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The Role and Impact of Instagram and TikTok Accounts to Learn Languages on the L2 or FL Learning Experience

From Theoretical Principals to a Practical Experience: Creation of an Account to Teach Italian on Instagram and TikTok

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ABSTRACT

Social Networking Sites (SNSs) are currently used by more than half of the world's total population every month. Their employment in the educational field has been largely studied in the last two decades with particular attention drawn to their effects and impact on foreign language learning. Previous research mainly focused on the analysis of how language learning could benefit from the use of SNSs, and of how teachers themselves employed these tools during classroom lessons. The present study aims at investigating their usage as a place where learning purposefully occurs instead, meaning that users choose to access contents that are specifically designed to convey linguistic notions. Instagram and TikTok accounts to teach foreign languages are therefore the object of the present study. A questionnaire was administered to assess their efficacy in terms of improvement not only of the user's linguistic competence but also of their motivation and pleasantness in the learning process. Data collected were then used as a basis to create an Instagram and TikTok account to teach Italian. Its efficacy was proved through two questionnaires administered to a group of Italian language learners before and after following the mentioned account for one month. They were later compared to verify the benefits that this type of accounts can bring to users' language learning experience.

Attualmente più della metà della popolazione globale utilizza mensilmente i Social Network. Il loro impiego nell'ambito dell'educazione e dell'istruzione è diventato oggetto di studio negli ultimi due decenni e particolare attenzione è stata dedicata anche ai loro risvolti nell'apprendimento delle lingue straniere. Ricerche precedenti si sono principalmente concentrate sull'analisi di come l'uso dei Social Network potesse favorire l'apprendimento linguistico in maniera implicita, o come gli insegnanti stessi potessero impiegarli durante le lezioni. Il presente studio mira invece ad investigare il loro utilizzo come luogo di apprendimento intenzionale, in cui i fruitori scelgono di accedere a contenuti volti esclusivamente alla trasmissione di nozioni linguistiche specifiche. Oggetto di questa ricerca sono pertanto le pagine per l'insegnamento delle lingue su Instagram e TikTok. Attraverso un questionario ne è stata valutata l'efficacia in termini di miglioramento non solo della propria competenza linguistica, ma anche della motivazione e del piacere nell'apprendimento. I dati raccolti sono in seguito stati utilizzati per creare una pagina per l'insegnamento dell'italiano su Instagram e TikTok, la cui efficacia è stata provata tramite la somministrazione di due questionari a un gruppo di fruitori. Dalla comparazione dei due questionari, somministrati uno prima di iniziare a seguire la pagina e l'altro dopo averla seguita per un mese, sono stati verificati i benefici che questa tipologia di pagine può apportare nell'esperienza di apprendimento linguistico.

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INTRODUCTION

This research project aims at investigating the impact of Instagram and TikTok accounts to learn foreign languages on the users' learning experience. This topic is believed to be of essential relevance in today's language education field, since not only do Social Networking Sites (SNSs) count very high numbers of users, but also they are worldwide spread. On one hand, it implies that the use of foreign languages to interact with others is more easily accepted than in real life since it might be perceived as the only means to communicate and interact in certain contexts. On the other hand, it offers teachers and learners a positive environment where classroom learning could be extended and enriched with regard to some specific linguistic aspects. They may in fact benefit or be better conveyed thanks to some features available on these platforms, for instance pronunciation, daily life and informal vocabulary, or cultural aspects.

Moreover, statistics[1] appear to prove the pivotal role that SNSs play in today's life at all levels. Instagram, for instance, counts more than 1 billion active users, and Facebook doubles this number. Consequently, their role in language teaching and learning has started to be largely studied in the last decade. Nonetheless, this field of research has primarily focused on their usage within the classroom as a tool for the teachers to make their lessons more engaging, or as a means to unconsciously improve one's foreign language competence through their daily usage.

The goal of this research is, conversely, the investigation of a different nuance of this topic. Namely, it examines the use and impact of accounts that are created and designed to purposely teach a foreign language. Therefore, not only does this study contribute to the existing literature about social networking in the educational field, but also offers a different nuance of perspective on the topic, which might appear significantly relevant given the popularity of Instagram and TikTok accounts for language learning. Consequently, the question that this research aims at answering is the following one: "Are accounts to learn foreign languages on Instagram and TikTok effective with regard to the improvement of users' FL or L2 competence? Do they have a positive and remarkable impact on the language learning experience with regard to motivation and pleasantness?"

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[1] <https://www.socialpilot.co/blog/social-media-statistics#insta-usage-stats> 15/06/2022

To this purpose, the investigation starts from the analysis of language teaching and learning theories which are expected to corroborate and sustain the hypothesis that the accounts object of analysis are effective to improve the linguistic experience. More specifically, the process of development of the concept of communicative competence is reported, and particular focus is set on the affective humanistic approach to teaching languages. The role of motivation in the learning process appears to be pivotal to the topic of this study, for this reason it is largely discussed in order to set the basis for later analysis. The remarkable impact the SNSs are claimed to have on nowadays' society is also justified by the presentation of statistics explaining who is mainly involved in the phenomenon, altogether with engagement trends, and data about time of usage.

After performing this *excursus* about the theoretical basis of this research, a more practical study is realised. More specifically, it consists of two phases which follow the same method and procedures. Firstly, a questionnaire was administered to investigate the use of accounts to learn foreign languages and collect data about their perception of utility from the users' point of view. In this phase features of the analysed accounts are also explored to understand which are the common characteristics that make an account to teach a foreign language engaging and helpful. Information collected from this passage are then used to create an account to teach Italian on Instagram and TikTok: *@italianocongloria*[2]. In order to answer the research question, the efficiency of the account and of its contents was proved by asking a group of users to fill in a questionnaire about their Italian learning experience before and after following *@italianocongloria* for one month. In order to perform the aforementioned data collections and analyses, a mixed approach was adopted as it was believed to provide a more complete, in-dephth, and detailed view of the phenomenon.

This research consists of three chapters, whose content will be briefly summarised in the current paragraph. First, the reader is provided with an outline of the state-of-the-art in order to inform and build a basis for the subsequent analysis by exploring teaching and learning theories that may be concerned and found relevant to the research topic. Effectiveness of this type of accounts is in fact believed to reside in their ability to boost pivotal factors enhancing language learning, such as newness and pleasantness, and consequently motivation, too. Afterwards, a brief *excursus* on the history and

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[2] <https://instagram.com/italianocongloria?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=> 15/06/2022
<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMNNwPnWx/> 15/06/2022

development of SNSs is elaborated thus leading to the presentation of current trends. The second chapter is dedicated to the presentation of the first questionnaire which aimed at investigating the use of accounts to learn foreign languages and users' perception of their efficiency. To this purpose, methods, procedures, participants sampling, and structure of the questionnaire are explained before reporting data collection and analysis. In the third chapter of this research, questionnaires investigating the use of the account *@italianocongloria* are exposed, analysed, and compared in order to answer the research question. Before analysing data, procedures leading to the account creation and administration are widely reported. Finally, general remarks and conclusions are elaborated to offer a comparison and an interpretation of the above-mentioned contents, thus answering the research question, and introducing possible avenues for further research.

CHAPTER 1

Language teaching and learning theories underlying and corroborating the role of accounts to teach languages on Instagram and TikTok

1.1 Historical overview and goals of language teaching and learning

According to Balboni (2015), language teaching and learning draws from various scientific fields, and it is a theoretical-practical science. To this regard it is necessary to mark a distinction between approach and method. The approach defines the general idea one has of a language, its culture and communication, including the student, the teacher and the concepts of learning and teaching that language. It therefore refers to how the acquired theoretical knowledge is dealt with. On the other hand, the method is the translation of the above-cited knowledge into operative procedures aimed at acting in a concrete social context. This translation from the approach to the method can be realised using designed didactic techniques. This terminology now allows us to understand the steps that led to and then followed the birth of the term "communicative competence", which is central to the development of language teaching and learning studies.

Until the 1990s, as Cook (2013) claims, the ultimate aim of foreign language teaching was to reach the native-speaker level, as it was considered to be the only valid model of language. However, this aim was hardly ever achieved. The 1960s marked a turning point with regard to the approach to language teaching and learning. In those years the focus shifted from the formal aspects of the language to its practical use. The work published by Austin in 1962, *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), was particularly significant because he stressed the importance of the practical aim of language over its formal nature. The author argues that not all utterances that present the grammatical features of statements can be considered so, as they cannot be defined as "true" or "false", which is one distinctive characteristic of the statements. Therefore, he questions the traditional philosophical assumption that "to say something […] is always to *state* something" (ibid., 12). To support his thesis, he proposed to analyse some utterances, such as "I do" pronounced by the spouses at the altar. Austin highlights how this utterance is clearly not simply saying a few words, as it implies a concrete consequence. Hence, he

named this type of utterances "performative sentence" or just "a performative", which clearly derives from "perform". This verb underscores that the aim of these sentences is not merely informative, but the performance of an action. This concept then develops into his theory of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, which describe different levels of explicitness in the performance of an utterance for a specific aim in a social contest. This theory is further refined by Searle in his work *Speech Acts* (1969) with particular attention to the distinction between locutionary and illocutionary acts.

These works led to a primary definition of the concept of communicative competence, which was formally proposed by Dell Hymes in his work *On Communicative Competence* (1972). The notion of communicative competence arose in opposition to the distinction operated by Chomsky between linguistic competence and performance (1965). In his view, competence and performance can be considered one the direct reflection of the other only with regard to an ideal speaker-hearer. This ideal individual is not affected by several internal and external factors that normally have an impact in the linguistic interaction, such as memory limitations, distractions, or errors. Hymes criticised Chomsky's lack of interest in the sociocultural factors that have to do with the linguistic interaction and the fact that he linked the concept of imperfection to that of performance. Hymes first used the term "communicative competence" in a conference in 1966, and, although it appeared as an undefined term, it was aimed at widening Chomsky's concepts of linguistic competence and performance. Hymes, in fact, carried out further studies on the relation between communicative form and its function and he stated the "primacy of speech to code, function to structure, context to message, the appropriate to the arbitrary or simply possible" (1974, p. 5-9). Whilst Chomsky claimed that competence consisted in an organised and limited system of rules allowing to produce an unlimited number of utterances, Hymes argued that linguistic competence did not directly imply communicative competence, as the latter requires the mastery of other components (Balboni, Le sfide di Babele, 2015). In particular, he highlighted the relevance of the sociocultural context in which linguistic learning takes place (Hymes D. H., 1972, p. 60):

The acquisition of such competency is of course fed by social experience, needs, and motives, and issues in action that is itself a renewed source of motives, needs, experience. We break irrevocably with the model that restricts the design of language to

one face toward referential meaning, one toward sound, and that defines the organization
of language as solely consisting of rules for linking the two.

Hymes claimed that language acquisition occurs not only when one speaks, but also when they do not, and it largely depends on «what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner» (ibid.). For this reason, in his notion of communicative competence linguistic elements are strictly linked to the other codes of communicative behaviour. Consequently, a child builds a repertoire of speech acts by participating in speech events and in order to successfully take part in social events. Their success is evaluated by others and indicates whether their communicative objectives have been accomplished or not, which largely depends on the mastery of the interrelation between sociocultural and linguistic competence (ibid.).

The works by Austin and Searle served as a theoretical basis for the *Modern Language Project* that was launched in 1967 and coordinated by Trim. This project had a twofold nature, as pointed out by Balboni (2015), since it aimed on one hand at creating a repertoire of communicative functions that could stand in all languages, on the other at defining some levels of communicative competence that could be homogeneous between the different languages. The most famous and important of these levels was the Threshold Level, created in 1975. It provided a list of functions and notions required to a language speaker in order to be considered autonomous from a communicative point of view. These criteria are consistent in every language, which means that an Italian speaker can do with the language the same things a French speaker can do in their language. The *Modern Language Project* therefore started from that new theoretical concept, the communicative approach, and aimed at translating it in the social context. Its major goal was «to break down the traditional barriers which fragmented the language teaching profession in Europe and to promote its coherence and effectiveness as a major force for European integration, whilst preserving linguistic and cultural diversity» (Trim, 1997, p. 10). In that attempt, the concept of "communicative competence" played a pivotal role.

To explain and validate this notion, a model of communicative competence needed to be designed, since a model is a conceptual structure aiming at being true in any situation and context (Balboni, Le sfide di Babele, 2015). After various modifications, in the 1990s Balboni proposed a model that will be further discussed in the following paragraph. The *Modern Language Project* moved on a binary level not only as far as its aims were concerned, but also with regard to its field of action. On one side, Trim and his

team, including Wilkins and Widdowson together with some French scholars (ibid. p. 40), operated with the support of the European Council to make their proposals more easily applicable on a concrete social environment; on the other side, they worked on an editorial level by cooperating with Longman. Consequently, not only their study had a significant effect on a wide area, but also they managed to spread their findings thanks to the concrete proposals that teachers all over Europe received. In 1975, in fact, Longman published a series of manuals providing teachers with new strategies to apply the communicative approach. They therefore managed to translate a theoretical approach into the notional-functional method. At that time, English was substituting French in its role within the European Union, and teachers were provided with new tools to support the spreading and increasing interest towards that language, such as theoretical manuals to guide through the complete mastery of the communicative approach, tools for curriculum designing, among which the Threshold Level, and more practical teaching manuals.

As above mentioned, Balboni proposed a model of communicative competence, a structural diagram whose significance lies in its being potentially true in every situation. His model is displayed in figure 1.
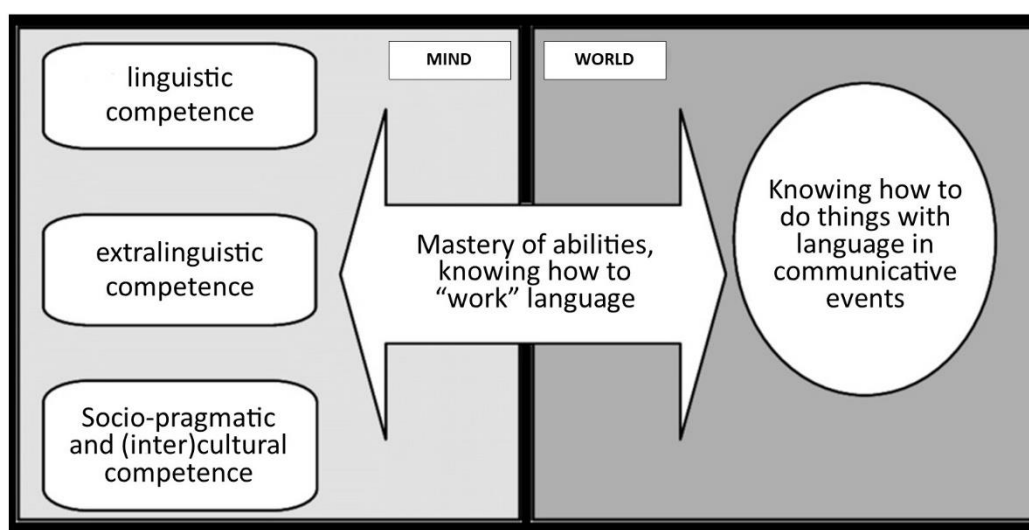

Figure 1: Model of communicative competence elaborated by Balboni. Source: Balboni, 2015

As previously highlighted, in his view of communicative competence Hymes related linguistic factors to extralinguistic elements (1972), a belief that constitutes the basis of the pragmalinguistic and ethnolinguistic of communication. The former focuses on the aims and outcomes of the use of language in a social event, whilst the latter mainly concerns the relation between language and culture (Balboni, 2015). These notions were

essential in the realisation of the model, in which the communicative competence is presented as a mental reality that includes three main components: the linguistic competence, the extralinguistic competence, and the socio-pragmatic and (inter)cultural competence. Those three competences consist of "knowing the language". In particular, the linguistic competence entails the ability to understand and produce morphologically, phonologically, syntactically correct utterances. The extralinguistic competence implies the ability to understand the communicative meaning of non-verbal expressions, such as gestures, clothing, objects, or distances. Finally, the socio-pragmatic and (inter)cultural competence are related to how the language can be used in a social contest in order to successfully achieve an objective. These three competences together constitute the communicative competence, which is translated into performance in the world through some abilities that correspond to "knowing how to work language". When language becomes action in the world, it needs to be adapted to the social and cultural rules required in a specific event, which is identified with "knowing to do with language". In addition to this structural diagram, a dynamic diagram was also elaborated in order to underscore the complex and strongly interconnected nature of the communicative competence.
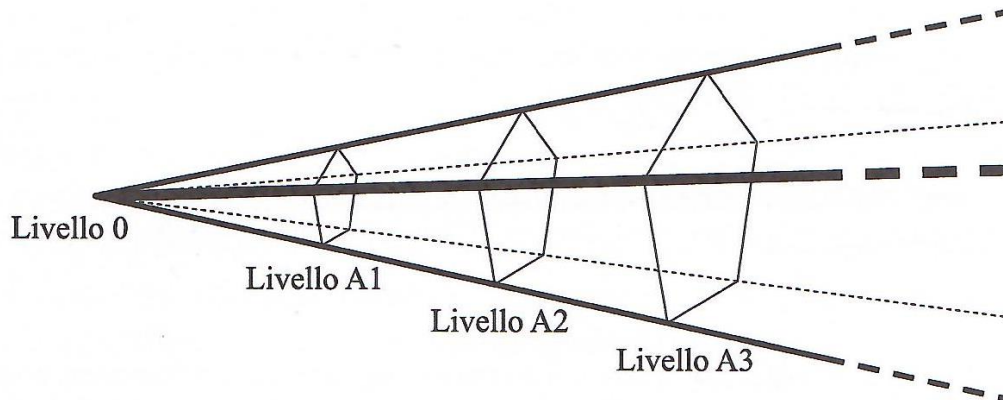

Figure 2: Dynamic diagram of communicative competence. Source: Balboni, 2015.

In this graph each level of competence is described by a pentagon, whose sides correspond to the five components discussed in the previous model. There are two visible faces representing mastery and pragmatic, whilst the other three represent the competences that belong to the mental dimension and that therefore are not visible. As a consequence, it clearly appears that to increase the competence, all the five faces must be trained in order not to cause unbalance.

To sum up, the communicative approach has been playing a pivotal role in language learning since the 1970s. This approach is characterised by the centrality of the student, whose needs, interests, and autonomy are promoted in the educational process, while the teacher appears more as a guide rather than the only source of knowledge. The communicative approach aims at acquiring the language to use it in a social context and therefore to act through it.

The spread of the communicative approach and the consequent relevance acquired by the communicative competence in the language acquisition field became the focus of the new European language policies. The *Modern Language Project* started in 1967 was then further elaborated, and the Council of Europe published the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (2001), the *CEFR*, which was later updated in 2018. Although this document is meant to include several uses, it presents a substantial difference from the previous *Modern Language Project*. The *CEFR*, in fact, is a political text (Balboni, Le sfide di Babele, 2015) as it broadens the issue arguing that the topic of Community languages is not restricted to the educational sphere, but involves everyone and every area of society, since society as a whole constitutes an educational community. The *CEFR* draws attention to the concept of plurilingualism, which had already started gaining relevance after Maastricht in 1992 (Coonan, 2010). The treaty highlighted the urgency of promoting plurilingualism since it established the creation of the European Union and the subsequent effectiveness of free mobility within European territory. This urgency was further emphasised by the White Paper, which proposed some lines of action at the European level that the Member States needed to take. Namely, five objectives were indicated and discussed, the fourth of which stated the need for European citizens to become proficient in at least three Community languages. This is claimed to be a key point not only to fully benefit the opportunities offered by the newly created Union, but also to know other people and to spread a feeling of European belonging (Communities, 1995, p. 47):

Proficiency in several Community languages has become a precondition if citizens of the European Union are to benefit from the occupational and personal opportunities open to them in the border-free Single Market. This language proficiency must be backed up by the ability to adapt to working and living environments characterised by different cultures. Languages are also the key to knowing other people.

Proficiency in languages helps to build up the feeling of being European with all its cultural wealth and diversity and of understanding between the citizens of Europe.

While multilingualism is the knowledge or the co-existence of more languages, plurilingualism entails the overstepping of the concept of separation between the languages, which was implied by multilingualism. Plurilingualism argues that every experience one lives contributes to acquiring linguistic knowledge and, even when this knowledge derives from different languages, it is not stored in separated mental compartments. On the contrary, all the known languages interrelate and interact with each other (Europe, 2001). In particular, the *CEFR* provides the Member States with concrete tools to uniform the criteria at the basis of language teaching and learning. It discusses language policies and language teaching and learning from a cognitive, neuropsychological, socio-cultural point of view, rather than suggesting specific methodologies to be adopted. This is due to the awareness that European countries, although being part of a community and therefore walking the same direction, keep their peculiarities and differences in the educational field as well as in every other area of society (Balboni, 2015). More specifically, not only does it establish the common reference levels of language proficiency, largely known and used all over Europe and the world, but it also clarifies the aim of language teaching and learning, which is namely the communicative language competence, and its components.

The approach adopted by the CEFR is action oriented. It means that language becomes meaningful when used to accomplish specific tasks in a particular social context, which must therefore be the aim of language teaching and learning (Europe, 2001). As previously stated, this is described as the communicative language competence, which comprises different components, namely linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic. These, in turn, include knowledge, skills, and know-how. Knowledge can be defined as empirical knowledge, resulting from personal experience, or academic knowledge, acquired from formal learning. In both cases, the knowledge creation process is not simply an addition of inputs, since new knowledge is perceived, processed, and acquired on the basis of the previous one. To this regard, it is clearly stated that the new linguistic knowledge acquired by a language learner is not kept separated from the already-mastered knowledge of their mother tongue. Not even does the learner acquire distinct manners of behaving or communicating. On the contrary, the knowledge deriving from a different language modifies the other and vice versa, thus enriching the learner's personality and

background. This is what was previously meant by plurilingualism. This type of knowledge, however, may facilitate the development of skills and know-how, which are related to the performance of procedures. The three subcomponents of the communicative competence will here be described. Linguistic competences, which are related to the quality of knowledge as well as to cognitive organisation, comprise lexical, phonological, syntactic knowledge and skills. Sociolinguistic competences entail the tight relation existing between the sociocultural context and language use, which highly depends on social conventions and is therefore as unaware as influential in the communicative event, especially if it occurs in an intercultural context. Finally, pragmatic competences have a great impact on interactions as they regard the functional use of language, which is directly related to the mastery of discourse.

