Evaluation of second language proficiency in a formal setting: research in the context of the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIAs)

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Abstract

Evaluation is a crucial issue in both learning and teaching processes, as it allows students to monitor their learning process and, at the same time, it means teachers can obtain information about the efficacy of their methods and tools. It has particularly important significance for adults in SL contexts, as the linguistic and communicative proficiency of the learner is fundamental in enabling further integration in the host society. For this reason, due to the increasing number of people migrating to Italy, many courses of Italian as a second language for adult immigrants have arisen. These language courses usually provide qualifications that might also have political consequences, such as the legal validity for acquiring a residence permit.

The research project of this dissertation examines the evaluation procedures and techniques adopted in the Provincial Centre for Adult Education (CPIA) in San Bonifacio, near the city of Verona. The aim of this dissertation is to explore how evaluation is conducted in practice and whether communication and sharing are effective in making the evaluation experience successful, and to investigate how judgments and error correction are perceived by students.
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V
Introduction

Italian is one of the most studied languages in the world, thanks to the prestige Italy has in terms of culture, architecture, and art, along with its economic importance. At the same time, Italian has become the second language of those millions of foreign nationals who have arrived in Italy in order to improve their living conditions or to escape from problematic political situations in their native country, as well as for those who have decided to move temporarily to Italy for work or study experiences. In order to cope with all these new residents who feel the need to learn the language which will allow them not only to manage their life in the host country but also, firstly, to acquire residence and work permits, and at a later stage to acquire elements concerning the Italian culture, a number of courses of Italian as a second language have arisen. Our research specifically focuses on the courses aimed at adult people learning Italian as a second language offered by the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIAs) instituted by the Italian Government.

This dissertation work originates from the researcher’s personal interest in immigration and social integration, combined with her passion for second language studies. It aims at exploring the formative opportunities offered to adult immigrants by CPIAs, and specifically analyses how evaluation is conducted within these language courses. Evaluation is indeed an important issue that education professionals are inevitably involved in, and nevertheless it still remains one of those issues which cause teachers many difficulties both in procedural and ethical terms. Not only is evaluation important for teachers, but it is essential for leaners as well. As it is also insisted upon by the European directives, students should be helped in managing to monitor their own learning and motivations in order to become autonomous learners and users, particularly when they are learning the language in their adulthood. This is particularly evident in second language contexts, where students mainly use the language outside the school environment and should be made aware of how they are actually performing.

The first part of this work is a literary review on second language learning - specifically on the part of adult learners - and on the evaluation process. Chapter 1, starting from the main and most recent theories and observations about second language learning and teaching, will describe what a second language is, how it is acquired by students, and what the affecting factors on learning are, and will focus
on the peculiarities of the adult learner. The andragogical model theorised by Knowles will be explained and integrated with further studies on the topic. Evaluation process is the focus of chapter 2, where the different kinds of assessment and testing procedures will be defined and analysed, also taking their limitations into consideration. This chapter also focuses on the error correction procedures, and it will end by providing several considerations about evaluation in the specific context of adult education.

The second part of this dissertation focuses on our own research project, which was conducted in the CPIA in San Bonifacio, near the city of Verona. Our work will be introduced in chapter 3, where the Italian context in terms of immigration and SL education is described, and in chapter 4, where the purposes of our research and the methodology adopted will be illustrated. Chapter 5 will focus on the analysis of the data collected and on their discussion and interpretation: results which have emerged during the study will be illustrated and summed up, and some observations for further research will be suggested.
1. Teaching a second language to adult people: literary review

Nowadays, due to the extent of international mobility, both in terms of individuals who move abroad temporarily to study or work there, and of immigrants who go to live in a foreign nation to improve their lifestyle, the demand for second language courses for adults has been increasing. This first chapter is an overview on the topic of second language and on adult teaching. Firstly, the differences between second languages and foreign languages are compared, then follows a description of the main theories and approaches dealing with the teaching and learning of a second language, and with adult learners in particular.

1.1 The second language, and its teaching-related aspects

The term second language (SL) refers to any language which is learnt after the age of three, apart from the mother tongue, regardless of the reasons why it is added to the preceding knowledge of the first language or of other second languages (Daloiso, 2015). A second language is characterized by the fact that it is spoken in the environment where it is learnt/taught, so that its formal teaching is interrelated with the student’s extracurricular life, where he/she is exposed to the living language (Pallotti, 1998; Balboni, 1994). Most of the input comes directly from the outside world and it is brought to school by students themselves. In order to describe this double exposure to the language, Luise (2006) uses the term “integrated input”.

The second language must be distinguished from the foreign language (FL) and the ethnic language (EL). A foreign language is a language which is learnt in an area where it is not generally spoken outside school. An ethnic language is the native language of the community to which the speaker belongs and which is present in the environment of the speaker, despite not being his/her mother tongue, as for example, the language that children born and educated in Italy of immigrant parents speak at home (Serragiotto, 2009).

Teaching a language to native speakers is different from teaching it to foreign students, as the teaching of a first language is aimed at a rational reflection upon linguistic elements which have already been acquired by the learner, whereas when you teach a SL or a FL, the target language is not known. Moreover, the
class-group when teaching a L1 is normally homogenous and shares not only the same skills, but also the same concept of knowledge and of the school system, whereas when teaching a SL, this is not always so (Balboni, 1994).

Teaching a foreign language is also different from teaching a second language, because the linguistic needs are different, and, as stated above, the second language is acquired both at school and in the outside world, while the foreign language is learnt only at school. Luise (2006) summarises the main differences between SL and FL teaching, by observing that:

- A second language is acquired not only as a means to communicate, but as a means of cognitive development, for non-linguistic learning as well.
- Motivation when learning a FL must be continuously constructed and continuously stimulated, while in the case of a SL it is immediate and based on functional needs. Nevertheless, it would be better to accompany this functional motivation with deeper and integrative motivation, based on the desire to integration into the community.
- FL classes are normally homogenous in terms of initial linguistic levels; on the contrary the SL group is heterogeneous and thus a more flexible planning and diversification of both the teaching operation and materials are required.
- The FL teacher normally controls the whole input and chooses the type and the amount of language which must be provided. In SL contexts, the teacher cannot control all linguistic input.
- From a pragmatic point of view, FL activities are often non-authentic, while SL activities require the learner to fulfil real tasks in order to integrate efficiently into the new environment.
- When learning a FL, the teacher mediates cultural references which are linked to the language, and there is no direct contact with the foreign culture. In the case of a SL, students come in contact with cultural aspects directly, without any mediation process. The teacher should help his/her students to decode them.

Caon (Santiplo, 2006) notices how the different way of monitoring the input (completely monitored in FL and integrated input in SL) affects the learning rates: in FL contexts the learning rate is regular and gradual, even if there are some personal variables; in SL contexts the rate varies a lot depending on many factors,
such as the amount and frequency of interactional and communicative exchanges the learner experiences, and the chance of using learning resources outside school.

1.2 How people learn a second language: Second Language Acquisition

In the Eighties and Nineties, the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) came into being in order to deal with the process governing language acquisition in second language contexts. SLA is a branch of Applied Linguistics, which deals with the description of spontaneous language acquisition. It considers the natural, spontaneous context to be the ideal context in which to learn a language, differently from the field of language teaching, which is interested in formal learning, in schools. Nevertheless, there are some points of contact between SLA and language teaching theories, as the two situations involve some similar acquisition principles, and the former provide some procedural indications to the latter.

SLA focuses on the universal variables in the development of proficiency, present in all subjects learning a second language, regardless of their mother tongue, age, or prior knowledge in other languages. These common characteristics are the basis upon which acquisition sequences are formulated, that is the succession of different moments of reorganization of interlanguage towards the target language. By *interlanguage* we mean that emerging linguistic system that the learner, who is yet not fully proficient, develops as he/she approximates to the target language, by making hypotheses and inferences from the linguistic input he/she comes into contact with while interacting with native speakers. This emerging system preserves some features of the L1 and some of the SL and can thus be defined as a *continuum* of linguistic (imperfect) varieties which are placed between the L1 and the SL. It is characterised by systematicity, time instability, and individual variability (Luise, 2006). In order to account for the sequences of interlinguistic development, the “Processability Theory” was formulated by Manfred Pienemann (Caon, 2010). According to this theory, linguistic structures and categories are distributed along an implicational hierarchy of growing complexity in accordance with the cognitive procedures their processing requires: by implicational we mean that higher-level processing procedures cannot function unless lower-level ones are acquired. In order to acquire linguistic input learners develop personal strategies of growing complexity (Lo Duca, 2003).
SLA studies have led to the conclusion that formal teaching cannot change the sequences according to which linguistic rules are learnt. According to the “Teachability Hypothesis”, which is part of the Processability Theory, it is not possible to teach what cannot be learned, what the learner is not able to process yet, as the stages of SLA cannot be skipped by teaching intervention.

Nevertheless, formal teaching is of great importance as it can favour the overall linguistic and communicative competence and develop the procedures of natural acquisition. The function of the school is, above all, that of organising the linguistic input so that the student will be facilitated in the perception, comprehension and grammatical analysis of what he/she is to come into contact with (Daloiso, 2015). School teaching accelerates the acquisition of standard linguistic elements (Luise, 2006) and, through interaction, which allows negotiation of meaning, the learner is helped to identify the gap between what he/she meant to say and what still prevents him from saying it because it is not yet known (Caon, 2010). Furthermore, formal teaching allows those social and psychological factors which can negatively interfere with the learning to be kept under control. If there is a correlation between social distance, psychological distance, native group cohesiveness and the group’s attitudes towards the SL, and the learner’s fossilization (as argued by Schumann in his Acculturation Theory), the school plays an important role in terms of encouraging the learner’s socialization and acculturation (Luise, 2006).

It must be added that, apart from the universal variables studied by SLA, the learning of a second language is affected by factors related to the environment, the learner, and the language itself. These aspects will be dealt with in section 1.5.

