

    ( ) Quite disagree

    ( ) Neither agree nor disagree

    ( ) Quite agree

    ( ) Strongly agree

11. I make guesses and inferences about the topic based on what has already been said. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

12. I look at the speaker's gestures and general body language as clues to meaning. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

Vocabulary Strategy Use

**To memorize new words:**

13. I pay attention to the structure of part of the word or all of it. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

14. I analyze words to identify the meaning of a part or several parts of them. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

15. I group the words according to the part of speech (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives). *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

16. I associate the sound of the new word with the sound of a familiar word. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

17. I sometimes use rhyming to remember new words. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

18. I often make a mental image of new words whose meaning can be depicted. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

19. I sometimes learn a new word by listing it along with other words related to it by topic. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

20. I write the new word in a meaningful sentence. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

○ Strongly disagree

○ Quite disagree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Quite agree

○ Strongly agree

**In order to review vocabulary:**

21. I go over new words often, at first, to make sure I know them. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

○ Strongly disagree

○ Quite disagree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Quite agree

○ Strongly agree

22. I go back periodically to refresh my memory of words I learned earlier. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

○ Strongly disagree

○ Quite disagree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Quite agree

○ Strongly agree

**In order to recall vocabulary:**

23. I remind myself of a word meaning by first thinking of meaningful parts of the word (e.g., the prefix or the suffix). *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Quite disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Quite agree
- ○ Strongly agree

24. I sometimes visualize the spelling of the new word in my mind. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Quite disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Quite agree
- ○ Strongly agree

**As a way of making use of new vocabulary:**

25. I use words just learned in order to see if they work for me. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Quite disagree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Quite agree
- ○ Strongly agree

26. I use familiar words in different combinations to make new sentences. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

27. I make a real effort to use idiomatic expressions in English. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

Speaking Strategy Use

**In order to practice for speaking:**

28. I say new expressions repeatedly to myself in order to practice them. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

29. I am likely to practice new grammatical structures in different situations to check out my confidence level with the structures. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

30. I ask myself how a native speaker might say something and I attempt to practice saying it that way. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

**In order to engage in conversations:**

31. I regularly seek out people with whom I can speak the new language (friends, parents, classmates, etc.). *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

32. I plan out in advance what I want to say. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

33. I anticipate what the other person is going to say based on what has been said so far. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

34. I often look for others to correct my errors in speaking and welcome the feedback. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

35. I frequently use expressions that call for both language and cultural knowledge, such as requesting, apologizing, or complaining in English. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

**When I can't think of a word or expression:**

36. I often ask the person I'm talking with to help me out. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

37. I will look for a different way to express the idea; for example, I use a synonym or describe the idea or object I want to talk about. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

38. I use words from Italian, but I add vowels or consonants so that they seem like words in English. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

39. On occasion I may make up new words if I do not know the right ones. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

40. Whenever necessary I use gestures as a way of conveying my meaning. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

41. I am likely to switch back to Italian momentarily if I know my conversation partner can understand what I am saying. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

Reading Strategy Use

**With regard to reading habits in the target language:**

42. I make it a point to read extensively in English. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

43. I often read for pleasure in English. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

**As basic reading strategies:**

44.  I will usually read a story or dialogue several times until I can understand it. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Quite disagree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Quite agree
- ◯ Strongly agree

45.  It is common for me to make summaries either in my mind or in the margins of the text. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Quite disagree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Quite agree
- ◯ Strongly agree

46.  I usually make predictions as to what will appear next. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ◯ Strongly disagree
- ◯ Quite disagree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Quite agree
- ◯ Strongly agree

**When I encounter words and structures I do not understand:**

47. I usually guess the approximate meaning by using clues from the surrounding context. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

48. I generally use a dictionary so that I can get a detailed sense of what individual words mean. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

Writing Strategy Use

**As basic writing strategies:**

49. I plan how I am going to write an academic essay, monitor to see how my writing is going, and then check to see how well I wrote what I wanted to. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

50. I frequently take class notes in English. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

**While I am writing an essay:**

51. When I cannot think of the correct expression to write, I usually find a different way to express the idea; for example, I use a synonym or describe the idea. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

52. I am likely to review what I have already written before continuing to write new material in an essay. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

53. It is common for me to use a dictionary to help me find or verify words in English. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

**Once I have written a draft essay:**

54. I often revise the essay once or twice to improve the language and content. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Strongly disagree
- ( ) Quite disagree
- ( ) Neither agree nor disagree
- ( ) Quite agree
- ( ) Strongly agree

55.  I usually look for ways to get feedback from others, may them be friends or the teacher. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

○ Strongly disagree

○ Quite disagree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Quite agree

○ Strongly agree

Strategic Use of Translation

**In order to enhance language learning and use:**

56.  I often plan out what I want to say or write in Italian and then translate it into English. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

○ Strongly disagree

○ Quite disagree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Quite agree

○ Strongly agree

57.  I tend to translate when reading in order to keep my train of thought and basically make the text more comprehensible to me. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

○ Strongly disagree

○ Quite disagree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Quite agree

○ Strongly agree

# Gli stili dell'apprendimento linguistico

Istruzioni:

Il seguente questionario è composto da 30 domande a scelta multipla a cui voi potrete rispondere secondo 5 criteri di preferenza: per nulla d'accordo, non molto d'accordo, né d'accordo né in disaccordo, abbastanza d'accordo, completamente d'accordo.