To the purpose of this research, chapters 4, 5, and 6 appear to be particularly relevant and will therefore be briefly described. In chapter 4.1.3 (Europe, 2001) conditions and constraints affecting communication are pointed out. The user/learner may encounter several external constraints deriving from the conditions characterising the communication. They could be physical, for instance clarity of pronunciation, ambient noise, interference; social, such as number and familiarity of interlocutors, relative status of participants, social relationships between participants; time-related, for example different pressures for speaker and listener or preparation time. Apart from the external conditions, a pivotal role for a successful outcome of the communication is played by the user/learner's internal-mental conditions. This is due to the fact that the external inputs are filtered through the user's perception, memory, long-term experience, practical classification, and linguistic categorisation. Communication also depends on the perceived relevance based on the user's intentions, expectations, motivations, conditions, and state of mind.

While chapter 5 further analyses the above-mentioned subcomponents of communicative competence, chapter 6 focuses on language teaching and learning. To this regard, plurilingualism and pluriculturalism acquire a primary relevance. Plurilingualism implies a normal imbalance since it does not require the learners to reach the same level of competence in every known language and not even in every ability within the same language. It is however worth mentioning that plurilingual and pluricultural competence stimulate the development of metacognitive strategies. These strategies allow the user to reflect on his learning process and therefore become more aware of their cognitive style and strategies that they are spontaneously more likely to employ. The concept of

plurilingualism leads us back to the initial statement by Cook, namely that, whilst before the 1990s the aim of language teaching was to reach the native-speaker level, then the major idea became that "students can be successes as L2 users, not failed imitations of native speakers" (Cook, 2013, p. 49).

1.2 The affective humanistic approach and the role of motivation in language learning

Starting from the 1970s a new approach to language teaching and learning began to develop and spread. It first was Carl Rogers to promote the affective humanistic approach. This approach differs from the traditional ones as not only does it give primary importance to the student as a whole, with their interests and feelings apart from rationality, but also because it stems from a completely new vision of the interrelation between cognition and emotion. To this regard, several studies have been realised with the purpose of ensuring scientific foundation which could further validate the new theories. In the following paragraphs pivotal points of the affective humanistic approach will be analysed, but the general assumption is that one's needs, expectations, and past experiences are essential in the process of learning, and if neglected they might undermine the successful outcome of the learning process (Begotti, 2007).

From a neurological point of view, human brain is characterised by the phenomenon of lateralization, meaning that the two hemispheres work separately. This statement was further discussed by neuropsychology that managed to explain the nature of the so-called bimodality (Balboni, Le sfide di Babele, 2015). This term was initially proposed by Marcel Danesi in 1986 to describe the neuro-logical duality of our brain functioning. It was later accepted by neuropsychologist as it proved to successfully illustrate how people learn a language. The left hemisphere is the biological locus for language, as well as for logical and analogical reasoning. On the other hand, the right hemisphere is devoted to general thinking and creativity (Mollica, 2008). But it was neurolinguistic that brought a final contribution to this field of studies through the latest psycho-semiotic research that revealed how the two hemispheres cooperate when it comes to language. The brain as a whole is therefore involved in the process of linguistic acquisition. Consequently, a second principal concerning the brain functioning was stated. Namely, the principal of directionality establishes a mandatory sequence the brain

follows when any input is perceived. More specifically, the brain proceeds from the global to the analytical, meaning from the right hemisphere to the left one. Consequently, this sequence must be kept into consideration when teaching a language. It has also been studied that when learning process occur, the learner needs to restructure their knowledge and to this purpose they need to focus on the left modality. This principle goes therefore under the name of *modal focusing*.

A major contribution to the affective humanistic approach was given by Krashen and Gardner, both American and respectively a linguist and a psychologist. Krashen elaborated the Second-language Acquisition Theory that consists of five hypotheses (1982). The first hypothesis states the distinction between acquisition and learning, where acquisition is linked to the subconscious process of acquiring a language, which is very similar to that experienced by children when learning how to speak; whilst learning entails the development of a conscious competence. More specifically, acquisition implies both an unconscious process and an unconscious result, meaning that the speaker can feel the correctness of their language use but is not able to give proper explanations on a theoretical basis. On the other hand, learning occurs when learners of a language are aware of its mechanisms and rules and are able to talk about them. Krashen claims that acquisition does not concern children exclusively, as adults can acquire, too. This is due to the possibility of both adults and children to access the LAD, "Language Acquisition Device" identified by Chomsky.

The second hypothesis elaborated by Krashen is the natural order hypothesis, which was proved by several studies and tests, among which it is worth mentioning the SLOPE test. It claims that "the acquisition of grammatical structures proceeds in a predictable order" (ibid., p. 12), which means that some linguistic structures are acquired earlier than others. Krashen also highlighted that this order differs depending on whether the user is acquiring their first or second language, although some similarities exist. Moreover, this mechanism is common to every language, even though English remains the most studied one to this regard.

The third hypothesis introduces the concept of Monitor, which further explores the difference between acquisition and learning. The first hypothesis only clarified the existence of these two different processes, while the Monitor explains how they are used. To be specific, acquisition is responsible for the initial performance and fluency, while learning intervenes a second time, to make changes or corrections to the utterance already produced by the acquired system. This implies that the Monitor has a limited role in

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language production. Moreover, its functioning is closely linked to the existence of three conditions, namely having time enough for the performer to re-elaborate the utterances, being focused on form, and knowing the rule.

The fourth hypothesis elaborated by Krashen is the input hypothesis, which starts from the question: how do we acquire language? Given that the previous hypotheses are true, the goal in language teaching should be to produce acquisition and not only learning. For this to happen, the teacher should provide the learner with a comprehensible input containing structures that are a little more advanced than those already acquired. This hypothesis is summarised in the formula *i + 1*, where *i* represents the previous knowledge and *1* the new content. This is possible because when one tries to understand a message, they also draw upon the context, their knowledge of the world and other extra-linguistic information. These factors enable the learners to obviate the lack of knowledge.

The fifth and last hypothesis is that of major interest to this research and it is namely the affective filter hypothesis. It was first proposed by Dulay and Burt and states that affective factors and variables highly influence the success of second language acquisition. Three main categories have been identified, namely motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. More specifically, when the subject experiences lack of motivation or self-esteem, and high levels of anxiety, the affective filter is up and prevents the input from becoming intake. On the contrary, when the environment encourages motivation and self-confidence, while lowering anxiety, the input will be perceived as relevant and will be acquired. This emotional reaction is caused by specific chemical inputs linked to the functioning of the amygdala and the hippocampus. More specifically, when the individual experiences fear, stress or anxiety, noradrenaline, which normally encourages memorisation, is blocked by a steroid. Consequently, the neurotransmitter that helped the memorisation process is prevented from working effectively. Since acquisition is therefore encouraged when the affective filter is lowered, it implies that the teacher should thus provide the students not only with a comprehensible input, but also with a low anxiety context where that input can be successfully acquired.

Before further exploring the role and function of cognition and emotion, it is worth stating what they are meant by. An important distinction must also be made. Whilst it is widely accepted a common definition of cognition as referring to mental processes such as memory, attention, problem solving, language and planning, emotion does not count a similar agreement between scholars (Pessoa, 2008). Emotion was defined by Damasio as "the combination of *mental evaluative process*, simple or complex, with *dispositional*

responses to that process, mostly *toward the body proper*, resulting in an emotional body state, but also *toward the brain itself* (neurotransmitter nuclei in brainstem), resulting in additional mental changes" (Damasio, 1994, p. 139). Emotion was also distinguished by feeling, described as the experience of the changes brought by the emotional response. In general, moreover, two main sets of emotions were identified: primary and secondary emotions. While the former are innate, the latter stem from new experiences the subject has. Balboni (2015) specifies that, whereas emotions have been considered completely irrational and as such controlled and contained by the main religions, they are now seen as adaptive responses. This definition means that emotions are psycho-physical reactions to specific events, and they help the subject in the perspective of survival and adaptation.

The fifth hypothesis elaborated by Krashen therefore entails that, although the anatomical conformation of the brain has often been utilised to demonstrate that emotion and cognition are linked to different areas of the brain and therefore work separately, emotions and cognition are on the contrary strictly integrated in the brain functioning. This means that the subcortical regions that have long been considered to be primarily related to emotions, namely the amygdala, the ventral striatum, and the hypothalamus, are pivotal connectivity hubs instead (Pessoa, 2008).

The integrated role of emotion and cognition characterises the learning theory named *Cognitive Theory of Emotions*. This theory is also known by the name of *Input Appraisal Theory* (1960) that was first outlined by Magda Arnold and whose application in the linguistic field is mainly due to Jane Arnold (1999) and John Schumann (1997), as reported in Balboni (2014). Arnold argued that individuals are led to repeat or to evaluate something on the basis of their previous experience of it. This is due to the fact that when an event occurs, it entails an input which is unconsciously evaluated or appraised on the basis of five main categories that Schumann later outlined. Based on the outcome of this appraisal, the input generates a psychological or physical reaction, named arousal, which could aim either at accepting or avoiding the event. This emotional reaction becomes part of the individual's emotional memory that will guide one's future reactions in similar events. In the process of language learning the arousal corresponds to the phase of acquisition. As previously explained, in this step the affective filter is crucial to the acquisition of a language. It means that only if the learners feel themselves at their ease, in a pleasant environment that does not cause stress or anxiety, acquisition is possible.

As previously mentioned, in his work *The Neurobiology of Affect in Language* (1997), Schumann further investigated the factors and mechanisms involved in the

Stimulus Appraisal Theory. He stated that the key factors affecting one's appraisal of a new stimulus are mainly five: novelty, intrinsic pleasantness, goal/need significance, coping potential, and self-compatibility. Moreover, not only did he relate cognition to emotions, but also to motivation. The outcome of that evaluation determines a change in motivation, which, according to the model of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) elaborated by Schumann, plays a pivotal role in the learner's propensity for learning a new language. Stimulus appraisal can therefore foster or inhibit the cognitive effort to learn a second language.

Moreover, he highlights how his stimulus-appraisal approach is strictly connected to the role of affect in language acquisition processes and is consequently at the basis of any motivational theories. To this purpose, Schumann had already discussed how affective experiences become part of an emotional memory that develops throughout one's life and contributes to defining a set of preferences affecting the subject's emotional response to any experience similar to the one already had. It is therefore clear that the stimulus appraisal process is highly subjective since it depends on one's former experiences. As a consequence, the same stimulus may be appraised differently by two different people. Schumann also argues that, although affective factors cannot lead learners to acquire a notion they are not prepared to, these factors can prevent learners from proceeding in the acquisition process instead. It is therefore possible to state that "developmental factors are subordinate to affective factors" (Schumann, 1994, p. 240).

It therefore appears that motivation plays a critical role in a foreign language acquisition process. As stated by Balboni (2013), acquiring a language entails a significant effort and motivation is the energy that allows the learner to sustain that effort. Many studies have been conducted on motivation, and three main models will be reported here. The first one is the Holodynamic Model elaborated by Renzo Titone, then the tripolar model designed by Paolo Balboni, and eventually the already introduced model of the input appraisal.

In the 1960s, Renzo Titone proposed his Holodynamic Model (HDM) (1991) in the attempt to understand how foreign language learning and teaching work. His model recognises the individual's personality as an essential factor in the process of language learning, as verbal communication is identified as an aspect of personality itself. According to the scholar, "language learning consists of integrated components of a behavioural and cognitive nature which are controlled by the learner's personality structure" (ibid., 7). His theory considers language learning as a stratified and dynamic

process that involves the individual as a whole. It integrates psychological, physical, and cognitive factors that are required to cooperate for the learning to be successful. In particular, Titone argued that three levels could be identified in the learner's personality: the need to communicate, the desire to communicate, and the act of communication. These three levels are related to the individual's self-perception. Each person, in fact, has an image of self and a project to fulfil that vision of self. To reach that goal, they enact strategies to promote and realise their project. This is called the "tactic component", that entails feedback over the used strategy and the nature of that feedback can encourage or inhibit its further application. It is therefore clear that with regard to the language learning and teaching sphere, the teacher should find the best strategies in order to provoke positive feedback that would increase motivation and sustain the learning process. It means that not only should the input generate positive emotions that may lower the affective filter, but also that the teacher should enact strategies to turn those unconscious emotions into feelings that the individual is able to appraise. If that occurs, the emotional memory will be reinforced by that positive experience that will encourage the learner to continue their effort.

The tripolar model (2014), on the other hand, starts by outlining three main reasons that move people's actions and behaviours: duty, need, and pleasure. Duty itself, although being largely present in traditional learning environments, does not lead to acquisition, but it can when it becomes "sense of duty", which is anyway strictly connected to pleasure. The second factor is need, which is linked to the left and rational side of our brain. Need appears to be effective, but only if the learners themselves feel that need, and it may lose its power as soon as they no longer perceive it. A different role is played by pleasure, which is primarily linked to the right hemisphere instead, but may also involve the left one. The possibility of involving the whole brain makes pleasure the most powerful source of motivation. It in fact generates positive emotions that boost motivation and lower the affective filter thus allowing acquisition to occur. There exist many sources of pleasure which will be discussed in the following paragraph.

It is possible to distinguish sources of pleasure into two main groups, one of which is more related to long-term objectives, whilst the other one is linked to methodologies and strategies applied in the language teaching and learning process. With regard to the first group, learning a foreign language may bring people pleasure as they fill a need or fulfil a project that reduces the gap between their image of self and who they really are. To sum up, it is possible to state that the fulfilment of self-realisation projects, in which

learning a foreign language could play a pivotal role, brings pleasure. On the other hand, the second group entails a series of crucial factors that the teacher is therefore required to pay attention to. Apart from the pleasure of acquiring, which can be boosted by providing the students with initial and final activities whose content is accessible to all students in order for them to feel reinforced and for their motivation to increase, pleasure can stem from other aspects of lesson planning, too. To go into more detail, variety is a source of pleasure; consequently, in the lesson designing process the teacher should use different materials, propose different types of exercises and activities. Monotony instead causes boredom and inhibits motivation, while variety enhances engagement and is more likely to meet different cognitive styles. Another factor that creates positive emotions in the appraisal is newness: a new and unexpected input may trigger curiosity and motivation in spending energies to acquire it. Challenge also appears to be a successful element as it causes the production of adrenaline that turns into noradrenaline thus enhancing acquisition. There can be found two more sources of pleasure that are more related to the left hemisphere than the others, namely pleasure for systematisation, which could be encouraged, for instance, by leading the learners to discover grammatical rules rather than only providing them with explanations; and pleasure of honouring a commitment, that might also turn into pleasant an activity that was originally not perceived as such.

As previously explained, the Input Appraisal Theory was originally proposed by Magda Arnold and then further developed by other scholars, among which John Schumann. The former, in particular, succeeded in applying her theories to language teaching and learning and in outlining the criteria on the basis of which one's brain evaluates the stimulus. More specifically, when an individual is provided with a new input, they decide whether to accept it or not according to the outcome of its appraisal. A positive appraisal depends on five features of the input: newness, aesthetic pleasantness, the feeling that one's self-image is not in danger, feasibility of the task, and need significance, meaning that the learner needs to perceive as useful what they're asked to do. In particular, with regard to the third factor, the teacher's role is crucial in explaining the difference between mistake and failure, and in not letting the learner feel a mistake as a failure. Failure, in fact, damages motivation and prevents acquisition to progress, whereas the mistake is a significant step in the process of learning, and it should be explained as such.

1.3 The development of Social Networking Sites and their role in language teaching and learning

This research deals with the field of Social Networking Sites (hereafter referred to as SNSs), with a particular focus on Instagram and TikTok. When Web developed into Web 2.0, not only were interactions between users and sites allowed and fostered, but also users started to have access to a high number of tools and wider knowledge that allowed them to shift from mere receivers to creators. As a consequence of the development of Web 2.0 and its further improvements, interactional aspects were more and more encouraged, and the linguistic field could benefit from this trend. Nowadays people all over the world can access several SNSs that are constantly evolving. They are defined as highly interactive platforms where users can create and co-create contents while interacting with other users (Sim and Pop, 2014). As shown in figure 3, among the others the most popular are Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, WeChat, and TikTok.
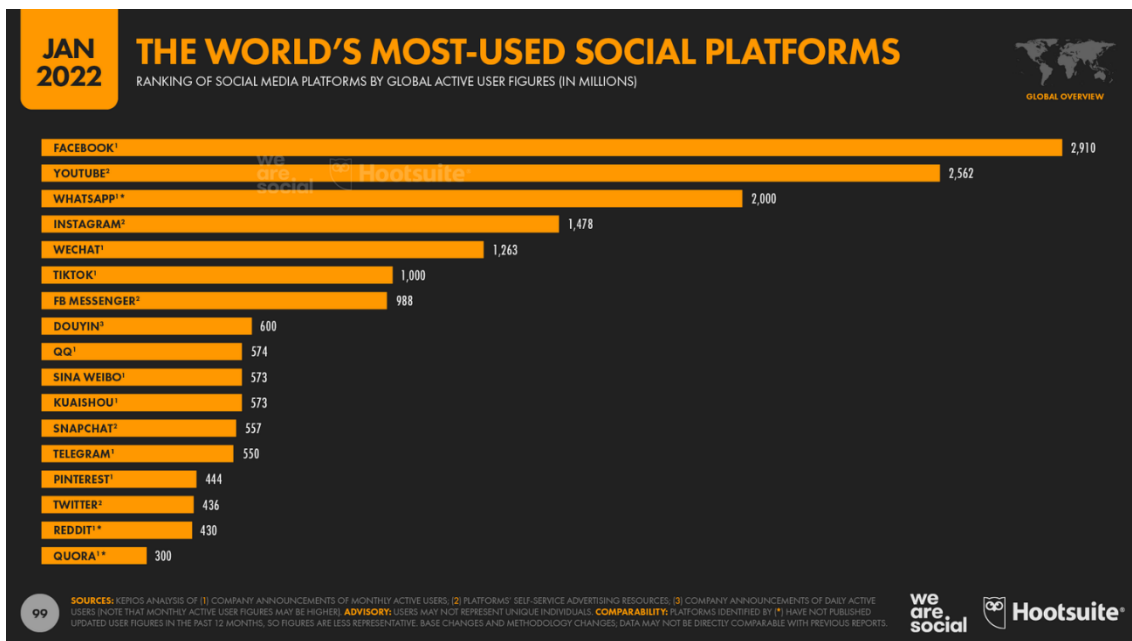

Figure 3: World's most-used SNSs. Source: Hootsuite.

The precursor of Social Network Sites consisted of a website that allowed users to introduce personal information and therefore virtually connect with real friends (Linke, 2011). Its name was *GeoCities* and was introduced in 1995. The concept of providing the user with the chance to connect with other people led to the creation of the first Social Network Site in 1997, namely *sixdregrees.com*. In this site users could create their own presentation page through a virtual identity and select a list of friends. From this idea,

modern SNSs have later developed. According to data provided by Buffer[3], Facebook is currently the SNS that counts the highest monthly rate of active users, reaching almost 3 billion people. This means that over 36 percent of the world population actively interacts through this site every month.

This research focuses on two specific SNSs, namely Instagram and TikTok. Before explaining the reasons for this choice, a brief overview of their history and development will be provided. Instagram[4] was born from the meeting between the American Kevin Systrom and the Brazilian Mike Krieger. After months of studies and developments, Instagram was launched on 6th October 2010 and reached 1 million users only two months later. It was first thought of as a photo-sharing SNS, but after being bought by Facebook in April 2012, the video feature was introduced and later enhanced. Its success is believed to lay on its suitability to nowadays' hectic pace of life. People seem not to have time to read long texts, hence they prefer to watch photos or short videos. On the other hand, TikTok[5] experienced a different process of creation. The brand was launched in 2018 when the Chinese tech giant ByteDance, founded and led by Zhang Yiming, purchased the music-video application Musical.ly. TikTok's previous Chinese version was Douyin, released in 2016. Despite the great success reached by Douyin, the new brand TikTok was able to land on the global market and in only four years it has reached over one billion monthly active users. TikTok was first developed as an application for short video entertainment but was later updated and new features were introduced. Users and creators now have the possibility to post videos up to 10 minutes, even though the most popular format stays within 3 minutes. Its success is believed to reside also in its powerful algorithm, which appears to be able to identify contents users like to see much faster than those of other SNSs. Whilst TikTok audience mainly belongs to Gen Z, as 42 percent of its users are aged between 18 and 24, Instagram primarily engages Millennials, aged between 25 and 34, who constitute the 32 percent of its total population[6].

Even though Instagram and TikTok, respectively counting 2 and 1 billion monthly active users, are not the most used SNSs in the scene, they were chosen to be objects of

[3] <https://buffer.com/library/social-media-sites/#:~:text=1.%20Facebook%20%E2%80%94%202.9%20billion%20MAUs,world's%20population%20are%20Facebook%20users> 20/03/2022

[4] <https://earthweb.com/history-of-instagram/> 22/03/2022

[5] <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-53640724> 24/03/2022

[6] <https://datareportal.com/essential-instagram-stats> 24/03/2022

analysis in this research. The reasons for this choice rely on the type of content that these SNSs promote, namely Reels. They are short multi-clips where different videos can be edited together. Many features, such as music, animated effects, scripts, or filters can be also added. As previously stated, TikTok was created as a video-sharing platform, where video have only recently been extended to 10 minutes, but were originally limited to 15 seconds, later expanded to 60 seconds and then 3 minutes in July 2021[7]. On the contrary, Reels were introduced on Instagram in Italy in August 2020. At first they were launched in over 50 countries[8], but they are now available in more than 150. This introduction was due to the exponential growth experienced by TikTok. Reels are characterised by a driving rhythm, and their being short and composed of flash scenes make them engaging and appealing. In addition to this, since Reels might often be scrolled distractedly on the homepage, their content needs to be easily understandable. Reels are used in a wide variety of topics and for several purposes, from commercial to recreational to informational. Statistics prove that Reels produce 22 percent more engagement compared to other types of content on Instagram.