1.3 The Affective-Humanistic Approach to language teaching

The label “Affective-Humanistic Approach” (or “Person-Centred approach”) refers to that underlying philosophy which is common to all those teaching methods which have been developing since the Seventies and have been focusing on the centrality of the learner, not only from a cognitive perspective (the learning mind), but also from the emotional, physical, and psychological perspectives (affective dynamics, motivations, and personal needs). Attention, thus, is no longer focused on the object of teaching (that is language), but rather on the subject (that is the learner), on his/her process of self-realisation within a community, and on the teacher-student and student-student relationship (Luise,
2006). Besides knowing which languages the learner can understand, speak, read and write, it is important to know which culture has shaped his/her personality. This allows for a better understanding of the way in which he/she used to process information before arriving in Italy, and what his/her habits, and relational styles in class still are, so that the teacher can design a specific language course (Della Puppa, Vettorel, 2005).

Particular attention is given to all those factors which can negatively affect the learning ability, such as anxiety and competitiveness. Indeed, these negative factors can cause the affective filter - a psychological system of defence triggered by fear or anxiety - to arise and inhibit the learner’s ability to acquire new knowledge (Luise, 2006; Begotti, 2010).

A further aspect considered by affective-humanistic teaching is neurolinguistics. These methods proceed by following the natural course, that is activating both brain modalities in order to exploit the individual’s potential and to respect the natural sequence of the acquisition process: from an initial holistic stage, where the input is globally observed (a process which activates the left cerebral hemisphere), an analytical stage follows, where the input is studied in depth and manipulated (this activates the left cerebral hemisphere); the third stage (where both hemispheres are involved) is that of synthesis where received input enters the system and is ultimately acquired.

The Affective-Humanistic Approach was thought to be suitable only for children, but this idea has recently been proven to be wrong, as it can be applied to adults as well (Begotti, 2011). Adults have lived through several personal experiences, and for this reason they show a greater awareness of their feelings, emotions, and interpersonal relations that children do, and they are more active in facing new experiences. If these aspects are not sufficiently considered, they can damage the learning process.

1.3.1 The Natural Approach

The Affective Humanistic-Approach includes several teaching methods, and one of this is the so-called “Natural Approach”, which is of particular interest in formal contexts of SL teaching. This method was developed in the Seventies by Terrell and Krashen, and is mainly based on the hypothesis on which Second Language Acquisition rests.
According to Krashen a language can be acquired by two different processes: *acquisition* which is a spontaneous, and subconscious process which leads to a stable linguistic competence by language elaboration becoming automatic (typical of children acquiring their mother tongue); and *learning*, which is a rational and conscious process, which will probably disappear with the passing of the time, and functions as a monitor of linguistic output. According to Krashen, school teaching only provides “learning”, while “acquisition” can only occur in natural contexts.

Taking up the hypothesis developed by SLA (that is that language acquisition occurs according to a natural and implicational order), the Natural Approach assumes that students can only acquire that input which is comprehensible. This means that exposition to input must follow the natural acquisition order “i+1”, where *i* is the input that has already been acquired, and +*i* is the immediately higher knowledge that can be acquired.

Furthermore, acquisition also depends on psychological factors like anxiety and distress, as the affective filter, which is triggered by negative feelings, can block the language learning.

All this assumptions imply that the learner must not be forced to talk, but must be helped by providing him/her with comprehensible input. The learner must be allowed to develop his/her interlanguage by him/herself, for example through communicative activities (Luise, 2006), and by encouraging autonomy and self-correction (Minello, 2010).

1.3.2 Significant Learning

In the 70s Carl Rogers’ theories about the so-called “Significant Learning” (or “Experiential Learning”) contributed to the rise of the Affective-Humanistic Approach, and are of particular interest when dealing with adult learners. Rogers hypothesises a positive, trusting and constructive learner, who perceives his learning as a self-directed and self-promoted process. The concept he theorises focuses on the processes by which the learner intentionally allows new knowledge to interact with the knowledge which is already present in his/her cognitive structure. According to this scholar, learning starts from within the subject, and involves his/her whole personality (both intellect and feelings). This is a turning point, because, in the past, learning was traditionally considered just from the
cognitive perspective, “from the neck up” to use Rogers’ own words (Rogers, 1969).

This kind of learning is based on actions, on experience, and can be damaged if it is perceived by the subject as a threat, as causing a change in his/her self-perception. The educational situation which most effectively promotes significant learning is therefore one in which 1) threat to the self of the learner is reduced to a minimum, and 2) differentiated perception of the field of experience is facilitated. Great attention is given to self-evaluation and self-criticism, which can favour self-esteem, creativity and autonomy. As it is evaluated by the learner according to his/her personal needs, it is consequently longer lasting and more pervasive. Furthermore, Rogers claimed that the most socially useful learning in the modern world is the learning about learning, this anticipating the notion of “Lifelong Learning” (see section 1.5). Two implications of Rogers’ theory are that a teacher cannot teach students, but only facilitate their learning, and that people learn only those things which are perceived as being involved in the enhancement of the structure of the self in a significant way.

The concept of significant learning has been taken up again by Ausbel and Novak. According to the former, significant learning is a process according to which new information come into relation with concepts which have priorly set on the cognitive structure of the individual. The latter assumes that only when there is a constructive integration of thoughts, feelings, and action, not only within the student but also between him/her and the teacher, significant learning occurs (Caon, 2005)

1.4 The content of second language teaching: linguistic and communicative competence

The main aim of language teaching - whatever the language is - as defined by the most important European document about language teaching and learning, the Common European Framework of Reference for language teaching (CEFR), is the achievement of linguistic and communicative competence, which includes linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competences. This label refers to: the capacity of being able to express oneself in the language 1) correctly - from a linguistic point of view, 2) appropriately according to different situations, 3)
consistently according to the cultural values linked to that specific language, and to: the capacity of efficiently achieving the goals one has set (Luise, 2006).

Balboni (2002) – taking up the model put forwarded by Dell’Hymes - describes the communicative competence as a mental construction which is implemented in the real world as a performance within communicative events in specific social contexts. The model is described as follows:

According to the model, the mental representation is made up of three core competences:

- Linguistic competence, that is the capacity to produce and understand utterances in a proper way, from a phonological, morphological, syntactical, lexical and textual point of view.
- Extra-linguistic competence, which includes kinesics (related to body language, such as facial expressions, and gestures); proxemics (related to the spatial distance between individuals), objectemics and vestemics (related to the communicative values of objects and clothes).
- Socio-cultural competence, which includes three sub-competences: sociolinguistic competence (the functional competence dealing with the different registers which are consistent with the communicative functions and communicative genres under consideration); pragma-linguistic competence (which governs the force of utterances according to the purpose of the communication); (inter)cultural competence (related to all those cultural elements and values affecting communication. See section 1.4.2).
These three mental competences can be defined as “knowing the language”. This mental reality is actually realised through communicative acts when mental competences are used to understand, produce, and manipulate texts (this is what is meant by mastering linguistic skills, and can be described as “knowing how to work language”). Oral and written texts contribute to communicative events which are governed by social, pragmatic, and cultural rules: knowing the language is then transformed into “knowing how to work with the language” (Balboni, 2010).

Along with communicative competence, metalinguistic awareness (that is the ability to reason about the language), and learning skills (that is the ability of applying and transferring knowledge and cognitive skills to any new discipline) are to be developed as well. Learning skills correspond to the so-called “learning to learn” competence and can be defined as the learner’s ability to self-direct his learning, which is very important, particularly for adults.

It must be noticed that a proper communicative competence in the second language is a precondition for the social and professional integration of the learner: a proper competence allows him/her to enter complex and non-marginal social contexts. Language learning on the part of an immigrant should be seen as the place where languages and cultures come into contact, an area where different languages-cultures live side by side (Barni, Villarini, 2001).

1.4.1 Language repertoire and language teaching

As far as Italian as a second language is concerned, one must consider the speakers’ language repertoire. By language repertoire, we mean the set of all verbal codes (languages, dialects, regional varieties, etc.) and the relationships existing between each and any of them. All language communities are characterised by more than one language variety, but this is particularly true for Italy where the national language has only established itself since quite recently. Regional varieties are far more often used than the standard variety by native speakers, and local dialects are often spoken in many contexts as well, although in the last few decades, they have lost their prestige (at least in cities), being associated now to lower classes and poorly educated people. Nevertheless, there are some exceptions, like in the Veneto, where thanks to the expansion of the economy and the success of many small and medium businesses, dialect has
regained its standing, becoming a symbol of pride and identity. The use these different varieties is governed by pragmatic and sociolinguistic rules (Santipolo, 2006).

This heterogeneity has caused some scholars to make some assertions about what kind of language is to be taught to learners of Italian as a SL. Santipolo (2006), for example, argues that as regards the spoken language, the model should be the semi-standard variety (whereas the standard variety should be the model of the written language). However, all the other varieties must also be taken into consideration according to the needs of the learners. He uses the term “didactic Italian” to refer to a variety which takes into consideration the real needs of the learners and the grammar which native speakers actually use when communicating (in terms of repertoire and sociolinguistic rules). Language teaching should therefore widen its scope and include all varieties the learner might come across in his/her extracurricular life. According to Barni and Villarini (2001), it is the teacher’s duty to choose some linguistic samples and pragmatic rules and make them comprehensible for his/her students, favouring those related to the contexts where students actually do use the language. This implies that what is more useful and more frequent should be taught before what is less useful and less frequent, and consequently sometimes it is not possible to always respect the pattern of SLA (and the i+1 order), as it is not always possible to learn what is easier (more comprehensible) before what is more difficult.

1.4.2 Intercultural communicative competence

In a second language context, intercultural competence, mentioned above as one of the constituents of the communicative competence, deserves particular attention.

By culture, we mean the way in which a natural need is met, for example the need for feeding, getting dressed, building families, living within a society. The minimal unit of culture is the cultural model, that is the answer or the solution provided by a particular people to a specific problem (for example the organisation of different meals during the day to cope with the need of feeding). Cultural models can vary a lot between one culture and another, and this can cause difficulties and damage communication irreparably. As people grow up in a certain culture, and thus within certain models, they are generally unaware of the
“grammars” governing gestures, expressions, communicative events and behaviours through which cultural models are expressed.

In complex societies, cultural models change very quickly, and for this reason intercultural competence cannot be taught. Though, it is possible to help the learner to observe the culture in which he/she is living (Balboni, 2002). An observation model has been theorized by Balboni (2002; 2007), taking up and integrating some notions put forwarded by Hoffstede. Balboni’s observation model includes: all those factors affecting communication, such as the idea of time, loyalty, family, etc. (software of the mind); all verbal and non-verbal codes, such as gestures, facial expressions, smells, tone of voice, noises, etc. (software of communication); and social and pragmatic conventions which govern the beginning, ongoing and end of communicative events (software of context). In a SL context, learners often come into contact with language-related cultural models directly, without any mediation. The teacher should help him/her to decode and interpret them so that communication with native speakers is efficient.