Le domande a cui vi viene chiesto di rispondere mirano a delineare il profilo di un apprendente di lingua straniera secondo modalità sensoriali (visivo/uditivo/cinestetico),stili cognitivi (analitico/globale, riflessivo/impulsivo) e tratti di personalità (introverso/estroverso).

La compilazione del questionario è completamente anonima e nessuno giudicherà le vostre risposte. Per rispondere ci vorranno circa 5 minuti e non vi porterà via molto tempo.Tuttavia vi chiedo di essere il più sinceri possibile! Grazie per la collaborazione :)

*Campo obbligatorio

1. Capisco meglio le istruzioni di un lavoro se le posso vedere anche scritte. *

   *Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

   ( ) Per nulla d'accordo

   ( ) Non molto d'accordo

   ( ) Né d'accordo né in disaccordo

   ( ) Abbastanza d'accordo

   ( ) Completamente d'accordo

2. Preferisco leggere un testo o guardare immagini piuttosto che ascoltare soltanto. *

   *Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

   ( ) Per nulla d'accordo

   ( ) Non molto d'accordo

   ( ) Né d'accordo né in disaccordo

   ( ) Abbastanza d'accordo

   ( ) Completamente d'accordo

3. Quando studio mi piace sottolineare, prendere appunti, fare disegni o diagrammi. *

   *Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

   ◯ Per nulla d'accordo

   ◯ Non molto d'accordo

   ◯ Né d'accordo né in disaccordo

   ◯ Abbastanza d'accordo

   ◯ Completamente d'accordo

4. Ricordo meglio quello che ho visto o letto. *

   *Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

   ◯ Per nulla d'accordo

   ◯ Non molto d'accordo

   ◯ Né d'accordo né in disaccordo

   ◯ Abbastanza d'accordo

   ◯ Completamente d'accordo

5. Penso di imparare di più con discussioni o conversazioni. *

   *Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

   ◯ Per nulla d'accordo

   ◯ Non molto d'accordo

   ◯ Né d'accordo né in disaccordo

   ◯ Abbastanza d'accordo

   ◯ Completamente d'accordo

6. Quando studio ripeto mentalmente o ad alta voce. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Per nulla d'accordo
- ( ) Non molto d'accordo
- ( ) Né d'accordo né in disaccordo
- ( ) Abbastanza d'accordo
- ( ) Completamente d'accordo

7. Trovo utile farmi dare spiegazioni a voce. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Per nulla d'accordo
- ( ) Non molto d'accordo
- ( ) Né d'accordo né in disaccordo
- ( ) Abbastanza d'accordo
- ( ) Completamente d'accordo

8. Ricordo meglio quello che ho ascoltato. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Per nulla d'accordo
- ( ) Non molto d'accordo
- ( ) Né d'accordo né in disaccordo
- ( ) Abbastanza d'accordo
- ( ) Completamente d'accordo

9. Mi piace fare ricerche, visitare musei, lavorare in biblioteche, laboratori, ecc. *

   *Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

   ( ) Per nulla d'accordo

   ( ) Non molto d'accordo

   ( ) Né d'accordo né in disaccordo

   ( ) Abbastanza d'accordo

   ( ) Completamente d'accordo


10. Quando studio ho bisogno di fare collegamenti con la mia esperienza e vedere le implicazioni concrete. *

    *Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

    ( ) Per nulla d'accordo

    ( ) Non molto d'accordo

    ( ) Né d'accordo né in disaccordo

    ( ) Abbastanza d'accordo

    ( ) Completamente d'accordo


11. Per farmi capire non esito a usare gesti, movimenti, sguardi, ecc. *

    *Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

    ( ) Per nulla d'accordo

    ( ) Non molto d'accordo

    ( ) Né d'accordo né in disaccordo

    ( ) Abbastanza d'accordo

    ( ) Completamente d'accordo

12. Ricordo meglio quello che ho sperimentato di persona. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

◯ Per nulla d'accordo

◯ Non molto d'accordo

◯ Né d'accordo né in disaccordo

◯ Abbastanza d'accordo

◯ Completamente d'accordo

13. Nel leggere un testo o nell'ascoltare un dialogo sento la necessità di capire ogni parola. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

◯ Per nulla d'accordo

◯ Non molto d'accordo

◯ Né d'accordo né in disaccordo

◯ Abbastanza d'accordo

◯ Completamente d'accordo

14. Mi infastidisce non capire bene come funziona una struttura grammaticale. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