According to the website Datareportal[9], SNSs currently count 4.62 billion users worldwide, which is equal to 58.4 percent of the global population. Moreover, not only is this data already significant, but also they are strongly growing, with almost half a billion new users subscribing in the last year, 2021. Another critical factor is the average amount of time that users spend on these SNSs. Data shows that users spend on average two hours and a half per day using SNSs, which equals to 15 percent of their time, if not considered sleeping hours. These considerations highlight the pivotal role that SNSs have and continue to acquire in people's daily life. As a consequence, it is worth creating occasions to benefit from this trend. This research, in fact, aims at proving that the time people spend scrolling SNSs is not wasted, but can be profitable if they are offered meaningful content.

Previous research has largely investigated and highlighted the beneficial role that SNSs can play in foreign-language learners' experience. Studies and experiments have been realised in order to underpin this hypothesis. Moreover, studies succeeded, on one hand, to better define the field of action where SNSs appear to have positive effects with

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[7]<https://www.google.com/search?q=tiktok+video+length+limit+evolution&oq=tiktok+video+length+limit+evolution&aqs=chrome..69i57j0i512l3j0i22i30l2j0i390l3.13068j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>
24/03/2022

[8] <https://earthweb.com/instagram-reels-statistics/> 20/03/2022

[9] <https://datareportal.com/social-media-users> 20/03/2022

regard to language acquisition; on the other, to underline the learning and teaching theories that corroborated the role of SNSs on the learning experience. In the following paragraphs some of these studies will be presented.

Before discussing the educational role that SNSs may acquire, it is essential to remark the distinction between informal and incidental learning proposed by Marsick and Watkins (2001). Both informal and incidental learning can be defined in opposition to formal learning. The latter usually occurs in a traditional environment devoted to education, such as a classroom, and is highly structured. The differences in learning can therefore be marked by the contest. More precisely, even though informal learning may occur in institutions, it is less structured than the formal one and learning mainly lies in the hands of the learners themselves. Incidental learning can be considered a subcategory of informal learning. Its main feature is that the learner is usually not conscious of their learning process, and that may occur as a byproduct of other activities.

Previous research has mainly analysed the role of SNSs in foreign language learning as a type of incidental learning or as a tool purposely used by teachers to enhance their students' learning. It was claimed that SNSs could be seen as a virtual extension of the class, offering a more flexible, positive, and non-threatening environment, instead. These factors encourage language acquisition since they contribute to increasing motivation and lowering the affective filter, as previously explained. Consequently, scholars have identified many areas of language learning where the use of SNSs revealed to be beneficial. In the following paragraphs some of the upsides of SNSs use in the language learning process will be presented.

With regard to writing ability, Depew (2011) investigated writing strategies applied by second-language learners on Facebook. He noticed that students were able to properly respond in different communicative contexts within that community. He claimed that the SNS environment may appear to be more adequate than traditional language classes because of the multiple modalities of linguistic input and output offered to the learner. Moreover, Depew also argued that improvements may be related to a major awareness of the learning of the possible real-world consequences of their writing. In another study, Dizon (2016) analysed students' written productions with paper-and-pencil assignments and Facebook. The comparison between the two revealed that, even though no significant improvements could be detected in terms of lexical richness and grammatical accuracy, writing fluency appeared to be enhanced in Facebook written production.

The use of SNSs for educational purposes in or out of the classroom were proved to benefit the language learning process with regard to the creation and enhancement of sense of identity and community. Blattner and Fiori (2009) highlighted how using SNSs in the classroom significantly contributed to fostering positive relationships not only between students, but also between student and teacher. The latter is in fact perceived as aware and involved in the contemporary student culture and attentive to students' interests and needs. Moreover, this practice may also encourage the development of sociopragmatic competence since it promotes cooperative and meaningful learning, as Karpati claimed (2009).

Other benefits that the use of SNSs provide to language learning are related to the enhancement of intercultural competence. SNSs, in fact, allow the learners to access a wider range of authentic materials and to interact with native speakers. As a result, being exposed to authentic input also leads the learner to produce authentic output, which shifts the focus from learning to experiencing, and from form to meaning, thus bringing meaning negotiation and meaningful learning. Furthermore, on one hand this context increases learner's motivation, and on the other it leads the learner to the discovery of the culture related to that language (Lomicka and Lord, 2012), thus becoming more aware of the tight interrelationship flowing between the two. Ozdemir (2017) conducted a research study which compared how traditional classroom language teaching and Facebook context affected learning. It highlighted the increased effectiveness of discussion on Facebook rather than in the class, due to the exposure to an intercultural context on SNSs which may encourage the development of intercultural competence.

As previously largely discussed, motivation plays a key role in language learning. It is the main trigger for acquisition. SNSs appear to be effective tools to foster motivation and therefore enhance language learning. This is due to the positive environment of SNSs that learners autonomously decide to access. Autonomy is, in fact, another essential factor that the use of SNSs affects. When using SNSs, learners themselves select what, when, and how to learn. As a consequence, they acquire greater autonomy and control of their learning process. They become able to discriminate what contents are more useful for their learning. Moreover, SNSs increase learners' engagement and pleasantness which lead to higher levels of motivation (Lafford, 2009). Finally, in SNSs learners expose themselves and they feel that they put their image at stake, for this reason they perform at their best, as claimed by Selwyn (2007).

Opposed to the majority of previous research, which has primarily studied SNSs usage within the classroom, or as a means to unconsciously improve one's foreign language competence through their daily usage, this study aims at investigating the use and role of Instagram and TikTok accounts to learn foreign languages. It therefore focuses on two specific SNSs not only as a means to promote language learning, but also as a place where learning can purposely occur. Particular attention is paid to the effectiveness perceived by the user with regard to the improvement of their linguistic competence and changes in their levels of pleasantness and motivation. This topic is believed to be of essential relevance in today's language education field, since not only do SNSs count very high numbers of users, but also are worldwide spread. This implies that the use of foreign languages to interact with others is more easily accepted than in real life, where its usage is perceived as not essential, unless the context explicitly requires it.

CHAPTER 2

Foreign language teaching and learning on Instagram and TikTok: an investigation

After outlining the theoretical basis upon which this study was planned and conducted, a first investigation about the perception of effectiveness of pages to teach foreign languages on Instagram and TikTok was realised. A mixed approach was adopted as a method to collect and analyse data. More specifically, a questionnaire with closed and open questions was chosen as a tool to collect data. Data were finally analysed and interpreted.

2.1 Purpose of the study

The aim of this survey is to investigate people's perception of the utility and effectiveness of Instagram and TikTok accounts to teach foreign languages. Moreover, users' preferences about different contents and features of the accounts followed are also objects of analysis, since this investigation seeks to provide the researcher with significant data to support the final objective of this study. As illustrated in chapter four, information collected was in fact used as a starting point to create an account to teach Italian on Instagram and TikTok. The goal of this survey is therefore not only that of assessing how this type of accounts are perceived by users, but also that of highlighting which features are believed to be more appealing and useful, in order to benefit from collected data when creating the above-mentioned account. For the above reasons, the survey questions addressed in this investigation were the followings:

1. What features do followers of Instagram and TikTok accounts to teach languages have in common?
2. Are those accounts perceived as effective to improve the users' foreign language learning experience with regard to motivation and communicative competence?
3. Which are the main features that make those accounts effective, engaging, and appealing?

2.2 Method

This survey adopted a mixed approach to collect data, meaning that both qualitative and quantitative paradigms were used in a combined way. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the quantitative paradigm appeared to be prevalent, since the questionnaire used mainly required closed answers. More precisely, in fact, quantitative data, also defined as hard data, are numerical, measurable, and quantifiable data that can be analysed and summarised through graphs, percentages, and objective statistics. Moreover, hard data are objective and that is the reason why they can lead to generalisations (Dörnyei, 2007). On the contrary, qualitative research concerns the collection of data resulting from interviews or open-question questionnaires. It hence requires the subjective analysis of ideas, opinions, and perceptions expressed through words. This type of data is called soft data and implies higher risk when results are generalised.

In this survey a mixed approach was adopted not only to realise data collection, but also to perform data analysis. Through the questionnaire, in fact, interviewees were asked to provide closed and open answers. The former were then transformed into percentages and graphs which allow a quicker and more general view of the trend, whilst the latter were aimed at providing the researcher with a more detailed and specific opinion about the topic on behalf of the interviewees. In conclusion, it appeared that adopting a mixed approach would allow the researcher to have a wider and more complete image of the dealt topic, which the collection of only one type of data, either quantitative or qualitative, would have not allowed.

2.3 Participants and procedures

According to the purpose of this survey, criteria to select participants were outlined as most inclusive as possible. Although it was likely that individuals over or under a certain age would have not accessed the questionnaire, given the topic of this research, being able to identify which age range was more involved in the phenomenon was also believed to constitute significant data. Consequently, the questionnaire was administered with no distinction of age, but considering at what age people might autonomously start using Instagram and TikTok, which was agreed to be at 10 years old.

Moreover, the questionnaire was designed to be mainly administered to Italian speakers. That decision stemmed from two main considerations. In the first place,

addressing the issue to Italian speakers wanted to be an attempt to broaden the view of the topic. In fact, in the following chapters it is possible to notice that other questionnaires were addressed to non-Italian speakers. As a consequence, this methodology was believed to make the research more complete. Another reason relied on the concrete tools and channels that could be used to administer the questionnaire, which could more easily lead to Italian speakers than to non-Italian speakers.

As previously stated, there were no strict criteria to follow to administer the questionnaire, therefore open channels were selected to share it in order to reach as many respondents as possible. For the same purpose, it was created using Google forms, which made the tool more easily accessible. The questionnaire was first shared through the researcher's personal accounts on different SNSs, namely WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. More specifically, on Instagram a brief description of the purposes of the present study was outlined together with the link to the questionnaire and it was posted on Instagram Stories. In order to reach a wider number of participants, this content was also reposted by the Instagram account @*students.unipd*[10]. The same content was shared on WhatsApp and sent to already-known contacts. A slightly different approach was adopted when Facebook was involved, since the description and the link to the questionnaire were posted not only on the researcher's personal profile, but also on Facebook groups which were believed to be related to the topic of the study. The questionnaire administration started on 8th February 2022 and ended within ten days, after reaching 506 answers, which was considered to be a sufficient amount of data to perform a reliable analysis.

2.4 Instrument

The instrument selected to realise this survey was the questionnaire, which was entitled "L'uso e l'efficacia delle pagine di lingua su Instagram e TikTok" ("Use and efficacy of Instagram and TikTok accounts to teach foreign languages") and was entirely designed by the researcher themselves. Due to the above-mentioned reasons, the language selected to write questions and items of the questionnaire was Italian. The questionnaire was structured into five main sections resulting in a total of 31 items. Questions aimed at collecting various data from the respondents, consequently both *factual questions* and

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[10] <https://instagram.com/students.unipd?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=> 05/05/2022

attitudinal questions were included in the questionnaire. According to Dörnyei (2007) the former seek to outline a profile of the participant and to understand who they are in order to collect demographic data, whilst the latter mainly focus on respondents' personal beliefs, opinions, and feelings with regard to specific topics.

The first section is called "Esperienza linguistica personale" ("Personal linguistic experience") and consists of eight close-ended questions. They can be described as factual questions since they aim at providing the researcher with a picture of the respondent's linguistic background. The second section is named "Uso dei Social Network" ("Use of SNSs"), in fact it sought to acquire information about participants' habits with regard to Instagram and TikTok through close-ended questions. It included items 9-13 which can be regarded as factual questions. This section also determined whether respondents could continue to fill in the form or would finish it there. The second option took place in case respondents stated not to be signed up in any of the involved SNSs. Those who declared to have an Instagram or TikTok account could continue the questionnaire, instead. The third section, named "Uso delle pagine di lingua su Instagram" ("Use of accounts to learn foreign languages on Instagram", aimed at investigating the use of accounts to learn a foreign language on Instagram and TikTok. It consisted of four questions, 14-17, of which the last one was the only open-ended question. Starting from the following section, attitudinal questions were also introduced. This section was titled "Punti di forza e di debolezza delle pagine di lingua su Instagram e TikTok" ("Strengths and weaknesses of accounts to learn foreign languages on Instagram and TikTok") and, as the title suggests, sought to collect information about the perception of efficacy of these accounts from the respondents' point of view. The fourth section included items 18-30 of which only two were designed as open-ended questions. The fifth and last section was addressed exclusively to participants who responded negatively to the 30th question, and it investigated reasons underlying that negative answer through a close-ended attitudinal question; consequently, it was titled "Motivazioni" ("Reasons").

Although the majority of items consisted of close-ended questions, as above mentioned three open-ended questions were also included in the questionnaire in order to further investigate the reasons underlying pivotal answers. Close-ended questions in this survey consisted of five types that will now be further analysed:

- multiple-choices;
- Likert scales;

- checkboxes.

Most items consisted of multiple-choice questions, more precisely 24 out of 31 questions. In this type of item respondents were asked to choose only one out of two or more options by selecting the corresponding dot. Only two items were Likert scales, instead. This type of question consists of a list of elements which participants are asked to rate on a scale that has been previously illustrated. They thus must select only one dot for each statement in order to express what is true, or closest to true, for them. Similarly, only two checkboxes were found in the questionnaire. In this type of item one or more options can be indicated by selecting the corresponding dot.

The choice of providing participants with more close-ended questions than open-ended ones is due to the fact that the former are pre-designed, standardised, and do not require any writing. Hence, their answers can be easily summarised into graphs and percentages which are essential elements in quantitative analysis because they allow generalisations. On the other hand, open-ended questions allow respondents to express their personal opinion, and the researcher to reach a deeper understanding of the phenomenon by accessing and visualising more specific nuances of thoughts. However, this latter typology of items results in soft data that require the researcher to interpret them. For these reasons only three open questions were included in the questionnaire.

2.5 The questionnaire

In this subchapter the 31 items of the questionnaire will be presented and analysed following the distinction into sections that have been previously explained. At the beginning of each section, respondents were also provided with a brief description of the objectives those items were seeking to achieve, together with the explanation of pivotal concepts. This structure was made clear to the participant at the beginning of the questionnaire. In order to make this analysis more easily accessible, all the questions, introductions, and items have been translated into English.

The first section, titled "Esperienza linguistica personale" ("Personal linguistic experience") comprises items 1-8. The introduction specifies that this section aims at acquiring information about the linguistic background of each participant. More specifically, data collected from these first eight questions seek to answer the first question underlying this survey, namely "which features do followers of Instagram and

TikTok accounts to teach languages have in common?". A definition of "foreign language" is also given in order for respondents to be able to provide as precise, consistent, and truthful answers as possible. "Foreign language" is therefore defined as a language studied but not spoken in the area one lives in. The eight questions that are here illustrated are multiple choice.

1. How old are you?

    ◯ 10-14
    ◯ 15-19
    ◯ 20-25
    ◯ 26-35
    ◯ >35

    The first question aims at outlining age ranges to which participants to the questionnaire belong. As previously explained in chapter 2.3, the minimum age range was established at 10 years old, because individuals under that age were not believed to be potentially involved in this survey due to its topic, nor could be easily reached by the researcher to administer the questionnaire. Moreover, they could not legally be on Instagram nor TikTok, whose age limit is 13 years old[11]. However, this type of data was expected to have an impact on the findings as it provides information about the average age of people who are most involved in this phenomenon.

2. Are you or do you consider yourself as an Italian native speaker?
    ◯ Yes
    ◯ No

    Starting from question 2, a series of items is dedicated to identifying the respondent's linguistic background. As stated in chapter 2.3 the questionnaire was designed to be administered to Italian speakers, but the possibility for non-native speakers to participate in the survey was not excluded.

[11] <https://www.tiktok.com/safety/en/guardians-guide/> 12/05/2022
<https://about.instagram.com/blog/announcements/continuing-to-make-instagram-safer-for-the-youngest-members-of-our-community> 12/05/2022

3. Do you know any foreign language?

○ Yes

○ No

The question underlying this third item was as follows: is a person who knows or studies more than one language more inclined to make decisions to direct their learning? In other words, do people who speak more languages follow pages to learn a foreign language more than people who do not speak any? This item seeks to understand whether speaking more than one language could be related to the penchant for finding one's own ways of improving their linguistic knowledge, such as following the already-mentioned accounts.

4. Would you like to improve the languages you know?

○ Yes

○ No

Similarly to the previous item, the fourth question aims at highlighting whether using accounts to learn foreign languages could be related only to individuals who find themselves still able to improve their linguistic knowledge or not. However, this aspect also entails other considerations that have not been further discussed in this study. For instance, there exists a fine line between feeling the need to improve as a consequence of not having - or believing not to have - a high linguistic level and thinking to have already achieved a satisfactory level so that no further intervention is seen as necessary.

5. Would you like to learn new languages?

○ Yes

○ No

Question 5 investigates the inclination of the respondent to languages and their willingness not to stop in their learning process. Moreover, this item would like to understand if the investigated tool, namely accounts to learn foreign languages

on Instagram and TikTok, may only be seen as a way to improve an already spoken or studied language or also to start learning a new one.

6. If you attend school or university, does your study course include learning a foreign language?

　◯ Yes
　◯ No

7. If you attend school or university, are you autonomously studying (self-taught or with a private teacher) a foreign language?

　◯ Yes
　◯ No

8. If you do NOT attend school or university, are you autonomously studying (self-taught or with a private teacher) a foreign language?

　◯ Yes
　◯ No

Answers to questions 6 to 8 are expected to reveal significant information related to motivational aspects in language learning. On a first level, a distinction between workers and students. In both cases it was asked if they were autonomously studying a foreign language. Then, in case one was studying but no foreign language was included in their study course, they were asked if they were autonomously learning a language. These questions aimed at highlighting how intrinsic and extrinsic motivation could be at the basis of one own's penchant for finding alternative ways of improving their linguistic knowledge. More specifically, studying a language autonomously is considered to present higher rates of intrinsic motivation than studying a language in one's study course. Nonetheless, it is essential to specify how these statements are generalisations which cannot include the whole range of possible and personal situations concerning one's learning process.

The second section, named "Uso dei social network" ("Use of SNSs"), includes questions 9-13. Underneath the title a brief explanation about its goals is provided. Being

the use of SNSs, especially Instagram and TikTok, and their "pagine di lingua" objective of investigation, a definition of the last concepted is also given. "Pagine di lingua" are those accounts whose contents aim at teaching a foreign language. As in the previous sections, all questions of the second section are multiple choice.

9. Do you have an account on Instagram and/or TikTok? (Please, answer "yes" if you have an account on at least one of these two SNSs)

○ Yes

○ No

Item 9 marks a distinction between participants who are on either Instagram or TikTok and those who do not have an account on these SNSs. Whilst the former could continue to fill in the questionnaire, the latter were directed to the last section to submit their answers. The following questions, in fact, were only addressed and useful for users of the two SNSs. In addition to that, it was also interesting to compare the percentages of participants stating to use Instagram or TikTok with those about age ranges in order to identify which age range is more active on these SNSs and which one is not.

10. Do you have an account on Instagram?

○ Yes

○ No

11. Do you follow any accounts to learn foreign languages on Instagram?

○ Yes

○ No

12. Do you have an account on TikTok?

○ Yes

○ No

13. Do you follow any accounts to learn foreign languages on TikTok?

○ Yes

◯ No

Questions 10 to 13 allows the researcher to acquire information about percentages of participants using Instagram or TikTok. This data can also be compared to that related to age ranges in order to have a clearer vision of which age range prefers using Instagram than TikTok or vice versa. A comparison can also be made between the total number of users participating in the questionnaire and those affirming to follow accounts to learn a foreign language, which is the specific focus of the survey.

The third section, titled "Uso delle pagine di lingua su Instagram e TikTok" ("Use of accounts to learn foreign languages on Instagram and TikTok"), comprises questions 14-30. The brief description introducing this section explains that it aims at investigating use and preferences about the accounts followed to learn foreign languages on Instagram and TikTok. In this section most items are close-ended questions, mainly multiple choice except for item 25 which is a Likert scale. However, it also presents 3 open-ended questions, namely items 17, 24, 27.

14. How many accounts to learn foreign languages do you follow?
   ◯ 0
   ◯ 1
   ◯ 2
   ◯ 3-5
   ◯ >5

Question 14 seeks to define the average number of accounts to learn foreign languages that an individual follows. This number must be considered as cumulative of accounts followed on both Instagram and TikTok.

15. Which language do the accounts you follow teach? If more than one language is involved, please select them all.
   ◯ English
   ◯ French

○ Spanish

○ German

○ Italian

○ Russian

○ Chinese

○ Japanese

○ Arabic

○ I do not follow any accounts to learn foreign languages

○ Other: _____

16. Which is your linguistic level in the language taught in the accounts you follow? (Please consider the main language; if you follow accounts teaching more than one language, specify your level in the following question)

○ Basic (A1, A2)

○ Intermediate (B1, B2)

○ Advanced (C1, C2)

○ I do not follow any account to learn foreign languages

17. If you follow accounts teaching different languages, please indicate your linguistic level in each language (only if you follow accounts teaching that language)

Questions 15-17 investigate the nature and quantity of languages that the user knows or is studying. Moreover, the respondent is required to specify the linguistic level possessed in each language. This type of information is relevant to the purpose of this survey because it allows the researcher to understand whether accounts to learn foreign languages are used by learners of any linguistic level or prevalently by either beginners or advanced learners. Additionally, data about the most popular languages is also collected. In order for the participants to indicate all the languages taught in the accounts they follow and the corresponding level, only question 17 is open-ended. It is worth noticing that, although the answer "0" to question 14 would directly send the participant to the end of the questionnaire, the option "I don't follow any

accounts to learn foreign languages" was also provided in these and the following questions.

The fourth section is titled "Punti di forza e debolezza delle pagine di lingua su Instagram e TikTok" ("Strengths and weaknesses of accounts to learn languages on Instagram and TikTok") and includes questions 18-30. As explained in the initial description, this section aims at highlighting the features of this type of accounts that make them engaging, useful, and effective. Moreover, it seeks to investigate how they are perceived by the users: do they contribute significantly to improve one's linguistic competence and motivation to learn? Hence, the following questions aim at answering the second and third questions at the basis of this survey, namely "are these accounts perceived as affective to improve the users' foreign language learning experience with regard to motivation and communicative competence?" and "which are the main features that male these accounts effective, engaging, and appealing?".