This implies helping the adult immigrant learner to achieve culturalisation (which is one of the goals education has), by guiding him/her, through the language, in the discovery of: cultural models a native Italian considers as vital; models that can be modified or at least be used even if not fully acquired; the way in which Italian people experience contact with immigrants; the idea Italian people have of other countries (Balboni, 1994).

1.5 Andragogy or adult teaching

Teaching a second language to adult people is different to teaching it to children. In the next paragraphs, we are going to analyse this particular kind of learners, considering the main theories and approaches of this field of research.

The label “andragogy” refers to a unitary theory which aims at defining a complete picture of the learning process on the part of adult people, as distinguished from that of children (pedagogy). The term, Andragogik, was used for the first time in 1833 by a German schoolteacher, Alexander Knapp, in order to describe the educational system as used by the Greek philosopher Plato (Knowles, 1973). Afterwards, the term was sporadically taken up again by other scholars, until the Fifties, when it began to be used more and more frequently as well as outside Germany. Nowadays, the term “adult education” (or adult teaching) is preferred, as it emphasizes the fact that the adult individual continues
to grow, not so much physically, but rather psychologically and cognitively
(adolesco, the word the term adult comes from, in Latin means “to grow up”, “to
develop”) (Caon, 2008).

This growing process has been studied for some time and has led to the
definition of two important notions: the Life-span Theory and the Lifelong
Learning. The Life-span Theory refers to the study of learning throughout the
whole life span. This theory focuses on the development of the subject,
considering all his/her personal experiences. Human development is an ongoing
process which occurs throughout one's whole life and it depends on the interaction
among socio-cultural geographical, personal, and environmental factors; learning
is not a regular process, but it is subject to rising and falling peaks. The term
Lifelong Learning, on the other hand, refers to the continuing education of adult
people, which occurs at regular intervals throughout their whole life. It deals
particularly with the acquisition processes, with the cognitive styles and
modalities through which education takes place. The main focus is the individual,
with his/her unique characteristics. Finally, in the last few years, the notion of
Lifewide Learning has come into being, a notion which considers any aspect of
human life as a chance for learning. Differently from Lifelong Learning which
focuses on the diachronic aspects of the learning process, the Lifewide Learning
theory focuses on the synchronic aspects of it (Caon, 2008; Begotti, 2011). In this
respect, learning can be formal (in schools, or universities, for example), non-
formal (for example, in the workplace), or informal (by using videocassettes,
books, cd-roms, etc.) according to where it takes place, and the kind of
qualification it awards (Begotti, 2006).

1.5.1 The adult learner

Before describing the main contributions scholars have made about the adult
learner, and before analysing the factors affecting adult-learning, it is important to
define who the adult learner is.

As a first thing, it is important to specify what is meant by the term “adult”.
The problem of defining this term has been dealt with by several eminent
scholars, who have considered various aspects affecting this issue. According to
the American psychologist Malcom Knowles, there are four definitions of
adulthood, which involve four different human conditions: the biological
definition regards adulthood as the age when a person can reproduce, that is, generally, early adolescence; the legal definition considers people as adults when the laws allow them to vote, get married, get a driving licence, etc.; according to the social definition people reach adulthood when they start to perform a mature role in society, like that of worker, husband or wife, citizen, etc.; finally, the psychological definition identifies being an adult with acquiring a concept of the self as being responsible for one's own life, of being self-directing. From the learning process point of view, the psychological definition is the most important, and according to Knowles, this process leading to a self-concept of an autonomous and responsible subject begins very early on and grows more and more as people mature biologically and gain experiences (Knowles, 1973).

This theory based on four aspects affecting adulthood can draw criticism, as these aspects are not universal, but can vary from culture to culture: there are cultures and societies where girls get married or take care of their younger siblings when they are still children, even if they do not have any particular social role; whereas in some Western countries young people leave the parental home later than their peers in other countries, even though they are both biologically and legally mature. This controversial issue has been sustained by the Italian scholar Duccio Demetrio: we cannot talk about one adult age, but rather of many “adult ages”, as many as are the formulations – verbal or non-verbal ones (rites, ceremonials, figurative arts, religions, etc.) - that have been found by different cultures, in order to answer their need of establishing the age of adulthood. Age, according to Demetrio, is the result of a personal construct, it is the subject him/herself who establishes the parameters of his/her psychological age in accordance with the experiences he/she gains, and with the desire to keep his/her mind active (Demetrio, 1990).

We can thus summarize the issue as follows: the notion of adulthood varies according to the culture, and even within each culture depending on the historical period under consideration; generally, in most societies, people are considered as adults in accordance with the degree of autonomy reached, and with the degree of responsibility they have within the society they live in. As far as education is concerned, an adult learner is a person who has chosen autonomously his/her educational path, has made plans, and does not need anyone or anything to motivate him/her; he/she has expectations and in many cases has invested money
in that education and therefore wants to make rational use of his/her time (Caon, 2008).

1.5.2 Pedagogical model versus andragogical model

Language learning on the part of adults is a field of research which has developed quite recently, even though in the past, education was aimed primarily at adults, and not at children.

The main exponent of the andragogical theory is the American scholar Malcom Knowles. At the beginning of his studies, he conceived his andragogical model as the antithesis of the pedagogical model: according to Knowles, the pedagogical model is characterized by the fact that the teacher has the responsibility of taking all decisions concerning what students will have to learn, when it will be learnt and in which way; on the contrary, adults feel the need to be, and have the capacity of being, autonomous and responsible for self-directing their learning, of putting their own experiences into it, and of organizing it in accordance with the problems of real life (Knowles, 1973).

Below, we summarize Knowles’ ideas in a chart, which shows the assumptions which vary depending on which model we consider, the pedagogical or the andragogical.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need of knowing</th>
<th>Pedagogy</th>
<th>Andragogy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children only need to know that they have to learn, what the teacher teaches them: they do not need to know how this will be applied in real life.</td>
<td>Adults feel the need to know what their learning can be used for, before starting their learning; they examine the advantages and the negative consequences of their learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-concept</th>
<th>Pedagogy</th>
<th>Andragogy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The concept of the learner which the teacher (and consequently the learner as well) assumes, is that of a dependent-personality.</td>
<td>Adult people mature a self-concept as people who are autonomous and responsible for their decisions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
They develop a strong psychological need to be considered and treated by others as people who are capable of self-direction.

The role of experience

Children’s experiences have little value in the learning process. To a child, experience is something that happens to him/her. What counts is the experiences of the teacher, and of those who design books and materials for their learning.

Adults have accumulated more experience than children, and each person has had different kinds of experience. This provides them with a broadening base to which to relate new learning. To an adult experience is part and parcel of who the person is, not something that just happens to him/her. For this reason, in any group of adult learners, there is a wider range of personal peculiarities and therefore a greater heterogeneity in terms of objectives, motivations, cognitive and learning styles and interests. Furthermore, experience leads to the development of mental habits and prejudices which can cause the learners to reject novelty.

Readiness to learn

Children are ready to learn what the teacher asks them to learn. They learn what they ought to because of their biological and academic development.

Adult people are ready to learn what they feel they need to know, or know how to do in order, in order to face the needs of real life efficiently.
Children have a subject-centred orientation to learning. Adults’ orientation to learning is problem-centred. They are motivated to invest energy into what will be helpful in facing problems in their own lives.

Children are motivated by external factors (school grades, parents, etc.). Adults are motivated by external factors as well, but inner motivations (like the desire for work satisfaction, or self-esteem, etc.) are far stronger.

These assumptions have consequences in terms of language teaching, as the teacher should create an atmosphere of respect and collaboration, where the planning of school activities is shared with his/her students, and where the individual motivation and the needs of each student are taken in consideration.

If at the beginning of his studies, Knowles conceived andragogy as being the opposite of pedagogy, he changed his view on this. Later on, he claimed that there is an interchange between the two models, depending on the level of dependence or independence the audience shows: in the case of a very dependent learner (one who has never studied the subject before), the pedagogical model must be adopted, but unlike the pedagogue, who aims at keeping this relationship of dependence in existence, the andragogue will help the learner to self-direct his/her learning. (Knowles, 1973).

1.6 Factors affecting adult-learning of a second language

In a migratory context, people find they have to reconsider themselves and renegotiate their self-perception and their categorisations, and interaction with other people can facilitate this renegotiation process. For immigrants, language has an identity function as well: it is the catalyst of problems of lost identity (when leaving the native country), of sought identity (in the new country), of split identity (when the two identities do not converge and so learning is blocked), and of balanced identity (when language appropriateness is a signal of the success of
migration) (Barni, Villarini, 2001). For this reason, learning the second language in a positive and constructive way, is very important for the success of the learner’s integration, and all possible variables affecting learning should be taken into account by the teacher.

Surely, the main factor affecting SL adult-learning comes from the experiences the adult learner has accumulated during his/her life. Due to negative past experiences, an adult learner who does not wish to go through this again may have a psychological block about learning. Moreover, generally, adults have already experienced a learning model in the past, and therefore they expect to learn according to a similar model in the new context as well. For example, there are cultures where education is based on performance in the real world, and the use of textbooks is limited; in Western societies, on the other hand, textbooks and multimedia resources are widely used. If we consider that any culture is characterized by a specific educational system, we can understand the importance of knowing how schools are organised in the native countries of the learners.

The native cultural background is indeed the second element which influences adult learning: the cultural context and its related teaching style can positively or negatively affect the new learning situation, according to the difference between the two teaching styles. The teacher must be aware that his/her teaching strategies and styles can be unfamiliar to the foreign learner, or even inconceivable. For example, a student coming from an Eastern country, where hierarchies are culturally very important, will find it very difficult to actively participate or ask the teacher questions, because teachers are seen to have a higher social role (Begotti, 2010).