◯ Per nulla d'accordo

◯ Non molto d'accordo

◯ Né d'accordo né in disaccordo

◯ Abbastanza d'accordo

◯ Completamente d'accordo

15. Se devo raccontare qualcosa tendo a soffermarmi molto sui dettagli. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Per nulla d'accordo
- ( ) Non molto d'accordo
- ( ) Né d'accordo né in disaccordo
- ( ) Abbastanza d'accordo
- ( ) Completamente d'accordo

16. Preferisco vedere molti esempi di una struttura prima di considerare la regola. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Per nulla d'accordo
- ( ) Non molto d'accordo
- ( ) Né d'accordo né in disaccordo
- ( ) Abbastanza d'accordo
- ( ) Completamente d'accordo

17. Nella lettura e nell'ascolto mi accontento, almeno all'inizio, di cogliere le idee principali. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Per nulla d'accordo
- ( ) Non molto d'accordo
- ( ) Né d'accordo né in disaccordo
- ( ) Abbastanza d'accordo
- ( ) Completamente d'accordo

18. Mi risulta agevole sintetizzare quanto è stato detto in una discussione. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

◯ Per nulla d'accordo

◯ Non molto d'accordo

◯ Né d'accordo né in disaccordo

◯ Abbastanza d'accordo

◯ Completamente d'accordo

19. M i piace, se possibile, preparare in anticipo quello che voglio dire e come dirlo. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

◯ Per nulla d'accordo

◯ Non molto d'accordo

◯ Né d'accordo né in disaccordo

◯ Abbastanza d'accordo

◯ Completamente d'accordo

20. Nel parlare cerco di controllarmi e di correggermi non appena mi accorgo di aver fatto un errore. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

◯ Per nulla d'accordo

◯ Non molto d'accordo

◯ Né d'accordo né in disaccordo

◯ Abbastanza d'accordo

◯ Completamente d'accordo

21. Cerco di farmi capire subito in modo accurato piuttosto che dover ripetere o riformulare il mio discorso. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ◯ Per nulla d'accordo
- ◯ Non molto d'accordo
- ◯ Né d'accordo né in disaccordo
- ◯ Abbastanza d'accordo
- ◯ Completamente d'accordo

22. Pur di esprimere ciò che voglio, corro il rischio di usare strutture o vocaboli di cui non sono sicuro. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ◯ Per nulla d'accordo
- ◯ Non molto d'accordo
- ◯ Né d'accordo né in disaccordo
- ◯ Abbastanza d'accordo
- ◯ Completamente d'accordo

23. Mi lancio a parlare o scrivere senza costruire prima mentalmente le frasi. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ◯ Per nulla d'accordo
- ◯ Non molto d'accordo
- ◯ Né d'accordo né in disaccordo
- ◯ Abbastanza d'accordo
- ◯ Completamente d'accordo

24. Quando parlo mi concentro di più sul contenuto che voglio esprimere piuttosto che sulla forma corretta. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Per nulla d'accordo
- ( ) Non molto d'accordo
- ( ) Né d'accordo né in disaccordo
- ( ) Abbastanza d'accordo
- ( ) Completamente d'accordo

25. Mi piace svolgere lavori in autonomia, senza troppi controlli esterni. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Per nulla d'accordo
- ( ) Non molto d'accordo
- ( ) Né d'accordo né in disaccordo
- ( ) Abbastanza d'accordo
- ( ) Completamente d'accordo

26. Capisco e ricordo di più quando studio per conto mio. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Per nulla d'accordo
- ( ) Non molto d'accordo
- ( ) Né d'accordo né in disaccordo
- ( ) Abbastanza d'accordo
- ( ) Completamente d'accordo

27. Imparo molto da attività (come fare esercizi, guardare video, leggere, navigare in Internet, etc.) svolte in modo individuale. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

◯ Per nulla d'accordo

◯ Non molto d'accordo

◯ Né d'accordo né in disaccordo

◯ Abbastanza d'accordo

◯ Completamente d'accordo

28. Per avere un'idea chiara del mio livello e dei miei progressi ho bisogno di un giudizio di un insegnante o di un esperto. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

◯ Per nulla d'accordo

◯ Non molto d'accordo

◯ Né d'accordo né in disaccordo

◯ Abbastanza d'accordo

◯ Completamente d'accordo

29. Mi piace lavorare in gruppo e mi sembra di imparare di più in questo modo. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

◯ Per nulla d'accordo

◯ Non molto d'accordo

◯ Né d'accordo né in

◯ disaccordoAbbastanza

◯ d'accordo Completamente

d'accordo

30. Cerco occasioni sociali di usare la lingua, come incontri con amici, chat, videogames di collaborazione, etc. *

*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- ( ) Per nulla d'accordo
- ( ) Non molto d'accordo
- ( ) Né d'accordo né in
- ( ) disaccordoAbbastanza
- ( ) d'accordo Completamente
    d'accordo

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