18. Is the account admin Italian or native speaker of the language they teach?
   ◯ Italian
   ◯ Native speaker
   ◯ In some cases Italian, in others native speaker

19. If you answered "In some cases Italian, in others native speaker" to the previous questions, do you prefer accounts run by an Italian or by a native speaker?
   ◯ Italian
   ◯ Native speaker

20. What's the reason for your previous answer?
   ◯ Explanations are more clear
   ◯ They can better grasp issues in language learning
   ◯ It allows me to better deepen language learning
   ◯ It allows me to learn both linguistic and cultural aspects
   ◯ I think it provides a more realistic view of language
   ◯ Other: _____

The first three questions of the fourth section, namely questions 18, 19, and 20, focus on the account administrator. More specifically, participants are required to say whether administrators of the accounts they follow are native speakers or not, and which one they prefer. They are also asked to explain the reasons underlying their preference. It is, in fact, believed to be a relevant aspect to take into account when planning the creation of a similar account and the reasons provided could constitute critical suggestions to focus and work on while administrating the account and designing the contents.

21. While only Reels can be published on TikTok, on Instagram different types of contents can be found. Which type of content is prevalent in the Instagram accounts to learn foreign languages that you follow?

◯ Videos

◯ Single picture (with scripts)

◯ Sequence of pictures (with scripts)

◯ I am not on Instagram
◯ Other: _____

22. Which type of content do you prefer finding in accounts to learn foreign languages you follow on Instagram?

◯ Videos

◯ Single picture (with scripts)

◯ Sequence of pictures (with scripts)

◯ I am not on Instagram

◯ Other: _____

23. Do you prefer and find it more useful when an Instagram account to learn foreign languages uses only one or more types of contents?

◯ One type of content

◯ More types of content

◯ I am not on Instagram

24. What's the reason for your previous answer?

Questions 21-24 deal with the type of content offered on these accounts. At the beginning of item 21 it is stated that only Reels could be published on TikTok, which is the reason why the following questions were only related to the use of Instagram, but a clarification must be made. What is indicated was true at the time the questionnaire was designed and administered, but since 17th March 2022[12] TikTok also opened the possibility of creating Stories. However, Stories can only be seen by purposely visiting a specific account and opening them by

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[12] <https://www.teamworld.it/tecnologia/storie-tiktok/#:~:text=Le%20Storie%20sono%20arrivate%20anche%20su%20TikTok%3A%20dal%2017%20marzo,Grandi%20novit%C3%A0%20in%20casa%20TikTok> 19/05/2022

touching the profile picture. There is not the option of scrolling all the stories of followed accounts, which does exist on Instagram, and the combination of these factors make Reels still the prevalent type of content published on TikTok. With regard to the four considered questions, they first investigate the frequency with which a specific type of content is seen in the followed account, which is also meaningful to the users' preferences. Question 22 then asks which content is most appreciated. The given options only considered three types of content, namely videos, single pictures, and sequence of pictures, of which examples were also provided to simplify comprehension. Nonetheless, the respondents had the opportunity to add any other content they felt important to mention. Lastly, the participants were required to say whether they preferred pages that shared only one type of content or more, and to provide reasons for their answer.

25. Rate from 1 (at all) to 4 (a lot) how much you would like the following linguistic topics to be dealt with in accounts to learn foreign languages on Instagram and/or TikTok.

	1 At all	2 Slightly	3 Fairly	4 A lot
Grammar	○	○	○	○
Idioms	○	○	○	○
Vocabulary	○	○	○	○
Common mistakes	○	○	○	○
Culture	○	○	○	○
Pronunciation	○	○	○	○
Linguistic registers	○	○	○	○

26. Do you prefer and find it more useful when an account to learn foreign languages on Instagram and/or TikTok deals with only one or more linguistic topics? ("Linguistic topics" refers to the categories listed in the previous question)
○ One linguistic topic
○ More linguistic topics

27. What's the reason for your previous answer?

Questions from 25 to 27 consider the linguistic topics that the accounts deal with. The respondent is first asked to rate from 1 to 4 how much they would like specific topics to appear in the page. This closed question is a Likert scale, which aims at providing the researcher with a general picture of which topics arouse the largest interest. This type of information is also believed to constitute critical data in preparation for the final step of this research, namely the creation of an account to teach Italian. After investigating which topics are found to be more useful, the participants are required to express their preference between pages that only deal with one linguistic topic, for instance idioms, or more topics. Finally, in question 27, they are asked to indicate why they prefer one type over the other. This last question is open-ended in order to give the respondent the opportunity to better express their opinion.

28. Does following these accounts encourage you to deepen your knowledge of that language?
○ Yes
○ No

29. Does following these accounts make language learning more pleasant?
○ Yes
○ No

30. Since you started following and using these accounts to learn foreign languages on Instagram and/or TikTok, do you think your linguistic level has improved (even to a small extent)?
○ Yes   *end questionnaire*
○ No   go to question 31

Questions from 28 to 30 are pivotal to the findings of this research. This study has in fact taken its start from three questions, among which "are these accounts perceived as effective to improve the users' foreign language learning

experience with regard to motivation and communicative competence?". More specifically, items 28 and 29 investigate the impact of these pages on the users' learning experience. As already discussed in chapter 1.2, motivation has got a critical role in the acquisition of a new language, and pleasantness is one of the features that boost motivation. These questions therefore invite the respondents to think about their learning experience, thus allowing them to take further steps in the process of becoming autonomous and aware learners. Item 30 also goes in this direction by requiring the participants to evaluate the efficiency of these accounts with regard to their personal experience. If they claim that accounts to learn languages had a successful impact on their learning experience because they contributed to improving their linguistic level, they are addressed to the end of the questionnaire. On the contrary, a negative answer would lead the respondents to the 31st and last question.

As above mentioned, the fifth section is only addressed to participants who answered negatively to question 30. It investigates the reasons underlying that answer, in fact it is titled "Motivazioni" ("Reasons").

31. Rate from 1 (at all) to 4 (a lot), how much do you think the following factors affect lack of positive results?

|	1 At all	2 Slightly	3 Fairly	4 A lot
Inconstancy in following the accounts' contents	○	○	○	○
Inefficiency of accounts to learn foreign languages	○	○	○	○
Lack of opportunities to practice	○	○	○	○
Lack of mistake corrections	○	○	○	○

The last question is a Likert scale where participants are required to rate from 1 to 4 the reasons underlying the unsuccessful impact of pages to learn foreign languages on their learning experience. These four reasons were identified and

hypothesised by the researcher on the basis of their personal experience. Data collected from this item are expected to contribute to understanding whether the unsuccessful outcome is to be linked to the nature of the phenomenon itself or rather to users' negligence.

2.6 Data analysis and discussion

This section of the paper is dedicated to analysing and discussing the data collected from the above-illustrated questionnaire. Both analysis and discussion are here conducted item by item or by small groups of items that investigate the same aspect of the issue. Hard data resulting from close-ended questions are presented and analysed through graphs, percentages, and charts. On the other hand, data collected from the only three open-ended questions are dealt with by presenting a summary of the main trends and themes that emerged from the answers.

1. How old are you?
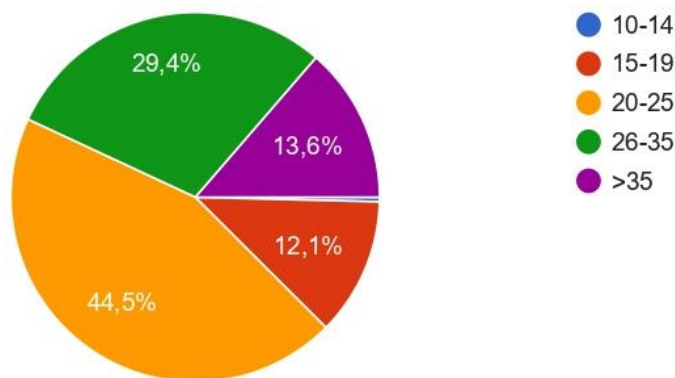
This pie chart illustrates the different age ranges to which respondents belong. The least represented group is the range of 10-14 years old, whilst most participants, namely 44.5% corresponding to almost half of the whole sample, belong to the age range of 20-25 years old. The second largest age group is that of 26-35 years old (29.4%), while the two other groups, namely 15-19 years old and over 35 years old, are almost equally represented, as their respective percentages show: 12.1% and 13.6%. Data emerging from this chart appear to be consistent with data relating SNSs users' age. In fact, as reported in chapter 1.3, Instagram is mainly used by people aged 25-34 (32%) while TikTok

primarily engages people aged 18-24 (42%). The great majority of the respondents to this questionnaire can be in fact considered as belonging to a wider age group, between 20 and 34 years old, which corresponds exactly to the most engaged aged group on Instagram and TikTok. Although this result may partially be due to the tools and channels chosen to promote the questionnaire, as explained in chapter 2.3, the number of responses appear to be adequate to guarantee its reliability.

2. Are you or do you consider yourself as an Italian native speaker?
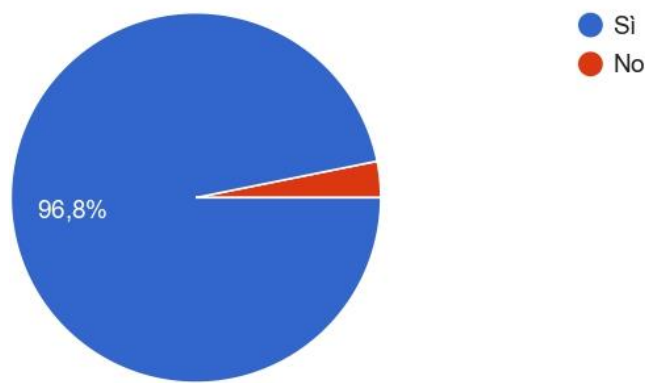
The pie chart shows the linguistic distribution of participants with regard to their native language. It can be seen that the large majority of respondents declared to be or to consider themselves as Italian native speakers (96.8%), whilst only a small percentage indicated the opposite. Being the questionnaire originally designed to be administered to an Italian audience, this result meets the initial expectations.

3. Do you know any foreign language?
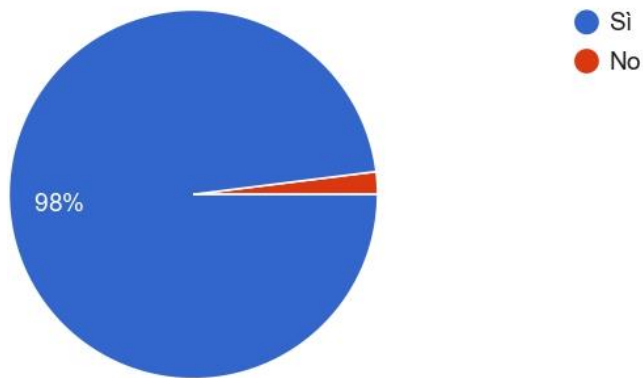
This pie chart shows that 98% of the respondents claimed to know at least one foreign language. This outcome is consistent with the most represented age groups in this survey if considered the current school curriculum which includes the study of at least one foreign language in every school grade.

4. Would you like to improve the languages you know?



5. Would you like to learn new languages?

Legend:
- Sì
- No

11,5%

88,5%
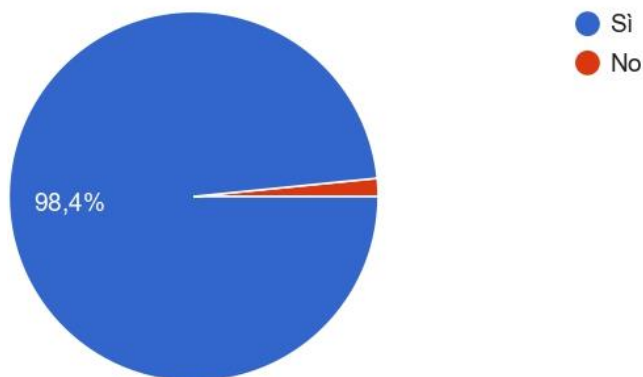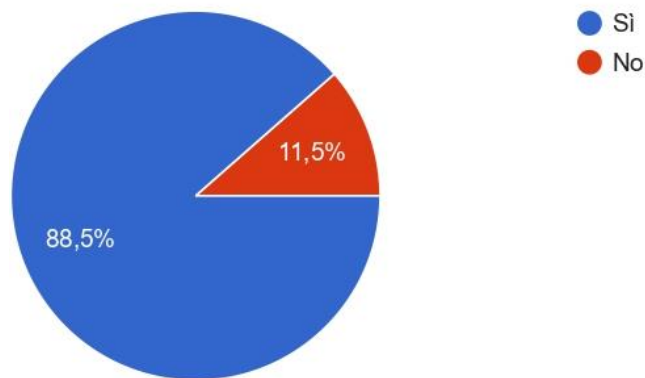
These items, 4 and 5, could be particularly relevant to this survey since the desire to improve one's competence in a foreign language or to learn a new one is the first step to take to look for different means and channels to fulfil this aspiration. In both cases, the majority answered positively, however a slight difference can be noticed between the results of the two questions. A vast majority of respondents (98.4%) stated to be willing to improve the languages they already know, while a slightly less large number of participants (88.5%) declared they would like to learn a new language.

6. If you attend school or university, does your study course include learning a foreign language?


Legend:
- Sì
- No

29,6%

70,4%
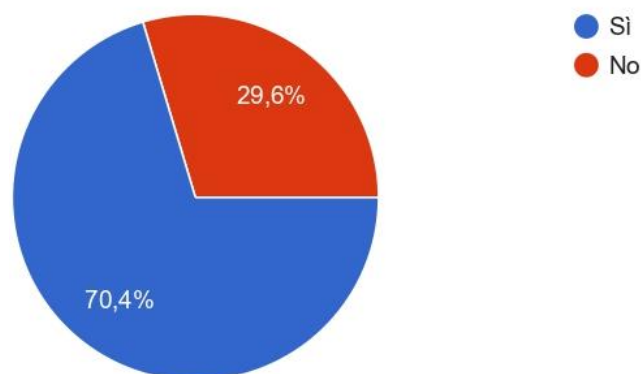
7. If you attend school or university, are you autonomously studying (self-taught or with a private teacher) a foreign language?
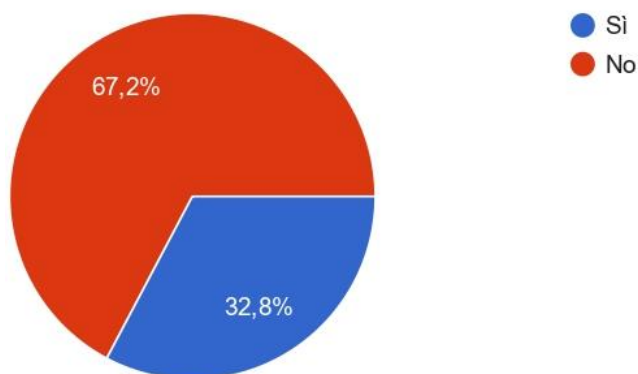
Items 6 and 7 explore linguistic habits of students. It is first important to notice that only 351 out of 506 participants answered question 6, while 345 replied to question 7. These respondents appear therefore to be students. With regard to item 6, more than half of the respondents confirmed that their study course includes the study of a foreign language, while only 29.6% answered negatively. On the other hand, question 7 shows that only 32.8% of 345 the respondents study a language autonomously, while the majority doesn't.

8. If you do NOT attend school or university, are you autonomously studying (self-taught or with a private teacher) a foreign language?
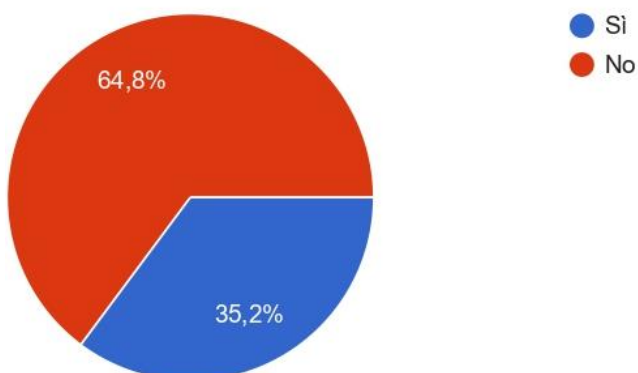

This pie chart collected 270 answers, which should belong to non-students. In this case a result similar to the previous question is displayed. Whilst 64.8% of respondents claimed not to study any foreign language autonomously, only 35.2% declared the opposite.

9. Do you have an account on Instagram and/or TikTok? (Please, answer "yes" if you have an account on at least one of these two SNSs)
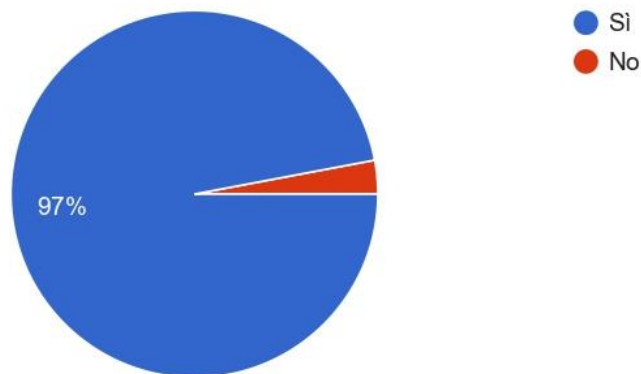

Item 9 shows that the vast majority of participants stated to have an account on either Instagram or TikTok. Again, the result is consistent with age-related data and previous statistics about SNSs. 97% of the whole sample in fact declared to use either one of the two investigated SNSs. If this result is generalised, it is possible to confirm once again the thesis claiming that SNSs engage a large part of the global population and that they are worth studying with regard to their effects in several different fields.

10. Do you have an account on Instagram?
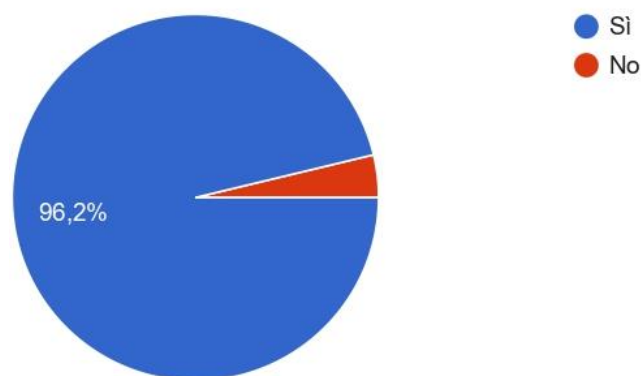
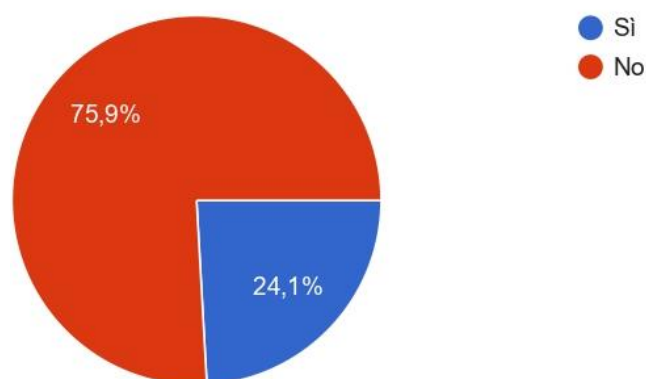11. Do you follow any accounts to learn foreign languages on Instagram?
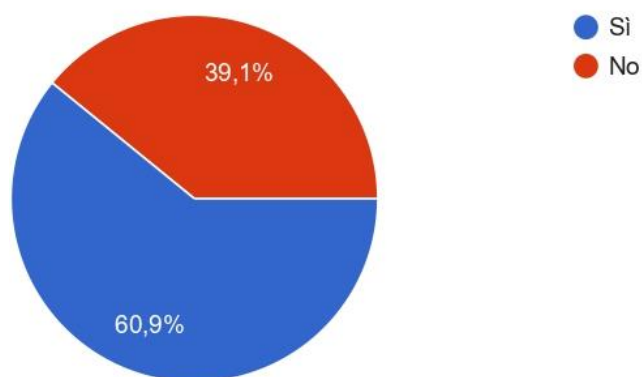
Items 10 and 11 focus on the use of Instagram. The former shows that almost the totality of respondents (96.2%) have an account on the SNS, but the latter indicates that only 60.9% follows at least one account to learn foreign languages. It is thus possible to notice that more than half of Instagram users follow the investigated type of account on the SNS.

12. Do you have an account on TikTok?
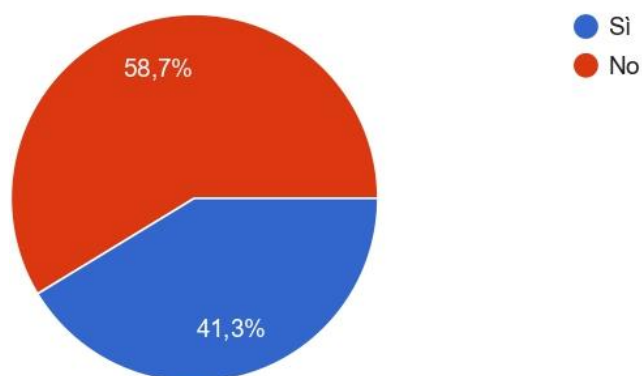
13. Do you follow any accounts to learn foreign languages on TikTok?

On the other hand, items 12 and 13 concern the use of TikTok. The former shows that less than half of the participants (41.3%) have an account on the SNS. However, despite the majority of the respondents stated not to follow any accounts to learn foreign languages on TikTok (75.9%), if we only consider the percentage of those who declared to be on TikTok, it is therefore possible to state that the vast majority of TikTok users also follow accounts to learn foreign languages.

14. How many accounts to learn foreign languages do you follow?
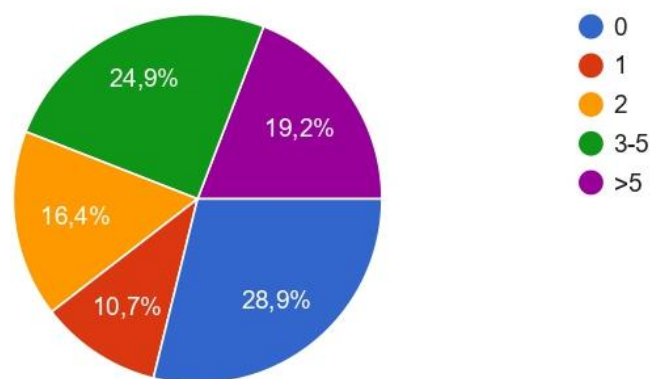
The pie chart illustrates how many accounts to learn foreign languages participants follow on either Instagram or TikTok. To go into more detail, 28.9% participants do not follow any accounts, 10.7% follow only one account, 16.4% follow two accounts, 24.9% follow from 3 to 5 accounts, and 19.2% follow more than 5 accounts. On an overall view it is possible to affirm that

more than half of the participants follow more than one account to learn foreign languages, and almost half of the respondents follow more than 3 pages.