Another factor, which is linked to the experiences of the individual and to his/her cultural background, is the way in which the learner approaches a learning task. This issue has given rise to the notions of cognitive style (that is the predominant modality according to which a person processes the information), learning style (that is the tendency of a person to prefer one specific learning modality from those at his/her disposal), and intelligences (i.e. logical-mathematical, verbal-linguistic, visual-spatial and so on., according to Gardner’s theory, whose extent can be developed differently according to experiences and cultural factors). In the case of adult learners, they have already experienced a specific teaching style, and consequently a specific learning style, which has led them to develop their own learning strategies. Although learning strategies are
generally inborn, they are very personal, because they are linked to the predominant learning style and intelligence of the subject. Adults seem to have more advantage compared to children in this respect, because they have been improving their strategies for a longer time, but the teacher should vary activities and tasks in order not to discriminate against people with a particular learning style (Caon, 2008; 2010; Begotti, 2006).

Furthermore, neuroplasticity must be mentioned. According to many neuroscientists, neuroplasticity is at its best up to the age of eight or nine, while after that age, brain structure remains relatively immutable (Begotti, 2010). This belief, however, has been questioned by findings revealing that after childhood synaptic connections between existing neurons do still happen modifying existing synapsis. Psycholinguists, thus, argue that neuroplasticity can be maintained and even improved in the adulthood, and that the capacity for learning a language never fades: it is the rapidity and the stability of the learning process which change and decrease with the passing of time. Therefore, it is very important for the subject to live in an environment full of intellectual input which keep the brain active. Some scholars have pointed out that there are actually several different critical (or sensitive) periods corresponding to different ages (Pallotti, 1988): some language areas, especially phonology, seem not to be acquired by adults at the same level of mother tongue speakers (as children normally do); on the other hand, there are areas, like the lexicon, which seem not to show any limit for age. Freddi (1974) has noticed that what is often attributed to neuroplasticity, is actually something else. Teachers must consider the whole personality of the individual they are teaching, because adult learners often feel the second language is an attack on their personality, and they adopt defence mechanisms which slow down or inhibit their learning.

According to Freddi, schooling affects the learning process as well, as it is proportional to the ease with which language learning occurs (the more well-educated a person is, the easier he/she will learn a new language) (Freddi, 1974; Begotti, 2011).

It must be noticed that besides these aspects strictly connected to adulthood, the success of SL learning is also affected by variables which generally affect SL learning regardless of the age of its learners, such as the distance between L1 and SL, the development of the student’s interlanguage (what stage language acquisition is) and the resources available outside school (such as family, friends,
entertainment, recreational activities, films or books, etc.). Moreover, it is important to make cultural references about school explicit, as the conception of the educational relationship and the relationship a person has with knowledge can change according to the culture.

Furthermore, variables connected to the migratory project come into play as well, such as the expectations connected with the migration (which influence the subject’s motivations towards the study of the SL, and the kind of education he/she chooses), socio-familiar influences, and any psychological conflicts linked to the migration, as it is always a distressing experience which makes the individual vulnerable (Caon, 2010).

1.6.1 Motivations and needs of adults when learning a second language

According to the learner’s motivations and needs, the learning process produces different results. As it can be implied from the observations throughout our work, the motivations and needs of the learner are crucial aspects which are dealt with by the Affective-Humanistic Approach.

In the field of language teaching, motivations are normally divided into intrinsic (or integrative) and extrinsic (or instrumental) motivation, according to their determining factors (self-esteem, pleasure, desire to please somebody else, etc.), and generally teachers aim at triggering the first kind of motivation. As far as SL adult learners are concerned, the situation is very delicate and complex, as motivation, at least at the beginning, is functionally related to the fulfilment of the need for survival and integration in the new environment, and it is felt to be quite urgent. The Common European Framework of Reference has classified the needs of people residing in a host country into different macro-areas or domains: the public domain (everything connected to social interaction); the personal domain (family relations and individual social practices); the educational domain; the occupational domain (Council of Europe, 2001). Some of these domains concern all migrants, others vary according to the migrant’s personal migratory project (health care is intrinsic to any migratory project, but education for example is not). The order is not universal, and frequently more than one element is felt at the same time, such as for example the need to obtain linguistic skills and that of finding a job (Vedovelli, 2010).
Maslow, in his theory of human needs (Maslow, 1954) has divided human needs into five categories: higher needs do not appear unless and until lower and more urgent needs are satisfied. We represent Maslow’s hierarchy of needs by using a pyramid diagram:

![Maslow's pyramid of human needs](image)

Fig. 1.2 Maslow’s pyramid of human needs

The needs at the bottom of his pyramid consist in physiological needs assuring the individual’s survival (food, warmth, house). Once they are achieved, the individual feels the need to have his/her physical and mental safety guaranteed. Successively, we find the need to associate with other people and above all to be accepted by them (“love and belongingness” level). The next level represents the need to obtain other people’s esteem, and to be recognized and admired as autonomous and useful individuals within society. The upper level of the pyramid consists in a complete self-actualisation (Maslow, 1954).

Within this hierarchy, the necessity of being able to read and write is felt as a primary need, as it represents a means of surviving in the new context and a prerequisite to find a job and integrate in society. Therefore, motivation towards basic literacy in the SL can be placed between the first two levels of the pyramid, whereas motivation towards proficiency improvement is felt as a secondary need, related to the three upper levels of the pyramid, like the desire of other people’s esteem and self-actualisation (Caon, 2008). Language is therefore considered as strictly functional to the possibility of interacting with native people, and is consequently connected to the individual’s motivation: if the foreign adult feels rejected or excluded, he/she is unlikely to study the language in depth once he has obtained the basic linguistic elements to survive. In other situations, the desire for
integration is so pressing and strong that the foreign adult willingly goes through any psychological or material difficulties and reaches higher proficiency levels (Begotti, 2010).

Once again, it is very important that the teacher creates the conditions which enable the learner to combine his/her instrumental motivation related to the needs at the bottom of the pyramid with a deeper, extrinsic motivation. It is indeed frequent for immigrants attending literacy and basic SL courses to leave the course once they have obtained those basic skills which allow them to survive.

1.6.2 Problems and limits in teaching adults a second language

Second language teaching has some advantages compared with foreign language teaching: students are plunged into a context where the language which is being learnt is spoken both in class and outside school, so the learning is linked to reality, and the teacher can easily find authentic material to use and can even organise extracurricular activities which use the language. Nevertheless, there are undoubtedly some difficulties and limits to take into consideration too (Begotti, 2010).

The most delicate issues concerning teaching adults a second language are mainly related to the learners’ gender and to the heterogeneity of the class-group, in terms of age, origins and prior knowledge. As regards students’ gender, there are cultures where women do not have the same equal social status as men, and for this reason, studying in a mixed-sex class or even being taught by a woman can generate some difficulties. As far as heterogeneity is concerned, age is one of the crucial aspects: classes are often made up of people of different age, and sometimes this can create problems, in particular when younger students see the difficulties of elderly people as an hindrance to their learning. Generally, the class-group studying a second language is multi-ethnic and the different cultural models can on the one hand favour motivation towards learning, but on the other can inhibit interpersonal relationships (when these models are not understood or communicated). Moreover, the different level of education can partially be a problem as well: the same group, is often made up of a mixture of uneducated, school-educated, and university-educated people, each of them having different needs and motivations (Caon, 2005). The teacher is required to arrange individualized materials, and adopt techniques and strategies which are as varied
as possible, as well as to adopt a method of organisation which favours all levels of proficiency.

The greatest constraint which can compromise the success of language courses for adults is time. Adults often do not have enough time to invest in education, because of their work or family commitments, or because of unexpected events. Moreover, it is not uncommon that adults start a language course, then leave it, and start it again later on. This cause their attendance on a language course to be occasional or at the least irregular. In order to cope with this problem, teachers should arrange a flexible language course, managing it in a way that allows those who have missed a class to be able to attend the course without feeling uncomfortable or in awe.

There might be hindrances on the emotional level as well. Adults are not willing to create a bad impression, and are afraid of sounding ridiculous, therefore their participation in the class activities might be limited by this (Caon, 2008; Begotti, 2010). Difficulties in understanding the teacher and the distance between the content of the course and real life can create a refusal towards the learning process too. It will be the teacher’s job to create an atmosphere of respect and sharing, where adult learners feel comfortable and do not fear being judged, and where their needs and motivations are taken into account.

1.7 Methodology and techniques

Whatever the method adopted (grammatical or communicative), the Affective-Humanistic Approach suggests that it is important to carefully manage the group dynamics according to the characteristics of its members. Each student must feel welcomed and accepted, and free to express him/herself and actively participate in the class. Interaction has a crucial role in creating a cohesive group and in making the course work. Teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction should be bidirectional and well-proportioned, with no one predominating nor hiding behind the others. In all this, the teacher plays the role of a director, directing his/her actors (the students).

The techniques used in class with adult people can hardly be decided in advance: everything depends on the class-group which comes into being and on the relationship which the teacher manages to establish with his/her students. In general, it is preferable to use techniques which put the learner face to face with his/her own proficiency (such cloze tests or self-dictation, which can be self-
corrected), rather than face to face with the teacher. As regards play activities, these are not often appreciated by adult learners, because adults perceive this kind of activities as childish and quite pointless, as well as embarrassing. Their value should be explained, and alternatively, activities based on pair-work can be proposed, which are more comfortable to do than a play activity done in front of the whole class. Grammar too can be taught either in an inductive or deductive way according to the progress, cognitive styles, and expectations of the class-group, and therefore the preferred method cannot be decided in advance. (Caon, 2008)

Knowles (1973) claimed that the most powerful tool he had tried out in his career of over half a century with adult learners were “learning contracts”. Learning contracts are an efficient tool which allow both the teacher and the students to negotiate an agreement which combines the external needs set by set by the social or work environments with the inner needs and interests of the learner. In this way, all the characteristics, proficiency levels, motivations, interests and skills are considered and involved in a specifically-designed project (Begotti, 2010). Learning contracts typically specify: the learning objectives (the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to be acquired by the learner); how and when these objectives are to be accomplished; what evidence can demonstrate that the objectives have been accomplished, and how assessment is provided (Knolwes, 1973). Similarly, Caon (2010) talks about “formative contracts”, and describes them as the procedure which allows for mediation and sharing of teaching methods, materials and objectives to be pursued.