15. Which language do the accounts you follow teach? If more than one language is involved, please select them all.

Language	Count
Inglese	341 (67,4%)
Francese	59 (11,7%)
Spagnolo	90 (17,8%)
Tedesco	48 (9,5%)
Italiano	47 (9,3%)
Russo	26 (5,1%)
Cinese	17 (3,4%)
Giapponese	14 (2,8%)
Arabo	14 (2,8%)
Non seguo pagine di…	121 (23,9%)
Portoghese	7 (1,4%)
Coreano	4 (0,8%)
Non seguo	3 (0,6%)
Portoghese	2 (0,4%)
portoghese	2 (0,4%)
Norvegese	2 (0,4%)
Nessuna	2 (0,4%)
Nessuna	2 (0,4%)
Esperanto, Svedese,…	1 (0,2%)
Nulla	1 (0,2%)
Non seguo pagine	1 (0,2%)
Pur essendo madreli…	1 (0,2%)
Wolof	1 (0,2%)
Albanese	1 (0,2%)
Svedese	1 (0,2%)
Ungherese	1 (0,2%)
Catalano	1 (0,2%)
Ladino	1 (0,2%)
Sloveno, portoghese	1 (0,2%)
Sloveno	1 (0,2%)
Lis	1 (0,2%)
Lituano, polacco	1 (0,2%)
Lingua dei segni	1 (0,2%)
latino	1 (0,2%)
Turco	1 (0,2%)
Hindi	1 (0,2%)
lis/asl, coreano	1 (0,2%)
Macedone	1 (0,2%)

This item was designed as a multiple-choice question where participants could also add personal answers. Pre-given options were English, French, Spanish, German, Italia, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, I do not follow any accounts to learn languages. It is possible to notice that 18 other languages were then indicated, namely: Albanian, Catalan, Esperanto, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian Sign Language, Korean, Ladin, Latin, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Norwegian,

Polish, Portuguese, Slovenian, Swedish, Turkish, Wolof. Whilst most of these languages were only indicated once, except for Portuguese, Korean, and Norwegian, which were added respectively 7, 4, and 2 times, among the others English reached the highest score (67.4%). The remaining languages show the following percentages: Spanish (17.8%), French (11.7%), German (9.5%), Italian (9.3%), Russian (5.1%), Chinese (3.4%), Japanese and Arabic (2.8%). It is eventually important to mention that 128 respondents affirmed not to follow any accounts to learn foreign languages. These results suggest that following this type of page has become a widespread custom. Particularly significant to this regard is in fact not only the percentage of respondents who follow similar pages, but also the number of minor languages that are involved in this phenomenon.

16. Which is your linguistic level in the language taught in the accounts you follow? (Please consider the main language; if you follow accounts teaching more than one language, specify your level in the following question)
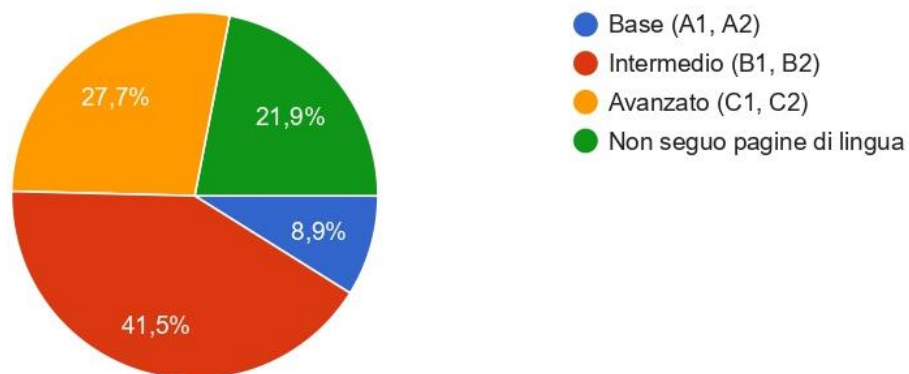

17. If you follow accounts teaching different languages, please indicate your linguistic level in each language (only if you follow accounts teaching that language)
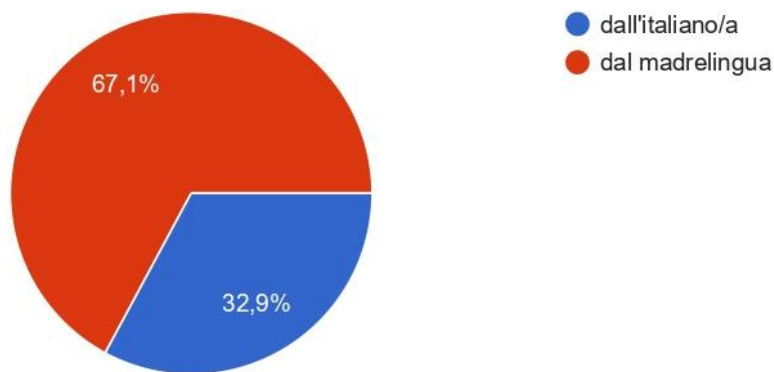
Questions 16 and 17 aimed at investigating whether the linguistic level could influence one's propensity to follow the aforementioned accounts. According to the pie chart summarising answers given to question 16, it is possible to see that 8.9% respondents declared to have a basic level, 27.7% affirmed to have an advanced level, while 41.5% stated to have an intermediate level. With regard

to item 17, 224 languages with related levels were indicated. Among the latter, 27.7% were indicated to be basic level, 30.3% advanced level, and 37.5% intermediate level. This scenario appears to be not too distant from the previous mentioned one, in fact the intermediate level is dominant. It is also interesting to notice that 10% of mentioned languages were Italian as first language. Some respondents specified that their following accounts to learn Italian was out of curiosity or professional reasons, namely to find inspiration for their own teaching. In general, the choice of following accounts to learn languages seems not to be affected by the linguistic level. However, one answer in particular appears to be worth highlighting: "Ho origini Albanesi e purtroppo ho disimparato la mia lingua madre, ma ho trovato molte pagine che mi hanno permesso di recuperare e imparare meglio alcuni aspetti di questa lingua", which means "I am of Albanian origins and unfortunately I've forgotten my native language, but I've found many accounts that allowed me to retrieve and improve some aspects of that language". Although this aspect of the phenomenon might appear of great interest and impact of today's society, no studies seem to exist upon the case. Consequently, it might constitute an intriguing topic for further research.

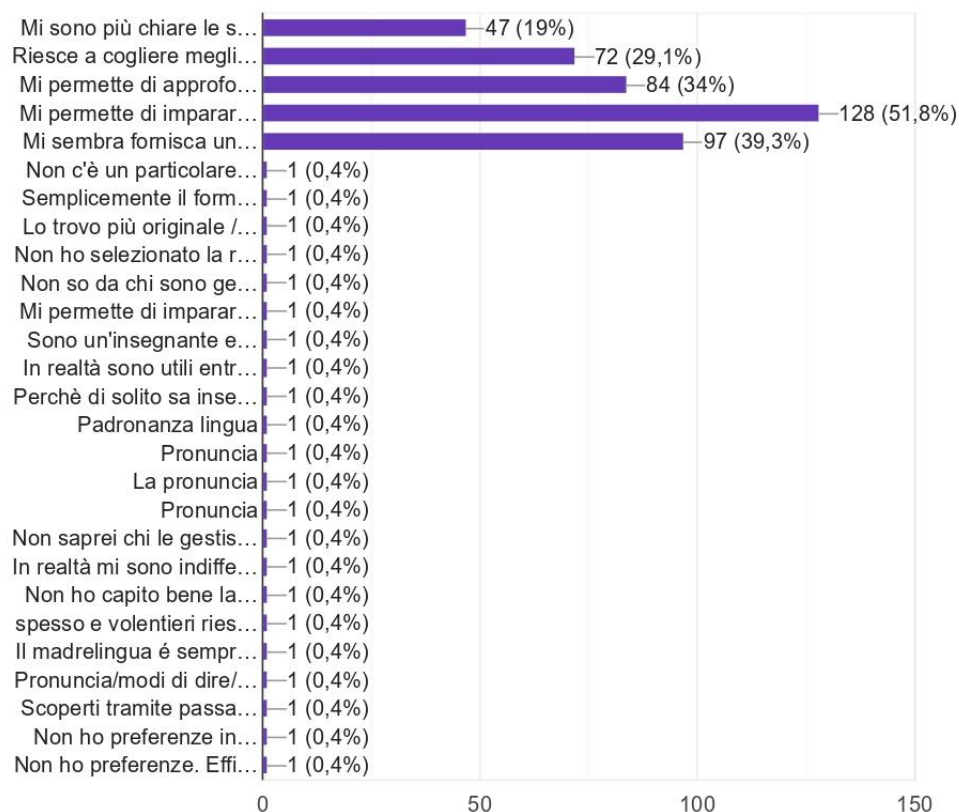18. Is the account admin Italian or native speaker of the language they teach?
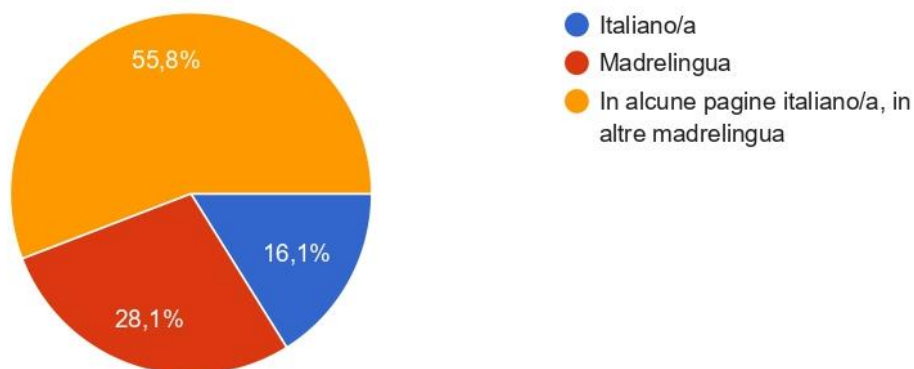
19. If you answered "In some cases Italian, in others native speaker" to the previous questions, do you prefer accounts run by an Italian or by a native speaker?
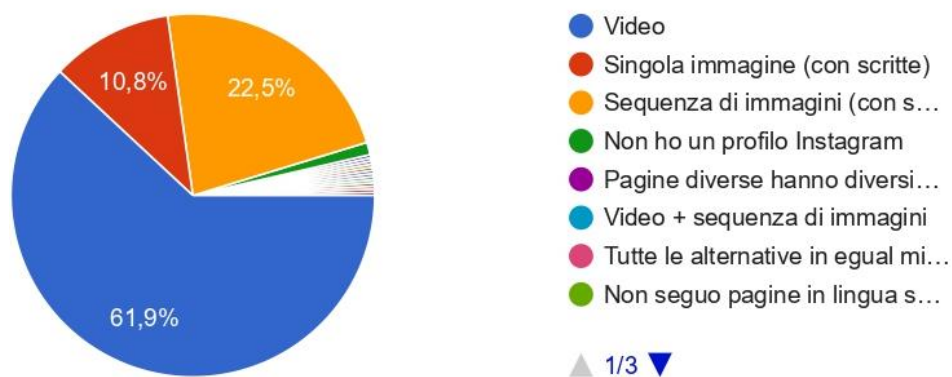
Questions 18 and 19 aimed at investigating whether the administrator's nationality might affect the efficacy of the account or not. The first pie chart shows that the majority of respondents (55.8%) follow accounts administered by both native speakers and non-native speakers, whilst 28.1% follow accounts run by native speakers and 16.1% by non-native speakers. The following item further explores this aspect by inquiring into participants' preferences. Among those who affirmed to follow accounts run by both native and non-native speakers, 67.1% claimed to prefer the former, while 32.9% stated to opt for the latter. It therefore appears that this criterion plays a not insignificant role in the account choice. Accounts administered by native speakers seem in fact to be preferred over those run by non-native speakers.

20. What's the reason for your previous answer?

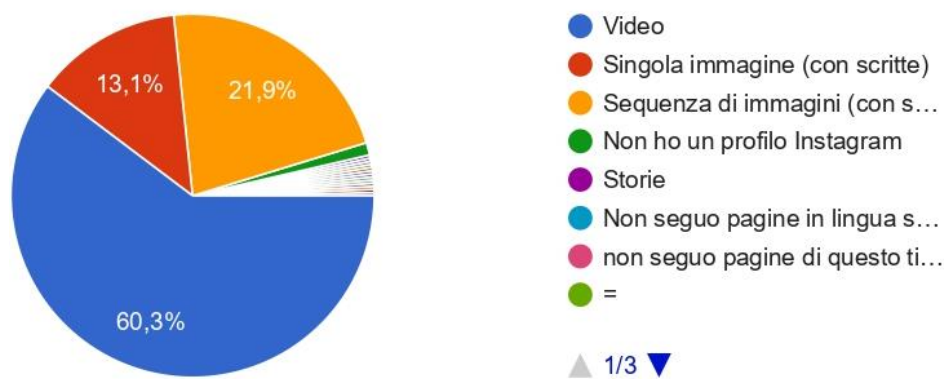| Label	Value
Mi sono più chiare le s…	47 (19%)
Riesce a cogliere megli…	72 (29,1%)
Mi permette di approfo…	84 (34%)
Mi permette di imparar…	128 (51,8%)
Mi sembra fornisca un…	97 (39,3%)
Non c'è un particolare…	1 (0,4%)
Semplicemente il form…	1 (0,4%)
Lo trovo più originale /…	1 (0,4%)
Non ho selezionato la r…	1 (0,4%)
Non so da chi sono ge…	1 (0,4%)
Mi permette di imparar…	1 (0,4%)
Sono un'insegnante e…	1 (0,4%)
In realtà sono utili entr…	1 (0,4%)
Perchè di solito sa inse…	1 (0,4%)
Padronanza lingua	1 (0,4%)
Pronuncia	1 (0,4%)
La pronuncia	1 (0,4%)
Pronuncia	1 (0,4%)
Non saprei chi le gestis…	1 (0,4%)
In realtà mi sono indiffe…	1 (0,4%)
Non ho capito bene la…	1 (0,4%)
spesso e volentieri ries…	1 (0,4%)
Il madrelingua é sempr…	1 (0,4%)
Pronuncia/modi di dire/…	1 (0,4%)
Scoperti tramite passa…	1 (0,4%)
Non ho preferenze in…	1 (0,4%)
Non ho preferenze. Effi…	1 (0,4%)

This pie chart gives an idea about the reasons underlying the preference for accounts run by either native or non-native speakers. In this question each respondent could select more than answer or specify their own reasons. More than half of respondents (51.8%) claimed that it allows them to learn both linguistic and cultural aspects. This answer was almost exclusively provided by those who previously indicated to prefer accounts run by native speakers. Similarly, 39.9% respondents stated that it provides a more realistic view of the language, and 34% said that it allows them to better deepen language learning. On the contrary, respondents who previously claimed to prefer accounts administered by non-native speakers, justified their choice by saying that non-natives can better grasp issues in language learning (29.1%) and that explanations are clearer (19%). Among the other reasons provided to support one or the other preference, the more frequent seems to concern advantages related to pronunciation.
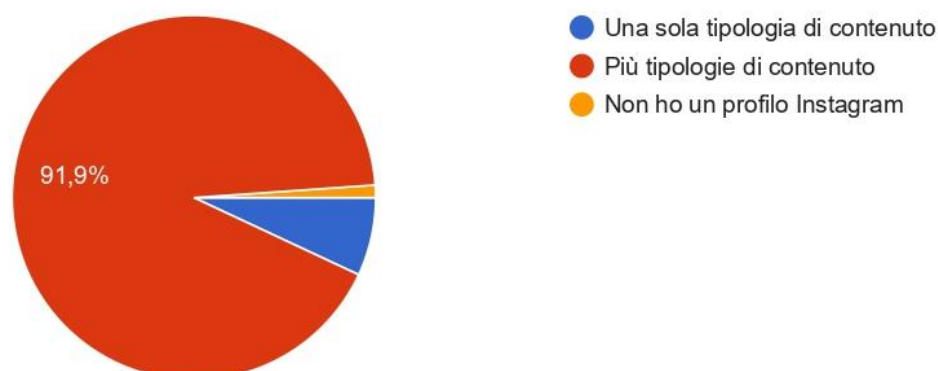
21. While only Reels can be published on TikTok, on Instagram different types of contents can be found. Which type of content is prevalent in the Instagram accounts to learn foreign languages that you follow?

Legend:
- Video
- Singola immagine (con scritte)
- Sequenza di immagini (con s…
- Non ho un profilo Instagram
- Pagine diverse hanno diversi…
- Video + sequenza di immagini
- Tutte le alternative in egual mi…
- Non seguo pagine in lingua s…

10,8% 22,5% 61,9%

▲ 1/3 ▼

22. Which type of content do you prefer finding in accounts to learn foreign languages you follow on Instagram?

Legend:
- Video
- Singola immagine (con scritte)
- Sequenza di immagini (con s…
- Non ho un profilo Instagram
- Storie
- Non seguo pagine in lingua s…
- non seguo pagine di questo ti…
- =

13,1% 21,9% 60,3%

▲ 1/3 ▼

23. Do you prefer and find it more useful when an Instagram account to learn foreign languages uses only one or more types of contents?

Legend:
- Una sola tipologia di contenuto
- Più tipologie di contenuto
- Non ho un profilo Instagram

91,9%

Items 21, 22 and 23 explore users' preferences about the type of contents published on the aforementioned accounts. While question 21 investigates how widespread appear to be specific categories of contents, the following questions

focus on respondents' preferences among these categories. The two related pie charts clearly show a strong predominance of one preference, namely video contents. More specifically, with regard to the first item, Only 10.8% respondents claimed to opt for single images, while 22.5% affirmed to prefer sequences of images, and 61.9% indicated to favour videos. The remaining answers are almost exclusively expression of participants claiming not to follow any such accounts or not to have an Instagram account. An almost identical scenario appears in question 22, where 13.1% respondents declared to prefer single images, while 21.9% stated to opt for sequence of images, and 60.3% affirmed to choose videos. Consequently, it is possible to state that there exists a balance between choice of contents on behalf of accounts' administrators, and users' preferences. A strong primacy is also marked in question 23, where participants are asked to indicate whether they believe it is more useful to only use one or more types of content. In this case, 91.9% agreed in saying that a variety of contents is more effective for the purposes of that type of account. As a consequence, it is possible to affirm that the type of content highly affects users' choice to follow or not an account to learn foreign languages, and in particular accounts promoting video contents are the most appreciated. Moreover, another key aspect is the combination of various types of content in order to engage the community as well as to better explain different topics.

24. What's the reason for your previous answer?

This open question aimed at exploring respondents' reasons underlying their preference between accounts offering only one or more types of content. In order to analyse the answers provided by the participants, data were clustered into two main groups, depending on whether the previous answer was "only one type of content" or "more types of content", and then into seven more subclusters according to the nature of the given reason. In the first case, respondents justified their preference for accounts offering only one type of content with three main reasons:

a) firstly, because it gives order to the account and also helps creating a well-defined identity;

b) secondly, because it allows the user to better understand and deepen a specific topic or linguistic area;

c) thirdly, many respondents assumed that this only content must be videos and declared that they are more useful and effective in providing linguistic notions.

On the other hand, respondents who claimed to prefer accounts with different types of content provided the following reasons:

a) different contents imply a variety which is essential to avoid boredom and hence increasing engagement, pleasantness, and motivation;

b) different types of contents might better suit different linguistic topics, for instance videos are crucial to improve pronunciation, while scripts on images may appear more adapt to explain grammar;

c) different contents meet different cognitive and learning styles, and they also provide the user with more and diversified inputs which enhance learning;

d) users can choose which type of content to watch depending on the context they find themselves in at a specific time or on the amount of time they have.

It is thus possible to notice that reasons provided to the most selected preference, namely that of more types of content, directly draw upon teaching and learning theories discussed in chapter 1 and especially related to motivation and cognitive styles.

25. Rate from 1 (at all) to 4 (a lot) how much you would like the following linguistic topics to be dealt with in accounts to learn foreign languages on Instagram and/or TikTok.
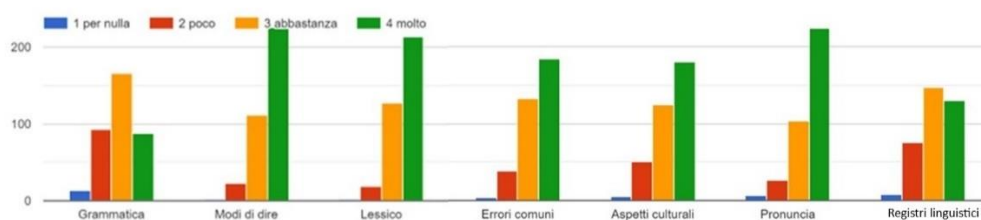
This bar chart shows how much those linguistic topics are required and appreciated in accounts to learn foreign languages. From an overall view of the chart, it appears that only two topics show higher rates 3, and they are "grammar" and "linguistic registers". Grammar is also the least required linguistic topic of all with 106 respondents rating 1 or 2. On the contrary, "idioms", "vocabulary", "common "mistakes", "cultural aspects", and

"pronunciation", received the highest rate from most respondents. More specifically, "idioms" and "pronunciation" appear to be the most appreciated and were rated 4 by 225 and 224 respondents respectively.

26. Do you prefer and find it more useful when an account to learn foreign languages on Instagram and/or TikTok deals with only one or more linguistic topics? ("Linguistic topics" refers to the categories listed in the previous question)
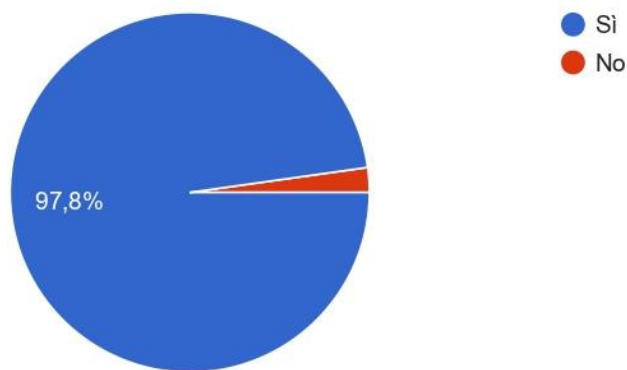

- Un solo argomento linguistico
- Più argomenti linguistici

96,4%
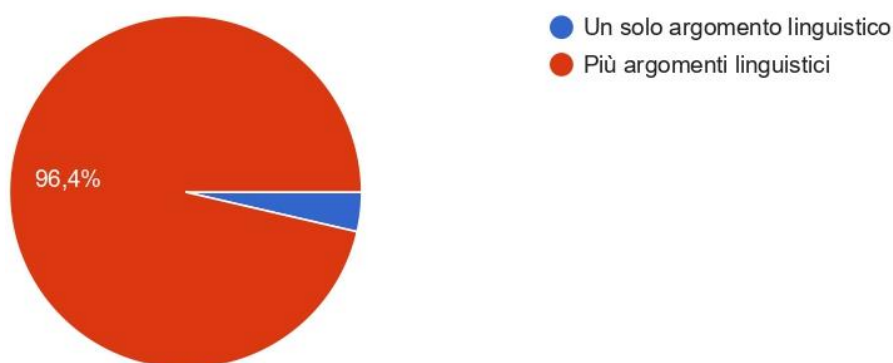
27. What's the reason for your previous answer?

The pie chart summarising data collected from question 26 clearly shows that the great majority of respondents (96.4%) believe that accounts dealing with more linguistic topics are more useful. The reasons supporting this answer mainly rely on the need to have a complete view of the language as a whole, which is only possible if all linguistic aspects are touched and dealt with. On the contrary, the few respondents who claimed to prefer accounts dealing with only one topic, explained that it helps focus their learning.

28. Does following these accounts encourage you to deepen your knowledge of that language?
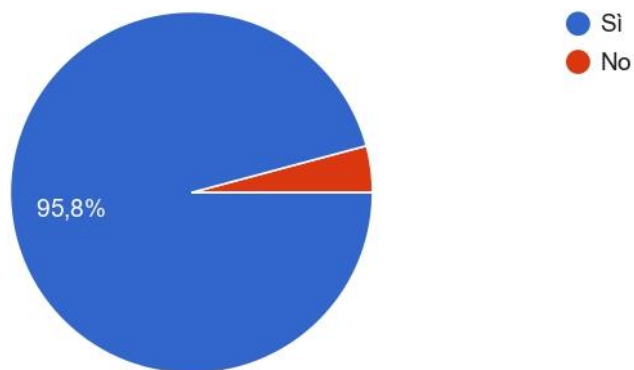
Sì
No

95,8%

29. Does following these accounts make language learning more pleasant?


Sì
No

97,8%

30. Since you started following and using these accounts to learn foreign languages on Instagram and/or TikTok, do you think your linguistic level has improved (even to a small extent)?

Sì
No

17,8%

82,2%
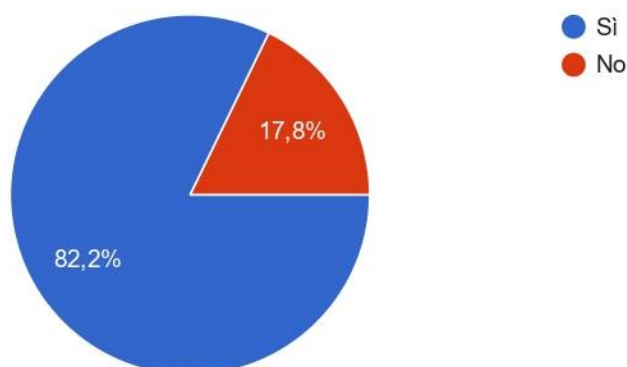
Items 28, 29 and 30 aimed at answering the second research questions, which is: "Are those accounts perceived as effective to improve the users' foreign language learning experience with regard to motivation and communicative competence?".

The first two questions investigate the impact of the aforementioned accounts on the users' motivation to learn a foreign language by focusing on two aspects, namely engagement and pleasantness. Pie charts show that 95.8% of respondents declared that following these accounts enhanced their willingness to deepen the language, and 97.8% claimed that they made learning more pleasant. It is therefore possible to state that the great majority of users affirm that accounts to learn a foreign language have a positive impact on one's motivation to learn. With regard to the second aspect, namely communicative competence, data appear to be slightly different. However, although 17.8% of respondents stated that their linguistic competence did not benefit from using these accounts, 82.2% agreed in saying the opposite. According to the analysed data, it is hence possible to state that accounts to learn foreign languages on Instagram and TikTok appear to have a positive impact on both motivation and communicative competence.

31. Rate from 1 (at all) to 4 (a lot), how much do you think the following factors affect lack of positive results?
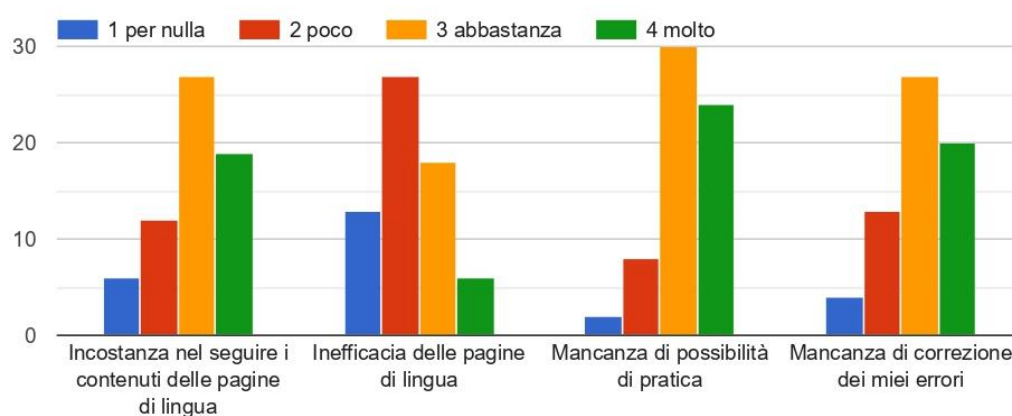
This bar chart shows how much those factors are perceived to affect one's learning experience on Instagram and TikTok, and prevent them from successfully progressing in their learning. It is worth noticing that "not having any opportunity to practise" is the reasons that received the highest score, followed by "lack of mistakes correction" and "inconstancy in following the contents", which were selected by 24, 20 and 19 respondents respectively. On the contrary, "inefficiency of these accounts" is the least voted reason with 40 respondents rating 1 or 2. It is therefore possible to assume that although this type of accounts is not perceived as ineffective, some structural features imply

the lack of opportunities that are essential to improve one's communicative competence.

2.8 General remarks

The present survey set out to determine on one hand the characteristics that made accounts to learn a foreign language useful and effective, together with the features of users following these accounts, and on the other hand whether they are perceived as effective with regard to motivation and communicative competence. Data collected through the analysed questionnaire allowed the researcher to answer the three starting questions. Results are summarised and reported here. It is however worth highlighting that, being the almost totality of participants Italian, findings might not remain the same if related to context different from the one analysed.

The first question aimed at identifying the features shared by people following accounts to learn foreign languages. It appears that the great majority of users are aged between 20 and 35 years old, and that they study one or more foreign languages at university. Fewer are in fact those who autonomously learn a language. Moreover, Instagram users are much more widespread in Italy than TikTok users. However, linguistic level appears to be irrelevant to defining a category of users which could be most interested in this phenomenon, since all levels seem to be almost equally involved.

The second question investigated the efficacy of accounts to learn foreign languages. According to data results, it is possible to state that these accounts are perceived as effective by users with regard to motivation and communicative competence. They are in fact claimed to positively affect the users' learning experience by increasing pleasantness, enhancing learning, and by providing a more complete view of the language, since cultural aspects can also be dealt with.

Finally, the third question sought to define which features make these accounts effective and engaging. Data showed that native speaker administrators are preferred over non-natives, although both entail significant benefits to learning. Moreover, users are more likely to follow accounts that offer a variety of contents and linguistic topics. In particular, it is worth mentioning that video contents appeared to be strongly dominant among the others not only because they are found more engaging, but also because great value is given to pronunciation.

In conclusion, although the phenomenon still presents some weaknesses related to the lack of opportunities of practice, findings proved that not only accounts to learn foreign languages are more and more followed and used, but also that users find concrete benefit in using this type of content.

CHAPTER 3

Teaching Italian as foreign or second language on Instagram and TikTok: a study from a concrete experience

The third chapter of this thesis represents the core part of this work. After exploring the theoretical basis that supports the role of SNSs in language teaching and learning, and after investigating the common perception of the effectiveness of these tools, this last part aims at presenting the process and outcomes of the final project. It consists of the creation of an account to teach Italian as foreign language on Instagram and TikTok, together with a comparative survey, to prove its positive impact on the language learning experience, thus answering the research question. To this purpose, all information that had previously been gathered were put into practice in order to design an account that could meet the users' needs. Additionally, the comparative part was organised into two steps: after the page was created, an initial questionnaire was administered to a group of people learning or willing to learn Italian, to take a picture of their overall learning experience to that moment. They were then asked to fill in a similar questionnaire after using the above-mentioned account for one month. In this chapter all steps of this study will be presented and explained. However, before going into more detail with the just-described process, a brief analysis of the more technical aspects concerning the use of Instagram and TikTok as creators will be provided.

3.1 Project

As briefly mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, this project seeks to answer the main research question this thesis moved from, namely "are accounts to learn foreign languages on Instagram and TikTok effective to improve FL and L2 competence? Do they have a positive and remarkable impact on the language learning experience with regard to motivation and pleasantness?". It is important to mark a distinction between this survey and the one discussed in chapter 2. Whilst the latter investigated the issue from a wider and more general perspective, the former wants to address the phenomenon in a very specific and concrete way. Moreover, while the latter involved almost exclusively Italian speakers, thus reducing the field of investigation, and consequently implying that

findings could be generalised only to a certain extent, the current investigation better defines the outlines of the research. More specifically, the focus is set on learning Italian as foreign language or second language. Except for the criteria concerning the target language, no other limit was established with regard to subjects involved. In order to design and run the account, findings resulting from the previous survey were used as a starting point as well as a resource that could lead to some decision making instead of others.

3.2 Method

Similarly to the survey conducted in chapter 2, this investigation adopted a mixed approach. As previously explained, this method implies the collection of both hard and soft data, which can also be named quantitative and qualitative data respectively. Together they contribute to the creation of a complete and more in-depth vision of the phenomenon. According to Dörnyei (2007), in fact, quantitative data result from close-ended questions and can be described by percentages, graphs, and charts, because they are numerable and measurable. On the other hand, qualitative data are expressed in words, which means that they are collected from the open-ended questions of the two questionnaires used to perform this investigation. In order to analyse soft data, they first need to be summarised and clustered into main ideas. This process allows the researcher to interpret the results and elaborate a discussion over the findings. It thus appears clear that the analysis deriving from hard data is more objective than that resulting from soft data. For the same reason, the former grants a higher degree of reliability when findings are generalised on a wider level.

As a consequence, a mixed approach appeared to be the method that could better meet the purposes of this study. To be more precise, it is true that collecting hard data was crucial to be able not only to generalise the findings, but also to compare the two questionnaires, a phase which is believed to be essential to the performance of this study. On the other hand, it must not be forgotten the field this investigation belongs to. The educational field cannot be conceived as separated from the subjects themselves. As largely explained in chapter 1.2, learners are not simply passive recipients, but active actors and promoters of their learning. For this reason, in order to provide them with the opportunity to better express their opinion and point of view about the experience, some open-ended questions were inserted in the questionnaires. Not only results are in fact

meaningful, but also feelings, perceptions, and emotions, which therefore are worth taking into account.

3.3 Participants and procedures

This survey implied the involvement of a group of learners of Italian language who were subjected to two questionnaires, one at each stage of the study. In this subchapter not only characteristics of the participants are exposed, but also methods used to find them and form the group, and procedures followed to perform the investigation with regard to times and instruments.

To select participants to this study only two criteria were established. Firstly, they had to be signed up to at least one of the aforementioned SNSs, namely Instagram or TikTok. As opposed to what stated in chapter 2, that also numbers of SNSs users and non-users might constitute significant data, to the purpose of this investigation only SNSs users could give their contribution. Secondly, participants had to be Italian learners or at least to be willing to learn the language, since the object of investigation was their Italian learning experience.

In order to find the subjects, a brief message was published on different SNSs between 8th and 10th March 2022. The text was as follows:

Hi everyone! For my thesis project I'm looking for people learning or willing to learn Italian. The only requirement is to have an Instagram or TikTok account. Send me a message if you're interested or know someone who might be. I'll give you more info. Thank you!

More specifically, it was shared on the researcher's private accounts on Facebook and Instagram Stories. Apart from that, it was also posted on several Facebook groups that were believed to include people who might be interested in the project. In particular, it was published in the following Facebook groups which were selected according to the researcher's linguistic background: ITALIANO PER STRANIERI, Italian language club, Let's Learn Italian, APRENDER ITALIANO, Aprende Italiano en casa, Apprendre Italien avec PARLE!, ARABO-ITALIANO: Scambio linguistico e culturale, Padova Expats, ERASMUS ROME 2022/2023, Erasmus Roma 2022/2023, ERASMUS MILAN 2021-2022, Italienisch lernen, Expats in Milano, Foreigners in Turin, Erasmus Students Bologna 2022, Erasmus in Milan 2021-2022. The post received a large number of

reactions, and 224 people asked to receive further information. They were provided with the following explanation which was translated into both Italian and English:

Ciao! Thank you for your interest. I'll give you more info. In my thesis I'm investigating the use and efficiency of accounts to learn foreign languages on Instagram and TikTok. The aim of this phase is to compare the learning experience before and after following my new account where I teach Italian (@italianocongloria). For this reason you'd be asked to follow my page for one month and fill in a brief questionnaire at the beginning and at the end of the month. The reels won't be longer than one minute, so it will take a few minutes daily. If you're in, I'll send you an e-mail with more detailed info at the end of this week. Please feel free to join or not."

Out of 224 people, 113 declared to be interested in participating in the project and gave their e-mail address. On Sunday 13th March they were sent an e-mail where more detailed information was given, together with the link to the first questionnaire.

Hi everyone,

First of all, thank you so much for taking part in this project. Your contribution will be of great value for me, but I hope it will turn out to be useful especially to you, too. As previously mentioned, it is extremely important for your participation to be as much regular and on time as possible. I thank you so much in advance for your commitment.

Let's now move to practical info.

My final thesis project aims at investigating the use and efficiency of pages to learn foreign languages on Instagram and TikTok. The current phase is the experimental one. Its goal is to compare your experience in learning Italian before and after following @italianocongloria in order to highlight the common perception of the efficiency of this type of accounts.

Here you can find the initial questionnaire that I'd like you to fill in by today, Sunday 13th March, at 8 pm (Italian time). It'll take just a few minutes. Your personal information (name and email address) is required exclusively to allow me to eventually compare the two questionnaires. No need to say how essential it is for your answers to be true and impartial, especially with regard to the second questionnaire.

Starting from tomorrow, namely Monday 14th March, you're asked to follow the contents published on @italianocongloria daily (you can follow them on Instagram or TikTok according to what you've previously indicated in the questionnaire). Reels won't last more than one minute, so this task won't take long. In order for me to keep track of who has watched the reels, please leave a comment, even a very simple one, or a like. Activating the notifications might help you not to forget to watch the content. Here is a tutorial, in case you need it.

At the end of the month, namely on Sunday 10th April, you'll receive a second and last questionnaire via email.

I truly thank you for choosing to participate!

The initial questionnaire collected 83 answers, but the final questionnaire only received 56 replies. Participants were reminded to fill in the second form through the following e-mail:

Hi everyone,

Here we are at the end of this project. As mentioned, here you find the final questionnaire that I kindly ask you to fill in as soon as possible. I really hope that this project turned out to be useful to you, too.

I'm going to keep on posting contents on my account, so if you want, I'll wait for you there.

Thank you for your time, I've really appreciated your availability.

Although this project only involved participants for one month, the account was created on 7th March and continued to be active even after the 10th April when they were asked to terminate the questionnaire. During that month one reel a day was posted from Monday to Saturday on both Instagram and TikTok, while a revision quiz was published on Instagram on Sunday.

3.4 Instrument

The instrument selected to perform this data collection was the questionnaire. As previously mentioned, two questionnaires, the Initial questionnaire and the Final questionnaire, were designed in order to compare the participants' learning experience

before and after following the account @*italianocongloria* for one month. Since they were addressed to a wider and more heterogeneous group of people, they were written in both Italian and English. In this subchapter a brief analysis of the structure of both questionnaires is provided.

The Initial questionnaire was composed of fourteen questions and was introduced by a brief explanation of its aims. It informed the participants that it sought to take a picture of their linguistic experience in learning Italian before starting to follow @*italianocongloria* on Instagram or TikTok. To this purpose both factual questions and attitudinal questions were inserted. With regard to the type of items selected for this questionnaire, multiple-choice questions prevailed over open-ended questions, and a Likert Scale can also be found. In this case, however, the latter appeared to be more adequate not only to allow the respondent to express their point of view, but also to provide personal information, such as name or e-mail address, which are different for each respondent.

As stated in its introduction, the Final questionnaire aimed at taking a picture of participants' learning experience after following the aforementioned account for one month. It included eight items, among which half consisted of open-ended questions, three were multiple-choice, and only one item was a Likert Scale. As it will be later explained, many questions are the same as in the first questionnaire in order to allow a comparison to be effectuated. The choice of items also depended on the same reasons as the previous questionnaire. In conclusion, the instruments thus designed allowed the collection of both hard and soft data that provided a more complete view of the participants' perception of the experiment.

3.5 *Italianocongloria*[13]

The creation of an Instagram and TikTok account to teach Italian constituted the last phase of this thesis. However, this passage was not an end in itself, but it was both tool and object of analysis. More specifically, as previously largely explained, a group of users were asked to fill in two questionnaires about their Italian learning experience before and after following this account. Their comparison then allowed the researcher to answer the research question, which asked as follows: "Are accounts to learn foreign languages on

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[13] <https://instagram.com/italianocongloria?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=> 15/06/2022
<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMNNwPnWx/> 15/06/2022

Instagram and TikTok effective with regard to the improvement of users' FL or L2 competence? Do they have a positive and remarkable impact on the language learning experience with regard to motivation and pleasantness?". Additionally, the functioning of the account itself was object of analysis, thus providing a view of how specific characteristics and features work. In this subchapter a brief *excursus* of the account is reported, starting from its planning to its creation on both Instagram and TikTok, on 7th March 2022, and its activity along the following three months, until 9th June 2022.

Before creating the account, other similar pages were analysed as models. Because of the reasons reported in chapter 1.3, the starting idea was to publish Reels as primary content. This thought was supported by the findings from the questionnaire about the use and efficacy of accounts to learn languages on Instagram and TikTok, as discussed in chapter 2.6. According to these results, it also appeared that a variety of contents might be an option for the account. Nonetheless, priority was given to Reels, in order to be able to publish the same content on both Instagram and TikTok, where only videos can be posted. In fact, they were first recorded with the smartphone, then both edited and published on TikTok. Afterwards the same Reel was downloaded and posted on Instagram, too. Whilst Reels were initially only edited with Italian subtitles and no other language was used in the oral explanation, after some requests from users, English subtitles were also added to the editing, while the spoken language remained Italian exclusively. In this way, users were provided with both oral and written inputs, but they were also given the opportunity to compare the two languages to help them check their understanding and to learn new words and expressions. Moreover, as a consequence of users' needs, examples given during the oral explanation started to be written in the caption, too. However, this was possible exclusively on Instagram, since TikTok allows posting short captions only. As it appears, Instagram included and integrated more features if compared to TikTok, for this reason analytics from @*italianocongloria* on Instagram are here largely illustrated. With regard to TikTok, the account analysis would also be incomplete due to the fact that only at the beginning of June the account was switched to Business modality which allows the creator to access full analytics.