1.8 The teacher of adult learners

Teaching a second language to adult people requires a wide and diversified range of competencies, both educational (methodological) and communicative, as well as relational. As his/her students have already completed their psychological development, and have already accumulated teaching experiences, the traditional teacher (a teacher who simply transmits knowledge to learners) would not be efficient. The teacher should instead play the role of a coordinator and facilitator of the learning process, who guides the learner towards learning autonomy. It is a role which entails possessing certain qualities: he/she must be a good listener, show empathy, and be trusting and respectful towards other people. His/her duty
is that of helping his/her learners to become aware of their need for knowledge, and of favouring the transition from a dependent state to that of autonomy (Begotti, 2010).

The facilitation operation should:
- be recursive in the contexts presented, but varied in the methodologies adopted;
- be orientated towards interaction, socialization, and to high-quality relationships;
- take into consideration the importance of comprehensibility of input;
- be linked to a communicative use of the language;
- favour multi-sensorial activities;
- integrate traditional aspects with innovative modalities;
- enhance the meta-cognitive dimension of language learning. (Caon, 2010)

Rogers, the founder of the “significant learning theory” (see section 1.3.2) lists the duties of the teacher as follows: to create an environment of respect for engagement; to identify and clarify the learning goals and motivations; to provide learning materials and tools; to be willing and ready to help his/her students. According to Rogers, the teacher-facilitator considers him/herself as part of the group, and thus shares his/her feelings and ideas without asserting his/her authority. He/she is aware of his/her limits and accepts them (Rogers, 1969).

Moreover, a teacher who is particularly interested in the relational dynamics within the class aims at enhancing three aspects of the learners’ personality, that are: 1) their self-esteem, by giving them a positive feedback about their skills and potential; 2) their self-efficacy, as autonomous learners; 3) their motivation, which has to be continuously strengthened (Begotti, 2006).

Finally, teaching adults implies the necessity of selecting contents which can be meaningful for them, and integrate with all those things that have already been experienced and acquired. Indeed, the teacher can be considered a counsellor or a technician too, a person who knows the language and the teaching theories and provides help to the adult learners in his/her “learning to learn” (Balboni, 2002).

Serragiotto (2004) has summarised the roles assumed by a teacher who works with adult people. Besides being a facilitator, a teacher is a:
- organiser and animator: the teacher organises and manages activities considering individual and diversified activities. He/she animates and stimulates the students’ participation in the activities proposed.
- language consultant: the teacher is willing to help students with his linguistic knowledge, when and if asked.
- experimenter and artist: the teacher is ready to experiment new methods and techniques, and uses his/her imagination to produce new materials.
2. An overview of the evaluation of second language proficiency

Assessing the students’ learning process is an essential part of the work of a teacher, as it allows him/her to obtain a clear picture of the effectiveness of his/her teaching method, and of the appropriateness of the syllabus, and at the same time enables the students to understand what they still have to improve, this having consequences in terms of self-esteem and motivation. Nevertheless, assessment is one of the most tricky and demanding stages of the teaching process, as it involves many different factors, which cause its simplification to be difficult.

This chapter describes the modalities in which evaluation can be conducted and the consequences evaluation has on the students’ learning process.

2.1 Defining evaluation

The definition of the term “evaluation” itself needs to be clarified, because it is often used, incorrectly, to mean testing, while testing is only one component in the evaluation process. Porcelli, who to this day is considered one of the major Italian scholars on evaluation, defines evaluation as the moment when the results of formative learning are compared to the learners’ personal history and to their attitudes towards school and society, as well as to the psycho-physical and environmental conditioning which may affect them (Porcelli, 1992). In other words, evaluation means interpreting data about the student’s progress, taking into consideration anything that may affect it. The term test, on the other hand, refers just to the moment when data concerning the achievement of specific goals or of a specific language level are collected, and subsequently distributed along an objective measuring scale (Balboni, 2002). Therefore, evaluation is an interpretative operation, while testing on the other hand is a fact-finding process.

According to Novello (2014), evaluation can also be defined as a powerful means of communication: evaluation implies an exchange of information which allows both the teacher and the students to succeed in the teaching/learning process. It also allows to do some predictions about what the learner will be able to do with the language, and this is particularly important in SL context, where language is strictly connected with integration.

Calonghi (1976) underlines that evaluating implies the existence of a project, of goals (general aims of the education process), and objectives (specific,
determined aims of the education process). All these factors function as a judgment criterion when a teacher (or students themselves, in the case of self-evaluation) compares students’ performances to his/her own expectations.

2.1.1 Purposes of evaluation

Evaluation is an essential practice for the teacher, because it can provide important information to use for the future direction of classroom practice, for the planning of courses, and for the management of learning tasks and students.

Evaluation may be undertaken for different reasons, in particular for students to monitor their progress, and for teachers to become aware of the efficiency of their teaching methodology and the techniques used, and the appropriateness of the syllabus adopted for that particular target audience. Rea-Dikins and Germane (1992) identify two main motivations for the evaluation to be systematically carried out in classroom: 1) its use as a means of explaining and confirming existing procedures which are successful; 2) to gain information about innovation or change (that is to see whether the introduction of new materials or the modification within a certain curriculum are efficient). In other words, evaluation makes teachers aware of the parameters in which they are working, raising awareness in order to analyse the context for possible openings for innovation or for constraints. At the same time, evaluation formalise and extend a teacher’s knowledge about teaching and learning in classrooms.

While ongoing evaluation is useful to provide this kind of information (raising the teacher’s awareness of students’ reactions to classroom practice and students’ progress, and providing information about possible modifications of the curriculum), summative (i.e. final) evaluation is mainly carried out for purposes of accountability (that is to understand whether there has been value for money or not, and therefore whether something is to be continued or not).

2.1.2 Types of evaluation

The evaluation process shows different levels of awareness and formalization. Tessaro (2002) takes up the categories identified by Barbier, stating that evaluation can be implied, spontaneous, or instituted. *Implied evaluation* is that kind of unconscious, and unintentional assessment that characterizes any social act, and that is often based on prejudices and stereotypes. *Spontaneous evaluation*
is a conscious operation, but it is based on parameters which are not pre-
determined, but decided at the moment. The \textit{instituted evaluation} is the true
evaluation, as we generally mean it: it is explicit and based on criteria and tools
which are specific and pre-determined. This kind of evaluation is socially
recognized because it refers to precise pieces of evidence which can be compared
to one another and is conducted by socially-authorized people.

According to the moment when the assessment occurs and to its purposes,
scholars have identified two types of evaluation: formative and summative
evaluation. \textit{Formative evaluation} is that which is conducted ongoing, during the
whole course, and it aims at monitoring the learning process of the students and,
at the same time, at providing ongoing feedback about the effectiveness of the
teaching method (for example, the evaluation at the end of each teaching unit), so
that the course can be modified or adapted from time to time according to the
results obtained. The teacher takes notes about students’ performances and
attitudes, generally by adopting observation grids. \textit{Summative evaluation} is that
which occurs at the end of a course or mid-course, and it aims at evaluating a
student’s achievements and language proficiency at the end of a course, along
with the outcome of a series of teaching activities. It can also help in
understanding whether the student is prepared to attend a more advanced course.
This kind of evaluation is also essential in order to better develop the curriculum
adopted (Rea-Dickins, Germaine, 1992). There is a further type of evaluation,
which is called \textit{diagnostic evaluation}. It aims at verifying the gaps in the students’
language proficiency, in order to support them in the best possible way (Novello,
2014). The diagnostic evaluation is often (but not only) conducted at the
beginning of a course, in order to assess the incoming proficiency level of the
students, so that they can be inserted in the class which best suits their level, needs
and motivations.

We are going to conclude this brief section by clarifying another
terminological dichotomy: that between evaluation and certification. \textit{Language
certification} is an operation which draws an accurate picture of the proficiency
level or profile a person has, regardless of the methods or learning process leading
to it (D’Annunzio, Serragiotto, 2007).
2.1.3 The object of evaluation

The object of evaluation in our specific context is the whole learning process, and the index we adopt as a criterion is the output of the students. By the word “output”, we mean the comparison between students’ potential and the advancement they make (Porcelli, 1992).

In the field of the SL teaching, the object of evaluation is communicative competence (see section 1.4), that is the ability to not only construct grammatically correct sentences, but also to use language appropriately in different social situations. The Common European Framework (Council of Europe, 2001) considers language learners as “social actors”, people who have social duties to fulfil in certain environments and on particular occasions. Therefore, communicative proficiency includes some sub-competences – linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic – each of which involves particular knowledge, skills, and can-do competences. As a consequence, students are to be assessed in terms of acceptability of their performance, considering what they can actually do, both on the receptive and the productive level in that particular environments (Maddii, 2004).

Furthermore, the Common European Framework states that the competence of a learner is always “partial” (even that in the mother tongue), and nobody develops all linguistic skills to the same extent. Partial competences are related to the learner’s motivations and needs, and for this reason a course – and consequently evaluation – must be planned by fixing clear and specific objectives related to these motivations and needs, in terms of domains, activities, and knowledge to be acquired (Spinelli, 2011).

Finally, evaluating the linguistic and communicative proficiency in a SL means defining the matter on a linguistic, sociolinguistic and pedagogic level, that is we need to define which linguistic model we are referring to. As a second language is used to communicate in the new environment, all the varieties constituting the speaker’s linguistic repertoire (see section 1.4.1) must be taken into consideration. In the specific situation of Italian, the so-called semi-standard variety is to be preferred over than the standard variety, which is seldom used by native speakers either (Maddii, 2004).
2.2 The test: usefulness and limits

The moment when data are collected, as we have seen in section 2.1, is called testing, and it is carried out using many different methods and tools which can be grouped under the label “language tests”. Language tests are used to measure language proficiency and linguistic knowledge at a precise moment in the learning process. Besides evaluating class achievement, classroom tests also play two further roles in SL programme: 1) they define course objectives, and 2) stimulate student progress, (Valette R. M., 1967). Students, in fact, generally tend to form an idea of what the goals of the course are according to which skills are tested. Testing can thus also be considered also a process of educational communication, therefore, it is very important to make students aware of what will be assessed and which criteria will be adopted. As for the second role indicated by Valette, tests are an opportunity for students to show how well they can handle specific elements of the language, rather than a tool to point up their lacks.