Additionally, another aspect was taken into consideration, namely the importance of creating a sense of community within educational context and therefore within one's account. According to Lomicka and Blattner (2012) online environments enhance the creation of a stronger feeling of community belonging, which ultimately supports the learners in their learning process and efforts. To this purpose interaction with users

appeared to be crucial. Therefore, altogether with Reels, functionalities of Instagram Stories were also chosen as content to be used, in particular polls and multiple-choice questions. While Reels were published from Monday to Saturday, a quiz was posted on Instagram Stories on Sunday to review topics dealt with during the past week, as shown by figure 4. Unfortunately, this option was not available on TikTok.
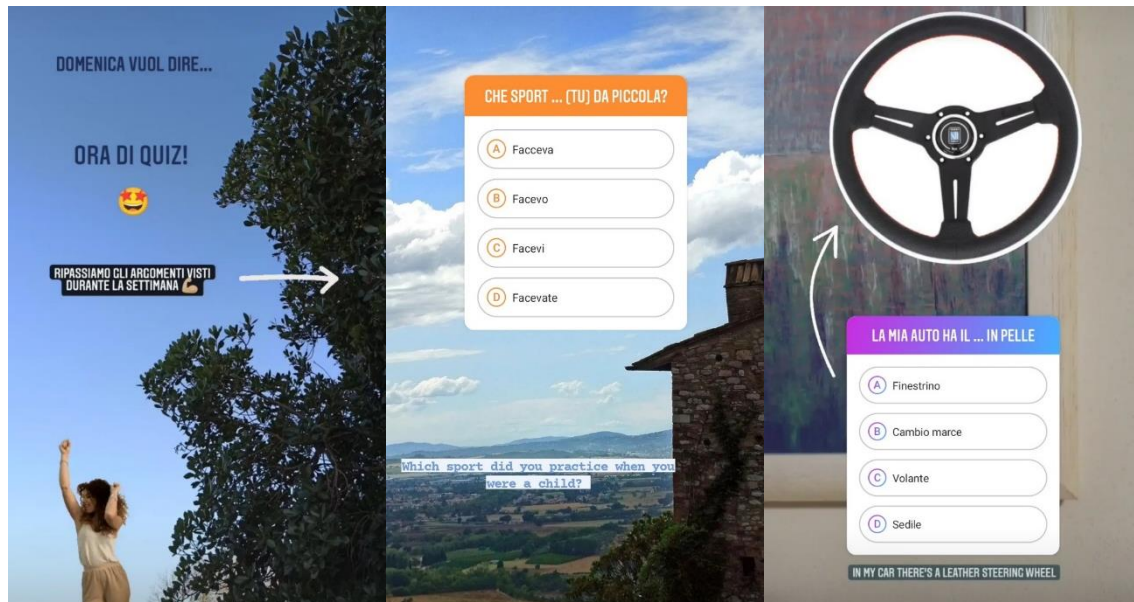

Figure 4: examples of Sunday quizzes on Instagram Stories. Source: @Italianocongloria (Instagram)

The same functionality was also used during the week with the aim of engaging users and letting them feel part of the teacher's daily life. More specifically, apart from Stories showing daily moments, other Stories with pols or vocabulary multi-choice questions were posted as displayed in figure 5. In this way users could both feel engaged and enrich their vocabulary. This type of content appears to be particularly appreciated by users who manifested their enthusiasm for quizzes many times.
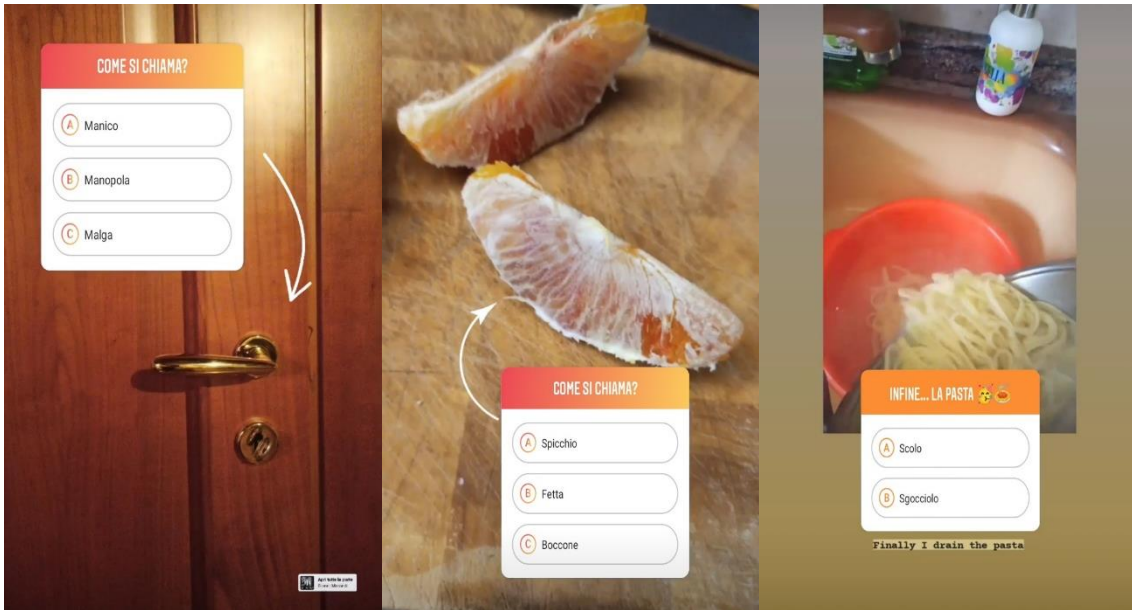
Figure 5: examples of Instagram Stories. Source: @italianocongloria (Instagram)

It is now worth giving a general insight overview of the account *@italianocongloria*. On 9th June 2022 it counted 23.2 thousand followers. As shown in figure 6, the number of followers started increasing from April and then displayed a surge in June.

| Last 90 days ∨ | | 11 Mar - 8 Jun |

23,231
Followers

+848% vs 10 Mar

Growth

● Overall	20,782
● Follows	21,324
● Unfollows	542

Figure 6: followers' growth. Source: @italianocongloria (Instagram).

According to graphs and percentages shown by figure 7, 8 and 9, it is possible to make some observations with regard to demographic data. Most followers reside in Italy (16.4%), while the second widest presence is from Argentina (13.7%), followed by Brazil (9.7%), United States (6.2%), and Mexico (6.2%). Being these percentages not particularly high, it is possible to infer that users come from a number of different countries. Although the same inference could be extended to cities, it is possible to notice that 3.2% followers come from Buenos Aires, 2% from Rome, while the following most common cities of origin are Santiago (1.9%), Lima (1.8%), and Mexico City (1.8%). In conclusion, it appears that the most numerous nationalities belong to the Spanish-speaking world. According to figure 8, instead, it is worth noticing that, although the main age range is 25-34 (24%), there is not a significant difference between that and the second one, namely 35-44 (23.5%). Moreover, it is also clear that there exists a consistency between male and female age ranges. Finally, gender is taken into consideration, and by observing figure 9 it is possible to affirm that the page experiences a balance between male (52.7%) and female (47.2%) followers.
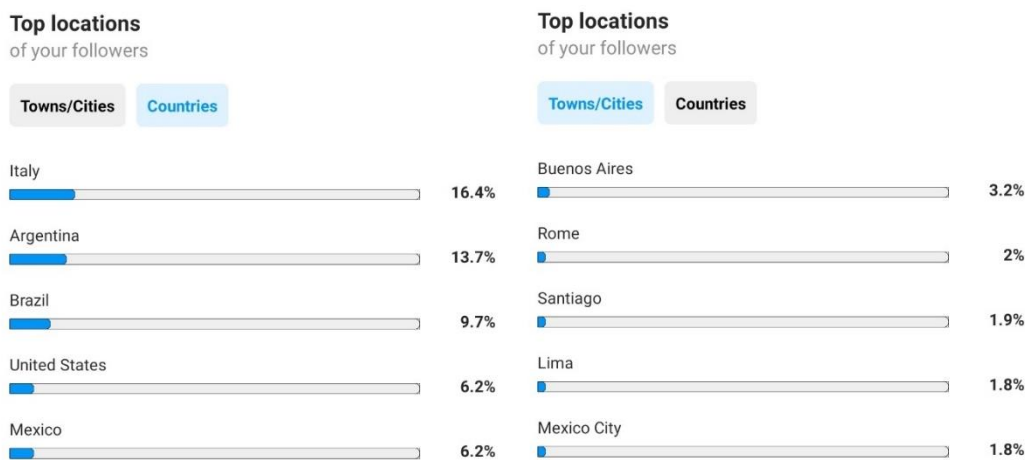

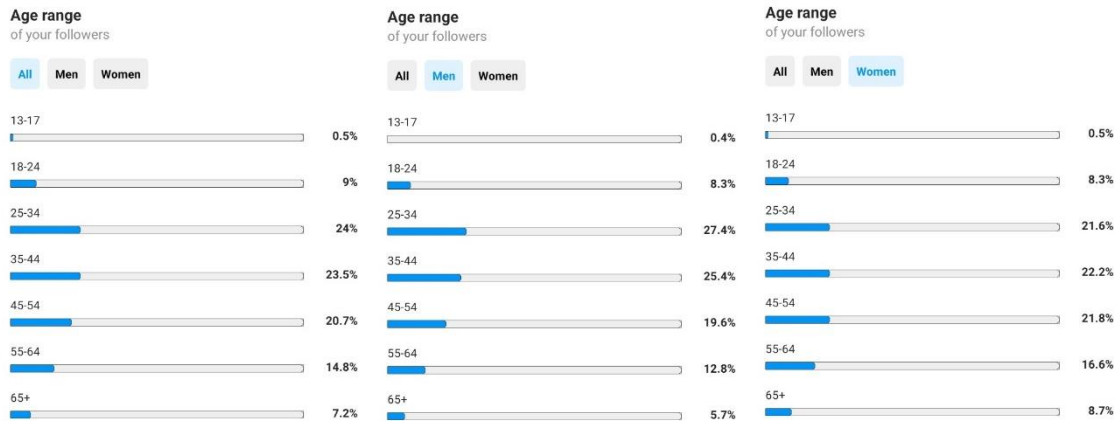*Figure 7: followers' location. Source: @italianocongloria (Instagram).*

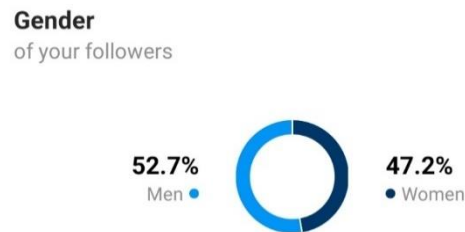*Figure 8: followers' age range. Source: @italianocongloria (Instagram).*

Figure 9: followers' gender. Source: @italianocongloria (Instagram).

3.6 The initial questionnaire

In this subchapter all the 14 items of the initial questionnaire will be introduced and explained in order to give the reader the tools to better understand their analysis and discussion in the next subchapter. Nature and typology of questions is here indicated together with their purpose according to the aims of the study.

1. What's your name?

2. What's your email address?

   The first two items are factual questions since they seek to collect sensitive data and they both are open-ended questions. The need to collect this piece of information stems from the structure of the study itself, which includes the comparison between a before and an after. As a consequence, on one hand this type of data was used to compare the results of the two questionnaires not only in a general way, but also individual by individual. On the other hand, the e-mail

address was required to be able to send official communications, which were reported in chapter 3.4. However, it is essential to mention that participants were guaranteed their sensitive data would have not been shared with third parties but for research purposes only.

3. How old are you?
   ◯ 10-14
   ◯ 15-19
   ◯ 20-25
   ◯ 26-35
   ◯ >35

Question 3 is a factual question which aims at identifying the age ranges participants belong to. This type of data is expected to be meaningful as it provides information not only about the most represented age groups, but also about the most engaged ones. However, it is important to remember that participants' selection is affected by the tools used to promote and share the study itself. For this reason, the sample could not be perfectly representative of the real population and consequently of real age ranges engaged in the phenomenon.

4. Where were you born?

Item 4 consists of another factual question expressed as an open-ended question. It seeks to identify participants' countries of origin. This type of data is expected to give the researcher the opportunity to find and interpret the trend in case a nationality appeared to be prevalent.

5. Are you currently living in Italy?
   ◯ Yes
   ◯ No

Question 5 is a multiple-choice factual question which aims at tracing a distinction between participants studying Italian as second language (L2), and those learning Italian as foreign language (FL). On a deeper level, this question also investigates

motivation, whose engines differ according to the context of learning. In fact, while L2 learning leans on motivation stemming from a concrete and often urgent need, FL does not always experience high levels of need, but rather of duty or pleasure. As a consequence, L2 and FL interest also might rely on different linguistic topics, and that is the reason why this type of information might be useful to the purposes of the account @*italianocongloria*.

6. Are you studying or working?

⭘ I'm studying

⭘ I'm working

⭘ Both

7. Are you studying Italian language at school/university or autonomously?

⭘ At school/university

⭘ Autonomously

⭘ I haven't started yet

Items 6 and 7 explore participants' current occupation and whether it has an impact on learners. These questions are multiple-choice factual questions, and their aims stem from the same principles as those of the previous items. In particular, the opposition between inner and outer motivation concerns question 7. Learners studying a language at university are in fact more likely to experience motivation from duty than learners who study a language autonomously. Nonetheless, it is important to be aware of these generalisations that only help researchers to understand and study phenomena but are not valid for each different case.

8. How long have you been studying Italian?

⭘ 0

⭘ 1 year

⭘ 2-3 years

⭘ 4-5 years

⭘ >5 years

9. Which is your linguistic level in Italian?

○ Basic (A1, A2)

○ Intermediate (B1, B2)

○ Advanced (C1, C2)

Items 8 and 9 are multiple-choice factual questions that investigate the linguistic level of Italian owned by participants altogether with the time spent studying the language. Although the link between time and level might not be directly proportional, the items mainly focus on the level itself in order to provide reasons for participants' greater interest on some topics rather than other, but also to give pivotal information about whether linguistic level might affect the choice to follow account to learn a Italian or not.

10. Why are you studying or willing to learn Italian?

Similarly to question 5, item 10, which is an open-ended attitudinal question, aims at exploring the linguistic needs of participants starting from the reasons why they are studying or will to learn Italian. It is in fact believed to be essential to find a balance between topics and contents that the administrator themselves invents and offers and what users show to be interested in. It seems important to remember that meeting learners' needs and expectations appears to be as crucial as providing them with new and unexpected topics in order to boost their motivation.

11. Rate these aspects with regard to your experience in Italian language learning (1=very low, 5=very high).

○ Difficulty

○ Motivation

○ Pleasantness

○ Quickness of progresses

Question 11 is a Likert Scale question, in which participants are asked to rate their experience in learning Italian focusing on specific aspects, namely difficulty, motivation, pleasantness, and quickness of progress. These elements were chosen

because of their impact on language acquisition process, which is believed to highly affect a learner's linguistic experience. Moreover, this question is particularly relevant as it constitutes the main element of comparison between the initial and final questionnaire.

12. Are you already following Instagram or TikTok accounts to learn Italian, other than *@italianocongloria*?

⭕ Yes

⭕ No

Item 12 is a multiple-choice factual question. On one hand it seeks to identify whether participants already follow Instagram or TikTok accounts to learn Italian or not, and on the other it aims at defining whether this might affect their answers to question 11 or not.

13. Are you going to follow *@italianocongloria* on Instagram or TikTok?

⭕ Instagram

⭕ TikTok

⭕ Both

14. What's the username you're going to follow *@italianocongloria* with?

Questions 13 and 14 are factual questions that aim at acquiring data to check on participants' constancy in the project more easily. Whilst the first item is a multiple-choice question, the second one is an open-ended question since it requires respondents to fill in with sensitive information which differs from one another. As for items 1 and 2, participants were guaranteed that data collected from question 14 would only be used for research purposes and would not be shared with third parties.

3.7 Data analysis and discussion

In this subchapter data collected from the initial questionnaire are presented, discussed, and interpreted. Hard data resulting from close-ended questions are summarised by

graphs, charts, and percentages, which allows the reader to have a general view of the trend more easily. On the other hand, soft data derived from open-ended questions are first clustered into thematic groups after identifying main ideas, then they are interpreted in order to find a meaning within the general trend.

1. What's your name?
2. What's your e-mail address?

As previously explained in chapter 3.7, questions 1 and 2 are not analysed and discussed since they required the collection of sensitive data and were only aimed at being able to later compare the two questionnaires.

3. How old are you?
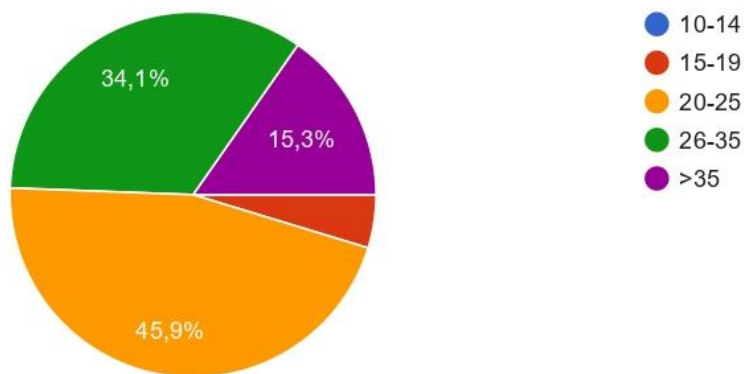
The pie chart shows the distribution of age groups within the sample. It is possible to notice that the largest group involves people aged 20-25 (45.9%), almost reaching half of the whole population. The second most present age range is 26-35 (34,1%). The third group is over 35 (15.3%), while participants aged 15-19 are the least represented (15.3%). It is possible to notice that one age range, namely people aged 10-14, are not present at all. Once again, results show a correspondence and consistency between most represented ages within the sample and average age of SNSs users. Results are also consistent with channels used to share the questionnaire, which often involved Erasmus groups on Facebooks. This might constitute a weakness of the questionnaire, since sample selection was not completely random, but on the other hand it was the most random sampling that could be performed with the available tools.

4. Where were you born?

Although this question was an open-ended question in order to include all the possible countries of origin of participants, its results were summarised in the following tables.

Country	Frequency	Country	Frequency
France	5	Croatia	1
India	5	Ecuador	1
Mexico	5	Guatemala	1
Colombia	4	Iran	1
United States	4	Kazakhstan	1
Algeria	3	Kuwait	1
Peru	3	Lebanon	1
Poland	3	Libya	1
Spain	3	Malaysia	1
Tunisia	3	Malawi	1
Turkey	3	Moldova	1
Australia	2	Morocco	1
Brazil	2	Netherlands	1
Czech Republic	2	New Zeland	1
Egypt	2	North Macedonia	1
Germany	2	Pakistan	1
Greece	2	Portugal	1
Saudi Arabia	2	Romania	1
Albania	1	Russia	1
Argentina	1	Serbia	1
Belgium	1	Sweden	1
Canada	1	Uruguay	1
China	1	Venezuela	1

The table displays all the countries of origin of participants to the questionnaire. As already mentioned, respondents were 83 and they stated to come from 46

different countries. The highest frequency reached is that of 5 respondents coming from the same country, which are only three: France, India, and Mexico. More than half countries, more specifically 28 of them, only recur once. What is possible to infer is that, although sampling was affected by channels used to reach participants, its composition is very heterogeneous.

5. Are you currently living in Italy?
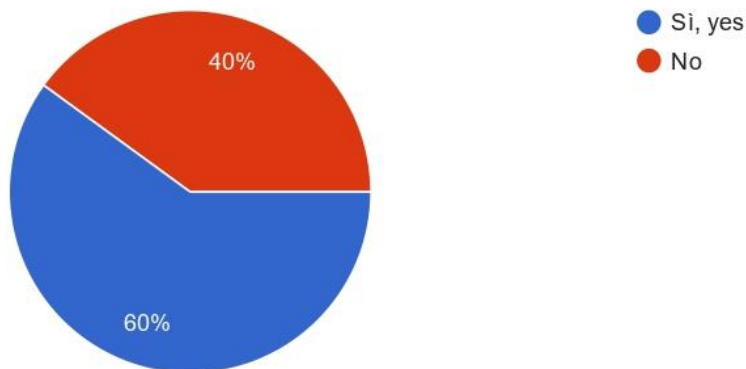
The pie chart shows that more than half participants live in Italy (60%), while 40% live in another country. Although being able to identify a majority trend in this question, it is not enough preponderant to be significant to content selection for the account @*italianocongloria*. More specifically, it is not sufficient to address only one between L2 or FL and their related topic needs.

6. Are you working or studying?
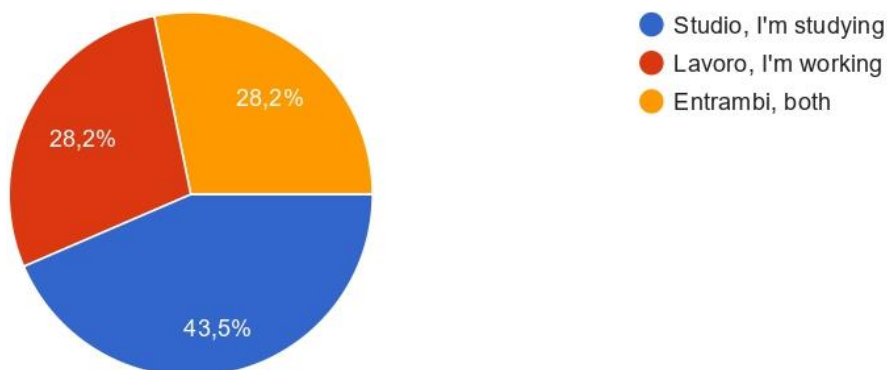
7. Are you studying Italian language at school/university or autonomously?
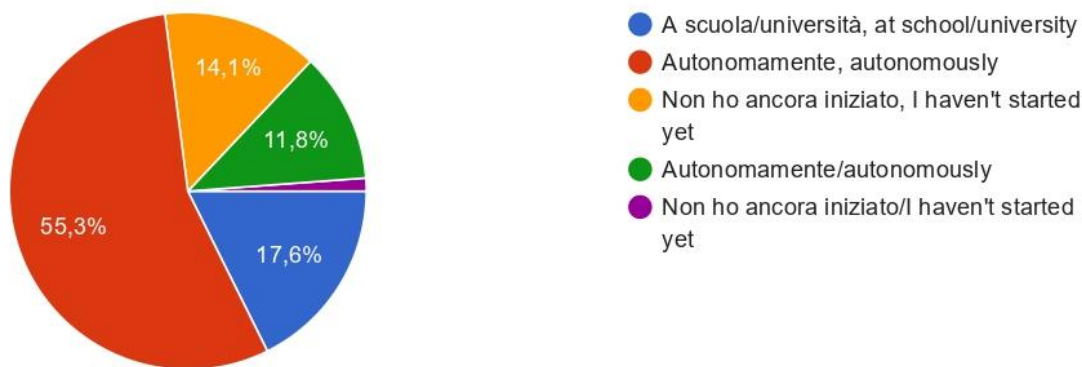
Pie charts in questions 6 and 7 show that almost half respondents are studying (43.5%), while 28.2% are working, and 28.2% are both working and studying. These results appear to be consistent with data analysed in item 3, namely age ranges. With regard to question 7, only 17.6% participants declared to study Italian at school or university, whilst the majority affirmed to be studying the language autonomously (67.1%). A remarkable number of respondents, corresponding to 25.9% of the whole population, stated not to have started to study Italian yet, instead.

8. How long have you been studying Italian?
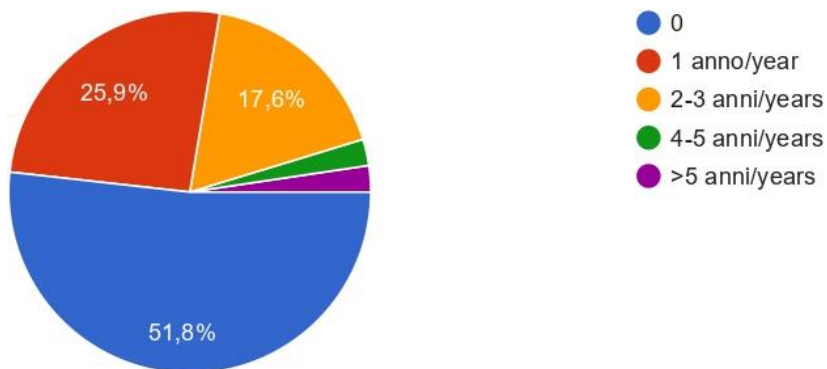
9. Which is your linguistic level in Italian?
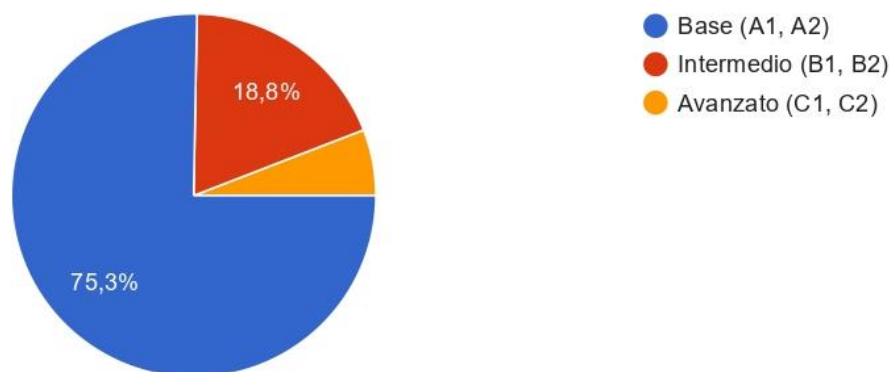
Data collected from questions 8 and 9 show that more than half participants have just started or have not started studying Italian yet (51.8%). 25.9% respondents have been studying Italian for a year, and 17.6% for 2 to 3 years. Only a small portion of participants have been studying Italian for more than 4 years (4.7%). As a consequence, most of the population (75.3%) declared to possess a basic linguistic level, which is consistent with both findings from item 8 and 7, where more than one fourth of respondents indicated not to have started studying Italian yet. 18.8% participants affirmed to have an intermediate level, instead, whilst less than 10% informed to have an advanced level. In this case it is possible to notice a variation in trend if results are compared to those collected and analysed in chapter 2. In the latter, in fact, all linguistic levels were almost equally represented, while in this case there is a strong predominance of basic level learners. Consequently, topics dealt with in the page also tried to meet learners' needs proportionally to their levels.

10. Why are you studying or willing to learn Italian?

Data collected from this open-ended question were gathered into five main groups based on similarity between ideas. These reasons are here reported and explained, following the order from the most to the least popular.

- 43% of respondents provided reasons related to their staying in Italy. Some explained they are living in the country and need to learn the language to be able to communicate and be integrated in society and community. Some others also said they want to improve their Italian in order to obtain citizenship.

- 22% of participants affirmed that the main reasons why they study or want to learn Italian is because they find it interesting, love the language and the culture.
- 14% of respondents declared they need to learn Italian because of job-related reasons. They claimed speaking Italian better could be highly helpful to them in order to either find a job or improve their working position.
- 9% of participants indicated study-related reasons that pushed them to study Italian. More specifically, they said that knowing Italian could help them to be included in study programs in Italy, but also in their home countries.
- 7% of respondents affirmed that they wish to travel to Italy and visit the country. Being able to speak Italian would be therefore useful for this purpose.
- 5% of participants said to have Italian origins or an Italian partner. They thus declared that studying Italian would help them build that bound and reconnect with their origins.

11. Rate these aspects with regard to your experience in Italian language learning (1=very low, 5=very high).
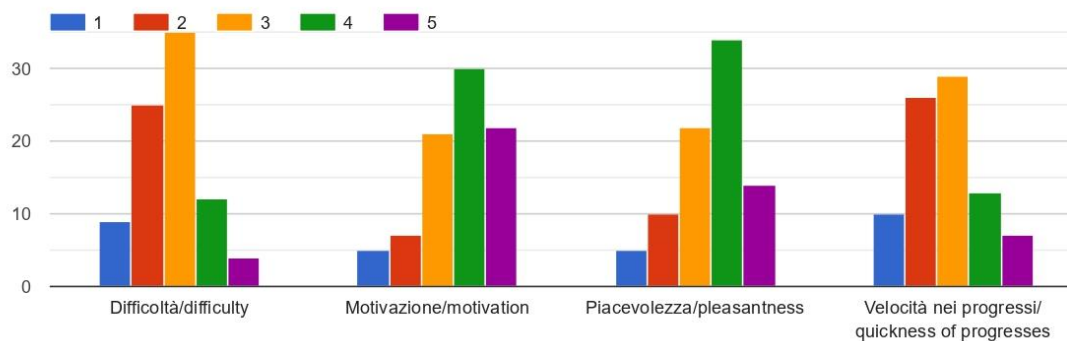
According to the bar charts, it is possible to discuss single aspects that were taken into analysis. With regard to difficulty in learning Italian, the highest number of respondents indicated to experience a medium difficulty, which was followed by low and very low difficulty. On the contrary, few people claimed to feel high or very high difficulty in language learning. Moving to motivation, it is possible to observe that the graph is highly asymmetric towards the right side, meaning that the majority of respondents experience medium, high or very high motivation to learn Italian, whilst very few of them stated to feel low or very low motivation.

According to the third graph, most people feel high levels of pleasantness towards Italian study, followed then by those feeling neutral to this regard. The smallest number of participants declared to experience low or very low pleasantness, instead. Finally, the fourth graph appears to be asymmetric to the left, meaning that most people said not to be able to see quick results in their learning.

12. Are you already following Instagram or TikTok accounts to learn Italian, other than *@italianocongloria*?
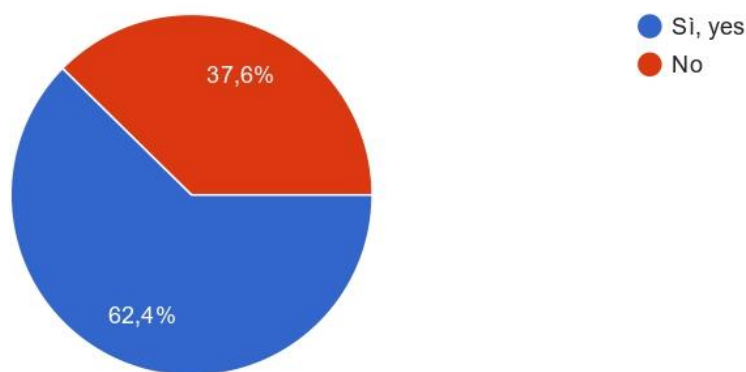
This pie chart shows that more than half respondents, more specifically 62.4% of them, are already following other accounts to learn Italian on either Instagram or TikTok, while 37.6% are not following any accounts of that kind.

13. Are you going to follow *@italianocongloria* on Instagram or TikTok?
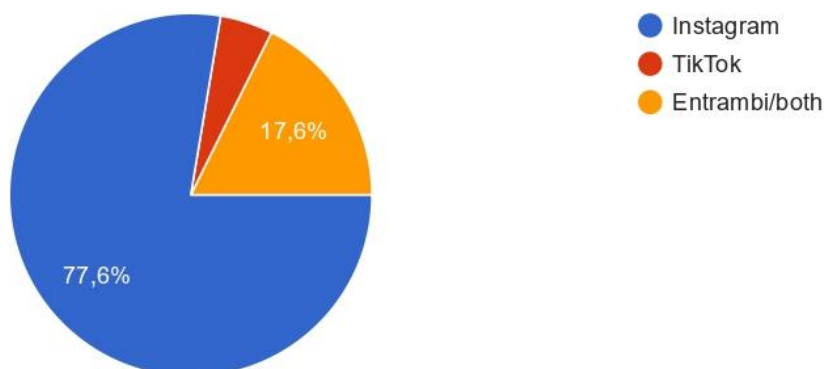
14. What's the username you're going to follow *@italianocongloria* with?

The last two item are useful to the researcher in order to monitor participation. While participants' usernames will not be shared since they are sensitive data, it is interesting to notice what the pie chart from question 13 shows. The great majority of participants (77.6%) declared to follow the account on Instagram, while 17.6% said they would follow it on TikTok. Only 4.8% affirmed to follow the profile on both SNSs, instead.

3.8 The final questionnaire

Similarly to the procedure followed in previous subchapters, here the final questionnaire is explained item by item. This questionnaire is composed of eight questions, among which four are open-ended questions and the other half close-ended multiple-choice questions. A distinction will be also made between factual and attitudinal questions.

1. What's your name?

2. What's your email address?

   These first two questions are open-ended factual questions which require participants to share sensitive information. As already explained in the initial questionnaire, this type of information is only aimed at allowing the research to compare the two questionnaires but will not be shared with third parties or for any reason other than research.

3. How regularly have you interacted with the contents?
   ◯ Everyday
   ◯ 3-4 times a week
   ◯ 2 times a week
   ◯ 1or less times a week

   Item 3 is a multiple-choice factual question which aims at defining how often and regularly participants were able to follow contents published on the account *@italianocongloria*. Although they were initially asked to commit in the project by also following contents with strict regularity, it was normal to foresee that not

every participant would have maintained the same constancy. This is in fact what normally happens when users follow an Instagram or TikTok account, and since this study aims at resembling everyday dynamics, it was important to keep this scenario into account. Moreover, this aspect is also critical as is expected to be a possible reason affecting the efficiency of such pages.

4. Rate these aspects with regard to your experience in Italian language learning (1=very low, 5=very high).
○ Difficulty
○ Motivation
○ Pleasantness
○ Quickness of progresses

Question 4 is a Likert Scale attitudinal question that aims at collecting information with regard to participants' feelings about their linguistic experience after following the account *@italianocongloria* for one month. This question is the same as question 11 in the initial questionnaire. It thus allows the researcher to compare participants' perceptions before and after following the page. In particular, they are asked to provide their opinion with regard to difficulty, motivation, and pleasantness in the linguistic process, and quickness of progress in language learning.

5. From 1 (not useful at all) to 5 (very useful), how useful was following *@italianocongloria* to improve your linguistic competence?
○ 1
○ 2
○ 3
○ 4
○ 5

Item 5 is a multiple-choice attitudinal question that asks respondents to rate how useful this experience was with regard to their linguistic competence. This item aims at collecting data to answer the research question, which says: "Are accounts

to learn foreign languages on Instagram and TikTok effective to improve FL and L2 competence? Do they have a positive and remarkable impact on the language learning experience with regard to motivation and pleasantness?". More specifically, it focuses on the first part of this question, since it investigates the impact of this account on the improvement of users' linguistic competence.

6. From 1 (not useful at all) to 5 (very useful), how useful was following *@italianocongloria* to increase your motivation to learn?
   ◯ 1
   ◯ 2
   ◯ 3
   ◯ 4
   ◯ 5

   Question 6 resembles the structure of the previous one since it is a multiple-choice attitudinal question aiming at evaluating users' experience with regard to their motivation. More specifically, its purpose is to investigate whether following the account *@italianocongloria* was effective to increase users' motivation to learn. it therefore seeks to find an answer to the second part of the research question.

7. Which topics or types of contents did you find more useful?

8. Leave a brief comment about this experience.

   Questions 7 and 8 are open-ended attitudinal questions that aim at providing users' with the opportunity to express their opinion and feedback more openly and widely. As previously explained, in fact, given the nature of the investigated field, it is essential to consider not only numbers, but also people as a whole, which also includes their ideas and feelings. These aspects also affect learning and might positively address content designing, for this reason they were believed to be critical to be considered.
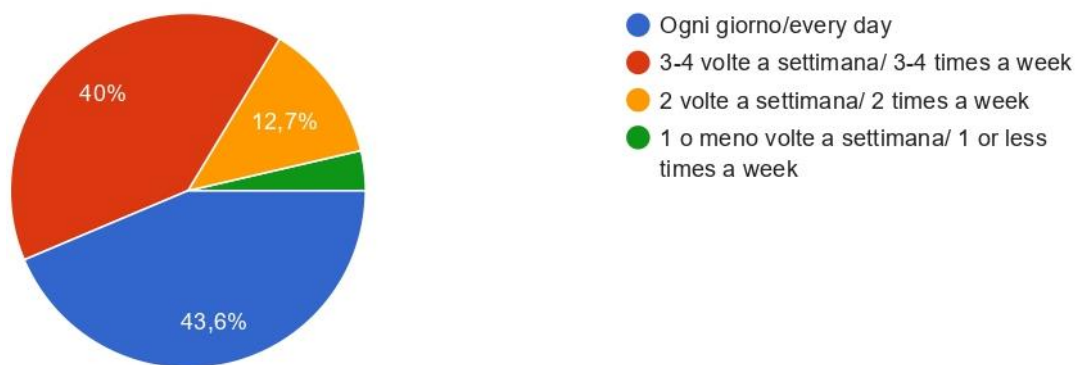
3.9 Data analysis and discussion

In this subchapter results from the final questionnaire will be presented, analysed, and interpreted. Similarly to previous analysis, a distinction in procedure is made between close-ended and open-ended questions, since different types of data result from these types of questions. More specifically, hard data obtained from close-ended questions are summarised and presented through graphs, numbers and percentages, while soft data resulting from open-ended questions are clustered according to main ideas and themes emerging from all the answers and then analysed and interpreted in order to find common trends.

1. What's your name?
2. What's your e-mail address?

   These first two items are dealt with as in the previous questionnaire. Since they require respondents to provide sensitive information, it is not here shared nor analysed. The only purpose of these questions is in fact that of being able to compare the two questionnaires.

3. How regularly have you interacted with the contents?

Ogni giorno/every day
3-4 volte a settimana/ 3-4 times a week
2 volte a settimana/ 2 times a week
1 o meno volte a settimana/ 1 or less times a week

   This pie chart shows that almost half participants (43.6%) declared that they followed contents published on *@italianocongloria* either on Instagram or TikTok on a daily basis. A similar result (40%) was reached by people indicating that they followed the page from 3 to 4 times a week, while only 12.7% participants affirmed that they interacted with contents a few times a week.

Finally, a small percentage of respondents (3.7%) stated to follow the page only once a week or less. Although the great majority of respondents declared to maintain a sufficient regularity in interacting with the contents, it is also worth remembering that only 56 participants filled in the final questionnaire out of 83 who completed the initial questionnaire. The high rate of regularity might be due to the fact that only participants who were truly interested completed the task. On the other hand, it is important to say that, although such a decrease in participants is not desirable, it reflects real dynamics occurring in the SNSs field.

4. Rate these aspects with regard to your experience in Italian language learning (1=very low, 5=very high).
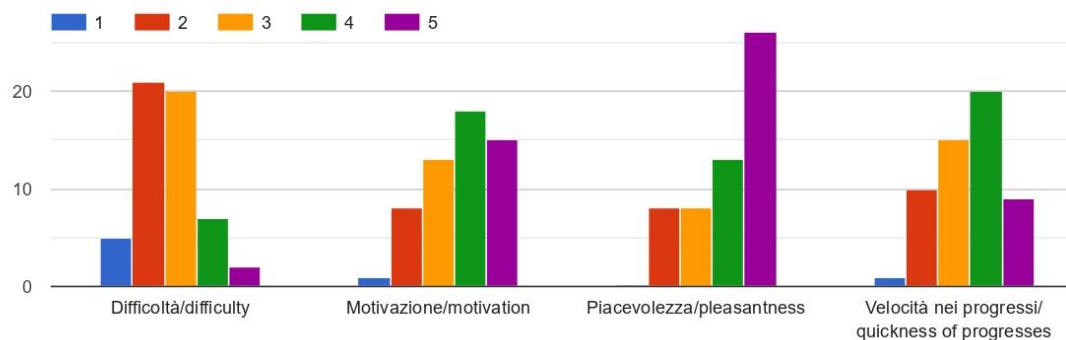
This bar chart shows rates of difficulty, motivation, pleasantness, and quickness of progress in Italian language learning after following @*italianocongloria*. It appears that the bar chart concerning difficulty is asymmetric to the left, meaning that most respondents affirm to find low or medium difficulty in learning. Comparing these results to those from the same question, namely question 11, in the initial questionnaire, in proportion it is possible to notice a slight increase of people affirming to experience low difficulty, while in general other values decreased. Moving to motivation, the chart appears to be asymmetric to the right. This means that the majority of respondents declared to feel high or very high motivation, while less than 10 people affirmed to experience low motivation, and only few of them very low motivation. Compared to the previous questionnaire, respondents claiming to experience very high or low motivation increased, while a decrease was shown by those saying to perceive high or very low motivation. In general, it is possible to state that a slight but not very remarkable increase in motivation was experienced by participants. With regard

to pleasantness, a surge is to be noticed in the "very high" value of the final questionnaire. This means that more than half respondents experienced very high pleasantness in learning, while "very low" did not receive any vote. Finally, according to the chart, more people perceived high and very high quickness in their learning, while low values remarkably decreased. It is therefore possible to state that following the account results useful and efficient with regard to all four factors and particularly for pleasantness and quickness of progress.

5. From 1 (not useful at all) to 5 (very useful), how useful was it to follow *@italianocongloria* to improve your linguistic competence?
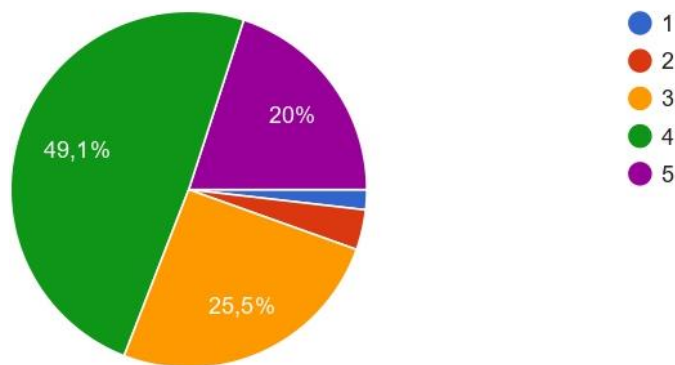
The pie chart displays rates of improvement perceived in users' linguistic competence after following *@italianocongloria* for one month. Almost half respondents (49.1%) affirmed that they found the page useful to improve their competence, and one fifth stated it was very useful. 25.5% participants claimed that following the account was neither useful or useless, while only 5.4% agreed that they did not perceive any remarkable improvement in their linguistic competence. In general it is therefore possible to affirm that the great majority of users (69.1%) experienced an improvement in their linguistic competence due to the efficiency of the account, while only a small percentage declared it was not useful at all.

6. From 1 (not useful at all) to 5 (very useful), how useful was it to follow *@italianocongloria* to increase your motivation to learn?
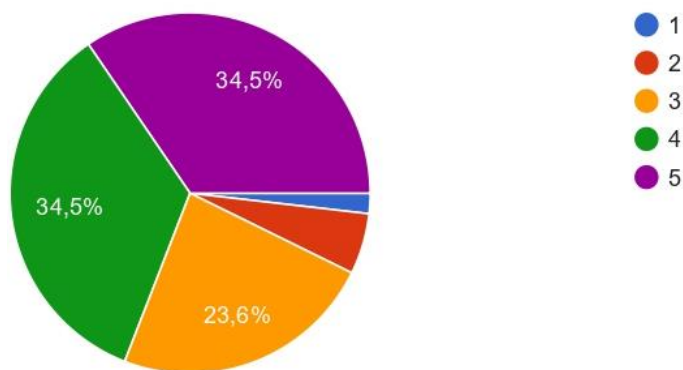
The pie chart shows rates of increase in motivation based on users' perception and experience. The highest rate (34.5%) is reached by both "very useful" and "useful" values, while 23.6% claimed not to have seen great differences with regard to their motivation to learn. only 7.4% respondents stated not to have experienced any increase in motivation, thus affirming that the account did not result useful to this purpose. Concluding, it is possible to state that most participants (69%) did find the account efficient to increase motivation to learn Italian.

7. Which topics or types of contents did you find more useful?

Topics and contents that were found more interesting and useful are here listed from the most to the least recurrent:
- everyday expressions and vocabulary;
- quizzes on Instagram Stories were indicated to be useful to discover and learn new words;
- verbs and conjugation;
- grammar notions.

From this brief list it appears that topics related to daily life and more easily expendable in everyday communication were preferred over grammar. The reason for this preference might be that SNSs provide notions and tips that are hard to be found in books, as some respondents declared.

8. Leave a brief comment about this experience.

From answers to this question, the main ideas that emerged showed that interacting with this type of content was altogether pleasant and useful to review already known topics as well as to deepen some aspects. Particularly appreciated was the opportunity to have an open window on Italian daily life, but also to broaden one's vocabulary. In general, it was said to be a helpful and interesting experience.

3.10   Conclusions

These two questionnaires were designed to evaluate the efficiency of the account to learn Italian created on Instagram and TikTok for the purposes of this thesis, namely *@italianocongloria*. More specifically, they aimed at answering the research question, which asked: "Are accounts to learn foreign languages on Instagram and TikTok effective with regard to the improvement of users' FL or L2 competence? Do they have a positive and remarkable impact on the language learning experience with regard to motivation and pleasantness?". Findings are here summarised.

Most participants affirmed that interacting with the account *@italianocongloria* appeared to be helpful to improve their linguistic competence and they were also able to see results and improvements more quickly. On the other hand, more than one fourth of participants did not perceive remarkable improvements in their competence. For this reason, it is possible to infer that this type of accounts might be useful to support and boost learning, but lack of practice prevents complete acquisition to occur, as claimed in the discussion of the first questionnaire.

With regard to the second part of the research question, positive feedbacks highlighted that interacting with accounts to learn languages on Instagram and TikTok is useful to increase one's motivation to learn and pleasantness in learning, which boost motivation in its turn. Although results showed high percentages of participants who experienced this improvement, they were not the totality of respondents. This might be related to the reasons outlined in the first questionnaire, for instance lack of practice and users' inconstancy in following and interacting with contents.

To conclude, the questionnaires and the comparison between the two highlighted an overall positive impact of the account *@italianocongloria* on users' linguistic experience. Although it cannot substitute other traditional learning methods and

environments, it appears to be an effective tool to sustain and enhance language learning. This successful effect seems to be related to the ability of SNSs to boost learners' motivation by providing them with new, various, and pleasant contents. Moreover, these platforms allow language learners to connect with native speakers, which on one hand enhances improvement of pronunciation, and on the other hand lets them access real life and cultural elements more easily. To conclude, it seems relevant to highlight a remarkable aspect that was raised by respondents to the first questionnaire, namely the role that accounts to learn foreign languages can have on the learning of one's language of origin. This topic appears to be of great interest to nowadays' society characterised by emigrations and need of integration, for this reason it might be worth investigating in further research.

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