Nevertheless, tests do not provide direct information about the actual state of a subject’s level of learning, but they just show how he/she responds when asked to perform a task (Maddii, 2004). Results on tests can be interpreted in terms of “products”, providing an indication of what learners can do with the language, but not how learners have acquired the language proficiency demonstrated by their performance (Rea-Dikins, Germaine, 1992). In other words, tests cannot tell us whether the product is the result of a permanent acquisition or of transitory learning which will disappear after a while (see Krashen’s dichotomy in section 1.3.1). This means that the teacher does not fully know the data, he/she can only make hypotheses about the data (Balboni, 1994). An analysis of what goes on in the classroom may provide useful information about what makes the learning process successful or unsuccessful.

Furthermore, testing significantly affects students on the psycho-affective level. It is a moment which provokes anxiety, and triggers the fear of failure, so it can strongly influence students. Testing is a moment of conflict as well, because the role of the teacher changes, as he/she is no more perceived as a guide (but rather as a judge), and a student forms an idea of him/herself as a learner according to the assessments and marks a teacher attributes to him/her, this having significant implications in terms of self-esteem and motivation.
Despite this, measuring students’ performance allows the teacher to infer important elements about his/her students’ progress, potentials, and needs, once each result is compared to the factors influencing the learning process, such as the student’s previous knowledge, the materials used, the learning context, etc.

2.2.1 Types of testing

Balboni (1994; 2002) divides testing into two different categories, according to the procedures adopted:

- Distributed testing: data are collected during the normal teaching routine, the teacher taking notes in a grid (for example, a checklist, or in a notebook); it can provide information about the learning process, the student’s attitudes, and/or his/her language performances.

- Formal testing: students are aware they are being assessed. This can occur at the beginning of an educational course (admission or placement test), during the course (progress test), or at the end of it (for example, final exams).

Direct testing can be classified according to several criteria. Tests can be divided into achievement tests and proficiency tests. The former (also called curriculum-dependant tests) measure how much a learner has learnt of what he was taught, it represents the extent of learning achieved by a learner in relation to a particular course of instruction, textbook, etc.; the latter (also called curriculum-independent tests) measure the student’s proficiency profile, his/her general ability or skill, regardless of the kind of education the student has had. This is the case of language certification or of a placement test.

Adopting the content as a criterion, tests can be divided into discrete-point tests, where a single isolated element is assessed (for example, definite articles, or a single item of speech, like introducing oneself), and integrative tests, which ask the learner to consider many elements at the same time in order to fulfil a task (for example, writing a letter). Integrative tests usually try to reproduce the same conditions as when the language is used in the real world. Taking up the concept of linguistic and communicative competence (see section 1.4), Valette (1967) noticed that tests aiming at determining the breadth and accuracy of student’s command of linguistic elements such as pronunciation or vocabulary (which she calls tests of linguistic competence) are equated with discrete-point tests, while
tests which focus on the student’s ability to communicate in specific situations are integrative (or global) tests. Carrol introduced the concept of *communicative tests*, where natural communicative situations are reproduced (like in integrative tests) but the four communication skills (i.e. listening, reading, and, speaking) are assessed separately (Proietti, 2005).

Tests can be objective or subjective, according to the kind of measurement and marking system they involve. *Objective tests* are those in which answers are previously determined in an unambiguous way, and each correct answer corresponds to a certain score (for example, true/false quizzes, multiple-choice tests, etc.). These tests present many advantages: they are time-saving when checking them, they are easy to administer, and allow a fair, impartial, and unambiguous assessment. Nevertheless, they limit the student’s creativity, and it takes a lot of time to create them. These tests are generally used to measure receptive and comprehension skills. Productive skills, on the other hand, are normally assessed by *subjective tests*, which involve the whole behaviour of the subject and assess a global proficiency in the target language, requiring the student to fulfil a complex task (like writing a letter, or expressing one’s opinion).

Teachers should in any case - even when dealing with subjective tests – try to obey the principles which guarantee the reliability and validity of the measuring procedure (see section 2.2.2), and to reduce subjective variables to a minimum. This can be done by using assessment grids, where the criteria used for assessing a specific task are described through some specific descriptors (for example, communicative efficacy, morphological and syntactic accuracy, stylistic appropriateness, lexical richness and correctness, etc.).

### 2.2.2 Test reliability and test validity

The two essential requirements a test must possess are validity and reliability. A test is reliable when it is administered at different times or by different teachers and still produces the same results. Factors affecting reliability are for example the conditions characterising the evaluation in attributing scores to the student’s performance. These variables are difficult to control, but can be reduced to a minimum by planning the test and evaluation criteria carefully (Novello, 2014).

The term validity, refers to the need for unambiguity, clearness and transparency, and it is the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to
measure. A grammar test, for example, is valid when it is used to assess the learning of grammatical elements; it is not valid if it assesses spelling, or the mastering of lexical elements.

The concept of validity is often described by the acronym “RACE”:
- **relevance**: a test is relevant if it only assesses all the elements in question, and nothing else. This means, for example, that a test cannot assess elements that are not present in the syllabus;
- **acceptability**: a test must be considered useful both by the teacher and the students. It cannot be too easy nor too difficult. Its structure and form must be acceptable as well, as it must be consistent with the approach and techniques used during lessons;
- **comparability**: the data provided by the test should be comparable to other data, and to the previous and following performance by the student.
- **economy**: a test must be economic in terms of administering times and checking times (Balboni, 2002; Porcelli, 1992).

### 2.2.3 Techniques

Tests should present the same techniques that have been adopted during the normal teaching routine. Some of these techniques cannot be used when assessing, because of their particular nature: this is the case for note-taking, which can only be decoded and evaluated by the writer him/herself, and dictation, because of its complexity and the state of anxiety connected with it.

A test should measure the achievement of both the objectives of the latest teaching unit (to a greater extent), and those of the whole course. If the latter are dominant, the test gives poorly significant results, because it repeats something that has already been found out from previous tests. Nevertheless, if the dominant data are those related to the objectives of the latest unit the teacher cannot infer whether the knowledge which is still present in the short-term memory has been definitely acquired or not (Balboni, 1994).

The techniques that are mainly used in tests are:
- Multiple-choice answers, grids, open questions: they are scored positively.
  - Each correct answer corresponds to a specific score (for example 1pt);
- Transcoding, jigsaws, cloze tests, fill-in-the-blank exercises, and other pattern drills: they are scored negatively. A maximum score is established, and for any wrong answer a point is taken off;

- Monologues and compositions: a larger number of factors must be taken into consideration here: textual coherence (the logical organization of the text), pragmatic efficiency (whether the message is clear or not), and linguistic quality (according to the level, it can involve different skills, from fluency to lexical richness, to morphological accuracy, etc.);

- Interactive communication and dramatization: these can be evaluated in terms of pragmatic efficiency, sociolinguistic appropriateness, and general accuracy;

- Summary: this must be evaluated considering the cognitive and linguistic aspects separately. (Balboni, 1994)

Apart from the first two kinds of techniques above, the other types of exercise elicit free responses that imply a subjective interpretation. However, through the development of appropriate scoring procedure, and the determination of some specific indicators (as those indicated), it is possible to evaluate students’ performance with a good degree of objectivity.

Considering that each individual is known to have his/her own characteristics, cognitive and learning styles, and types of intelligence which are more developed than others (see section 1.6), the assessment techniques which are chosen each time are not neutral in this respect, but can favour some subjects more than others. For this reason, it would be correct to vary different techniques in order not to discriminate against anyone.

2.3 Traditional assessment and authentic assessment

This paragraph is meant to be a brief digression about the issue of authentic assessment, which was introduced in the US by Wiggins, and spread to Italy thanks to Comoglio.

In order to cope with the need for a precise and objective measuring system, in general, standardized tests have been used. They are normally composed of close items which aim at assessing students in different skills. Nevertheless, education professionals have expressed several perplexities about this: many of them wonder whether it is actually worth evaluating at all, considering that a test cannot
provide information about the processes behind the product (see section 2.2), or about the actual ability to apply the acquired skills to a real life context. A new kind of evaluation method has begun to be hypothesized: authentic or alternative assessment. Authentic assessment not only aims at assessing what a student knows, but also at what he can do with that knowledge. It is based on the assumption that it is not the accumulation of knowledge the students has that shows his/her learning, but his/her ability to generalize, to transfer, and to use knowledge in real contexts. Moreover, it is based on the principle that students understand and assimilate a greater amount of knowledge when they have to deal with real situations rather than when they learn in decontextualized situations (this is similar to what is stated by the significant learning theory in section 1.3.2). Wiggins (Comoglio, 2002) lists the characteristics of authentic assessment as follows:

- it is realistic: tasks reflect real situations and simulate the contexts in which adults are “tested”, as for example, in the workplace;
- it requires judgment and innovation, meaning that the student must use knowledge and skills to solve problems;
- it requires students to do the discipline, instead of repeating something he/she was taught, or that he already knows; it involves a student’s own research or use of knowledge;
- it assesses the student’s ability to efficiently and effectively use a repertoire of knowledge and skills to negotiate a complex task;
- it allows appropriate opportunities to rehearse, practice, consult resources, and get feedback on and refine performances and products.

Authentic assessment should occur during the learning process and not at the end of a course of instruction, and suitable instruments should be adopted (D’Annunzio, Serragiotto, 2007). Two of these instruments are the portfolio and the rubric. The portfolio is a document which gathers students’ work, materials, and tests, and the teacher’s notes. It provides evidence of students’ efforts and accomplishments in relation to specific educational goals. The rubric is a grid consisting of: criteria, indicators, or descriptors describing the particular features of a specific performance (for example, for a written composition, descriptors might be: content, organisation, word choice, fluency); a benchmark; and measuring scales (which can be qualitative, numerical or qualitative-quantitative).
Wiggins (2002), however, states that authentic assessment is just a way of assessing students, and he does not object to the validity of “paper-and-pencil” assessment. There is a place for unauthentic, non-real-world assessment as well, the two forms can live together and improve the learner’s proficiency and prepare him/her for future experiences.

2.4 Limiting subjectivity

Operating professionally in the evaluation field means avoiding generalizations and vagueness. Indicators must be established, in order to be able to determine whether or not a learner has a certain skill, to explain possible gaps, and to evaluate in a univocal and fair way. In many cases, the risk of subjectivity is very high, and misinterpretations and bias can arise. One example is the so-called “Pygmalion effect”, that is the tendency to evaluate a specific characteristic of a subject on the basis of the global impression the teacher has about the learner; the opposite can also occur, that is the tendency to evaluate the whole personality of a learner on the basis of a characteristic that has been detected (“halo effect”).

A solution has been suggested by Tessaro (2002), and it is called “triangulation of points of view”. He suggests that subjectivity can be reduced if more than one source of observation is involved, and assessment criteria and scales are shared by the teachers. There are contexts, though, where triangulation is not possible. When a teacher works alone, for example, he/she can adopt triangulation resulting from measuring tools. This means that the teacher can use more than one kind of measuring tool (narrative and descriptive tools, objective tests, oral interviews, and etc.), so that he/she can obtain a more complete picture of the learners’ proficiency (Tessaro, 2002).

2.5 Measuring and grading

After having corrected a test, the teacher has to set and to attribute scores to the learners’ performances. In order to do this, there are a series of elements to take into consideration:

- how much the learner has obtained from the maximum score;
- variation in the learner’s performances (how much he has improved/worsened with respect to the results of previous tests);
the relative position of the learner with respect to the rest of the class;
(Calonghi 1976; Balboni 1994).

This process is also useful for the teacher, who can become aware of his work. By observing the students whose performance is average, he/she can get an idea of the average result of his/her teaching (Balboni, 2002).

Evaluation can be expressed in different ways according to its purpose (i.e. summative, or formative) and to the situation where it occurs (i.e. during the teaching activity, after an exam, etc.). Normally feedback is given by marks or classifications, by judgments or profiles, or through adjectives, and each method has its advantages and disadvantages (Calonghi, 1976). In the Italian school system, grading is expressed through several procedures: numerical (tenths, thirtieths, hundredths, according to the school grade); through a series of qualitative adjectives (good, excellent, etc.), and that based on alphabet letters. Generally, qualitative feedback should be preferred as it allows students to understand what has to be strengthened (Novello, 2014). In any case, whichever marking method has been chosen, judgment communication has to be shared with students and be univocal and clear, so that expectations can be satisfied (Porcelli, 1992).

Generally, students’ performances distribute across a Gaussian (or bell-shaped) curve. The bell curve is a statistical concept that is designed to represent normal distribution. This means that most of the students are distributed in the central part of the curve, while some of them obtain almost excellent results, and some others very poor results (Balboni, 2002).

![Fig.2.1 Gaussian curve](image)

Those students whose assessment is not considered adequate according to the objectives of the course, and therefore distribute along the “weak” side of the curve, must be given remedial help. First of all, it is important to understand whether their unsatisfying results are due to gaps relating to the latest teaching
unit content, or are due to more general gaps relating to the whole acquisition process. Some additional input and material should be provided according to the needs of the students, both in class and in form of homework, so that students, particularly those with general gaps, are encouraged and helped to reflect more deeply upon the language. Extra work on the part of the student, though, must correspond to extra work on the part of the teacher. The teacher has to dedicate him/herself to monitor the student’s learning and correct what he/she does autonomously at home. It is important that the student perceives this extra work as a personal psychological contract with the teacher and not as a punishment for his/her bad performance. (Balboni, 1994)

2.6 Errors

In the Fifties, the direct instruction teaching method, inspired by behaviourism, considered errors as evidence that the teaching intervention had failed. They regarded errors as something that had to be immediately removed, without being analysed or reflected upon by the student. The mother tongue was thought to be the main barrier to second language learning. From this assumption, a branch of research - called contrastive analysis – developed and dominated the field of language teaching up to the Seventies. Contrastive analysis had a descriptive focus and dealt with the comparison of the speaker’s native language and the target language system: from this comparison predictions were made about the patterns which would cause difficulty in learning. Errors were mainly attributed to interference-related phenomena.

Contrastive analysis soon proved to be limited, as it could not explain many types of errors. Cognitive psychology and Chomsky’s contributions to linguistics led to a change in the way errors were perceived. The learner is considered as taking on an active role in the learning process, as he/she makes his/her own hypotheses about how language works (Pallotti, 1998). In other words, errors are the learner’s faulty inferences about the rules of the language he is learning, and thus they represent evidence of the way in which he/she reflects upon it and makes hypotheses. Since the second half of the Seventies, these studies have been grouped under the label of error analysis. The first scholar to introduce the notion of error analysis is Corder, who in 1969 wrote an article entitled “The significance of learners’ errors”: he claims that errors are significant in three ways: 1) they show to the teacher what has been acquired and what has still to be learnt; 2) they
provide evidences on how language is acquired; 3) they inform the learner about his/her proficiency (Casciani, Rapallino, 1991).

In 1972, the concept of “interlanguage” (see section 1.2) was elaborated by Selinker: it deals with the learner’s creativity, which means that in the efforts he/she makes to get closer to the second language, the learner forms an actual language system made up of a continuum of varieties where at one end there is his/her own language and at the other end, the target language (Pallotti, 1998).

Thus, nowadays, there is a more tolerant attitude towards errors, and scholars investigate all the factors - linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural factors (which may cause learners to use the wrong form) - in order to be able to identify different kinds of errors. Errors can be referential, communicative, cultural, and pragmatic, and can be identified by different criteria, which are described in the next paragraph.

2.6.1 Criteria to identify errors

First of all, it is important to clarify the difference between an error and a mistake. An error occurs when the learner uses the wrong form, because he/she does not know the rule governing it; a mistake is made when the learner does know the rule, but commits an inconsistency when applying it. Errors and mistakes must be corrected by external intervention (from a teacher, the teaching material, or classmates) or by the learner himself, otherwise “fossilization” may occur, and it will be difficult to change this bad habit later on (Mezzadri, 2002).

At least four criteria of reference can be found in order to evaluate errors:

- correctness and accuracy: the error is a deviation from the rules of the linguistic code;
- appropriateness: the error is an unsuitable linguistic form, which, even if grammatically correct, does not suit the context;
- comprehensibility: the error is an element which makes communication difficult or inefficient, because the interlocutor cannot understand what is being said;
- subjectivity: this refers to the fact that the degree of error tolerance varies from teacher to teacher in accordance to his/her approach to the language. (D’Annunzio, Serragiotto, 2007)
2.6.2 Error correction

Marking and evaluating are often experienced by the student with a great amount of emotional stress. The fear of failure - which is typical of those adult learners who have grown up in areas where error is not well-tolerated - leads to the rise of affective filters hindering acquisition (Mezzadri, 2002).

Following the affective-humanistic perspective, errors must not be considered negatively, a phenomenon which must be eliminated: teachers should remind their students that errors occur because they are facing a very difficult task, that is learning a language, and they need to make errors in order to learn (Lo Duca, 2003). The teacher should be a figure who guides the learner, and helps him/her to find the best way to detect errors and correct them; he/she has to select from the techniques at his/her disposal, those which are more suitable for error correction. Unlike traditional language teaching approaches, which were based on the idea that knowledge could simply be transmitted by the teacher to the learner, recent approaches prefer the facilitator-teacher to involve the class in the correction process. Students are thus guided through the discovery of their errors (inductive method) and helped to evaluate their own and their classmates’ performances, in a serene and constructive environment. Evaluation is indeed unproductive in terms of acquisition if it is conducted by the teacher alone, whereas it is very productive when fairly discussed (Balboni 2002).

A key concept when correcting errors is that of “selectivity”, that is a teacher cannot and should not correct all errors at one time, but has to select those that are relevant in that particular moment and, at the same time, he/she must select those strategies which are most appropriate in that particular case (Lo Duca, 2003). Selection has to be made according to the learner’s proficiency, but also according to what the object of the evaluation is. Correcting everything every time can generate confusion and learning is not efficient (Maddii, 2004).

Strategies can be implicit, like in the case of reformulation (the teacher only repeats the concept expressed by the student, by reformulating it correctly), or more explicit, such as by making the student notice the wrong form he/she has used (Lo Duca, 2003). As far as the moment when correction occurs is concerned, techniques and their related correction methods are frequently divided into two categories according to the purpose of evaluation: those which promote grammatical accuracy, and those which aim at fluent communication. When using the first type of activities, the teacher generally tends to provide an immediate,
targeted correction, whereas in the second case he/she allows the learner to finish avoiding interruptions, and later he gives his feedback and corrections (Mezzadri, 2002).

2.7 Evaluating adult learners: the importance of self-evaluation

Evaluation, with its intrinsic problematics and aspects, is even more essential when learners are adult people. When dealing with adults, it is particularly important to share the learning objectives that students are expected to reach. Adults show a desire in being aware of their personal education, and want to know the criteria adopted to evaluate their progress, therefore teachers should share these criteria and parameters with the class. Although adults need to be constantly monitored and guided, they want to take part in the decisions concerning their learning. Results are not to be demotivating or frustrating, that is they must be appropriate and consistent with learners’ expectations (Caon, 2010).

Adult learning is successful only when the learner is aware of what the content of his/her learning is, and of the reasons and future applications of it. According to Lindeman (Begotti, 2006) adult education is a process through which learners become aware of significant experiences. It is when we know what is happening and what importance the event has for us that the experience gains significance.

Self-evaluation, thus, is an essential concept to encourage when teaching adult learners. It allows students to acquire and master those skills which allow them to become autonomous learners, to reflect upon their way of processing information, and to analyse themselves and their work, along with their teacher’s work. In order to favour self-evaluation the teacher needs to give his/her students an appropriate feedback. Self-evaluation can be encouraged, for example, by self-administered tests or by means of some other devices such as questionnaires (made up of the so-called “Can you…?” questions) or checklists, where the student self-estimates what he/she can do or has learnt to do. Closed-item tests can be used, which allow to excite cognitive skills, like that of recognising, or comparing. Techniques such as the cloze test, jigsaw, or self-dictation allow students to become aware of their progress without feeling judged or mortified. Moreover, self-evaluation also allows students to understand whether their proficiency is good enough to access to a more advanced course, and to monitor their interests and motivations.
Teacher evaluation should however accompany self-evaluation, otherwise this can become self-referential. A co-evaluation can thus be adopted, combining self- and teacher evaluation, the two integrating with each other (Begotti, 2006).

It must be reminded, that due to their past experiences and to the influence of their cultural background (see section 1.6), adults find it harder than children to question the way they see themselves as students and as individuals. Evaluation is therefore a very delicate and tricky process, and when it is not managed in a proper and constructive way, in a serene environment based on respect, it can lose its efficacy and even compromise its educational purpose.

As far as concerns the content of evaluation, when teaching and evaluating adults, particular attention should be paid to the socio-pragmatic competence (see section 1.4), as adults mainly use the language to work and thus they need to know how to behave properly according to the context, and respect the rules governing communication.
3. Introduction to the research project: the Italian context

This brief chapter is intended to introduce the research project object of the present work. It describes the situation in Italy, in terms of foreign nationals living in the country and particularly in the Veneto. We consider the formative learning of immigrants, focusing specifically on the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIAs), as most immigrants turn to this kind of institution in order to learn the language, and being our research conducted in one of the districts of the CPIA in Verona.

3.1 Italian as a second language: state of the art

For more than a century and a half, Italian people emigrated to other countries and continents, exporting the Italian language around the world. Nevertheless, the Italian language has never established itself over other languages in any place to which it was exported. Today, Italian is the official language of the Republic of San Marino, and of the Vatican City (besides of Italy of course), and one of the official languages of Switzerland, only (Santipolo, 2006).

Thanks to the prestige Italy has in terms of literary and artistic culture, its architecture and natural beauties, and in terms of economic importance as well, the Italian language has been increasing in its prestige with an ever growing number of people from all over the world studying it. At the same time, since the Nineties there has been a turnaround: Italy has now become a land of immigration, with many people from other European countries and from outside Europe coming here to work and improve their lifestyle.

Outside Italy, the use of Italian is spread mainly by those authorities which have been set up with the aim of promoting Italian language and culture, such as the Italian Cultural Institutes, the several branches of the Dante Alighieri Society, or Management Entities. As for people learning Italian as a second language, that is in Italy, their teaching varies according to their needs. Normally, highly-educated or average educated people turn to authorities like Universities (Centri Linguistici di Ateneo) or to private schools. Immigrants who arrive in Italy to find a job and improve their lifestyle, generally, turn to local voluntary organizations, or to the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (Centri Provinciali per
l’Istruzione degli Adulti or CPIAs), which are educational institutions for adults managed by the state school system (Begotti, 2006).

3.2 Italy, land of immigration. Some data

According to the latest projections, in 2015 the number of migrants worldwide would be at least 237 million, and their number is constantly growing, in particular to Europe and North America.

In 2014, the EU hosted 33.9 million foreign residents, 20 million coming from non-EU countries, and 14 million from other EU Member States. The number of immigrants moving to Europe has almost tripled between 2009 and 2014 also taking into consideration asylum applications and illegal immigrants seeking employment. Data regarding 2015 show an enormous increase in illegal immigrants, this being due to the work permit restrictions imposed by EU countries in order to deal with the economic crisis and due to the current political situation in many Middle-East countries, such as Syria, Iraq, and Libya.

As far as Italy is concerned, it is one of the main countries in Europe for immigration. In December 2014, the number of foreign people residing legally in Italy was 5,014,037 (according to the Statistical Dossier on Immigration published by IDOS - Study and Research Centre), totalling 8.1% of the Italian population, which is higher than the European average. The Dossier has estimated that including the non-EU residents awaiting registration in the Italian registry, the total foreign presence is likely to reach 5,421,000 people.

The Italian situation is quite complex, because on the one hand, - due to the economic crisis - the country has been losing its attraction for migrants moving for economic and work reasons, and at the same time over 150,000 residence permits, for work and family reasons mainly, were not renewed, causing the people concerned to have to leave the country. On the other hand, the foreign resident population is undergoing a stabilisation process, meaning that there is a larger number of people who are legally registered to the registry office: many of them were in fact born in Italy or came here to be reunited with their families. Moreover, there are an ever growing number of people asking for protection or asylum (the number of refugees and other migrants arriving by sea in 2014 amounted to 170,000, and in the first six months of 2015, asylum applications were 30,545).
3.2.1 Where foreign nationals come from

The majority (52.4%) of foreign nationals residing in Italy are European citizen (2.6 million individuals), mainly Romanians. As far as regards non-EU immigrants, 31% of them are from Africa, particularly from the Mediterranean areas, then from the Eastern Europe, Asia, and from America in descending order. The largest communities present in Italy are Romanians, Albanians, Moroccans, Chinese, and Ukrainians.

Most of the immigrants residing in Italy live in central and northern regions, while their presence in southern regions and on the islands is smaller. However, there are variables in terms of origin, characteristics of the ethnic group, and areas of distribution, for example, there are large Ukrainians communities living in southern regions (Lazio and Campania).

As far as employment is concerned, the sector which involves most of the immigrants is the service sector (58.9%), in particular that of home help and family care, that of business services (contract cleaning and other low-level jobs), and that of hotel, food and beverage businesses. The second sector is that of industry, above all the construction and metal industry. The third sector is agriculture. Different ethnical groups are generally occupied in different business activities, as for example Indians, Polish, and Romanians mainly work in the agricultural sector, while Peruvians, Filipinos and Ukrainians are often hired as daily help.

3.2.2 Immigrants in the Veneto

The Veneto region, with its 4,927,596 resident citizens, is the fifth Italian region in terms of population (Istat data referring to 2014). In 2014, foreign residents were 511,550, that is 10% of the population of this region. Nevertheless foreign residents have decreased in numbers between 2013 and 2014, mainly because of the great amount of people who have obtained the citizenship (not being immigrants anymore), and those who have intentionally emigrated to other countries or have been repatriated.

Verona is the area which hosts the larger number of immigrants in the Veneto (21.5%), followed by Treviso, Padua, Vicenza, and Venetia, while Rovigo and Belluno are less interested by the phenomenon. Foreign women are more than men, and most of immigrants come from an EU country, mainly from Romania.
Considering non-EU countries, these people come mainly from Europe, Africa, Asia, and America, in line with the national average. As in the other parts of Italy, Romania is followed by Morocco, Albania, and China. Other important communities are those form Serbia, Moldavia, Bangladesh, India, Kosovo, Sri Lanka, and Nigeria. The Veneto seems to be a region of reference in particular for Moldavian, as those living in the Veneto represent the 26.3% of all the Moldavian people residing in the whole country.

As the national economic system is mainly based on small and medium enterprises, job integration is ever since one of the main and preferred channels to social integration of foreign people. The area where most of foreign residents in the Veneto work is that of Verona. Many of these foreign workers are working as domestic help and as carers for elderly people. Due to the economic crisis many foreign citizens who cannot find an employment have decided to open their own business, becoming businessmen themselves, in particular as retailers, and restaurant owners.

3.3 Adult education and Italian as a second language: the Provincial Centres for Adult Education

Immigrants who need to learn Italian often learn the language at the so-called Centri Provinciali per l’Istruzione degli Adulti (Provincial Centres for Adult Education – CPIAs), which, until 2014, were called Centri Territoriali Permanenti (Permanent Territorial Centres for Education and Training in Adult Age – CTPs), and were managed by the state school.

CTPs were firstly established by the Italian law (OM n.455/97) in 1997, bringing together and unifying existing adult literacy and school courses - such as those aimed at adult workers which had been offered up to then by the Movimento Sincacale Italiano (the so-called Corsi 150 ore) - and awarded the qualifications of Primary School and Lower Secondary School Diplomas, once defined as compulsory schooling.

In 2012, according to the Italian law (Dpr n.263/12), CPIAs started to gradually replace CTPs and the existing evening schools, which had been providing technical education and vocational training to adult people in upper secondary schools, along with the education offered in prisons. CPIAs, unlike CTPs, are locally and autonomously managed, meaning that they have their own
premises, staff and governing bodies. Their main goal is that of raising the educational level of the adult population in order to facilitate their educational and professional qualification and requalification, and social integration, along with active citizenship. They are, thus, an expression of Lifelong and Lifewide learning (see section 1.5): not only is a person expected to learn throughout his/her whole life (diachronic perspective), but he/she learns in any possible situation and has thus the right to have his/her proficiency recognised.

Courses provided by the Centres for Adult Education are open to people aged 16 and above (people aged 15 can participate in exceptional circumstances). Education offered by these institutions mainly consists in programmes corresponding to initial education up to the completion of compulsory education as well as language courses for immigrants. Indeed, they offer courses aiming at the achievement of the completion of compulsory education, which in Italy now lasts ten years (five years of primary school, three years of lower secondary school, and the first two years of upper secondary school), while in the past it lasted eight years (consisting of the primary and lower secondary school only). Therefore, those who have not completed their education when they were younger can achieve both the Primary School Diploma and the Lower Secondary School Diploma at the CPIA. Education corresponding to the high-school level (upper secondary school) is offered through specific agreements with state schools offering technical, artistic, and vocational education. Finally, CPIAs offer literacy courses and Italian language courses (pre-A1 to C2) to immigrants, and the final exam with its related qualification (when corresponding to at least the A2 level of the CEFR) are considered valid in order to apply for an EU long-term resident permit (see section 3.4).

3.4 Italian proficiency test as a precondition to reside in Italy

An increasing number of countries - and amongst these Italy - now require adult immigrants to demonstrate proficiency in the language of the host country before granting entry, residence or work permits or citizenship. The level of proficiency required is usually based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and there is a considerable difference in the levels of proficiency required – ranging from A1 to B1, or even B2 (oral) of the CEFR, as in England and in Germany.
In Italy, in order to obtain the EU long-term residence permit ("Permesso CE per i soggiornanti di lungo periodo"), which until 2015 was called "Carta di soggiorno"), the individuals applying need to have passed a language test designed and validated by the Prefecture (administrative districts of the national Ministry of the Interior). EU long-term resident status can be applied for by all those non-EU immigrants from the age of fourteen who have legally been residing in Italy for at least five years and have some income requirements. It is a permanent residence permit, which never ceases to be valid.

The language proficiency level required to obtain it corresponds to the A2 level (or Basic User level) of the CEFR, which requires the subject to be able of using the language in everyday life. According to the global scale of the Common European Framework (Council of Europe, 2001), the basic user:

Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.

Normally the ministerial test to obtain the permit is made up of different parts: listening, reading and comprehension, and writing skills are examined. No oral test is provided. Exercises are generally about everyday life, requiring the subject to fulfil routine tasks, like understanding a job advertisement or sending a message about his/her plans for next Sunday (see Appendix A).

There are some exemptions, that is not all subjects applying for the permit need to do the language proficiency test. Those who have attended and completed their education in an Italian school achieving the Lower (or Upper) Secondary School Diploma do not need to do the test, they just have to present their school certificate when applying for the permit. The same is true for those who possess qualifications which certify their attendance on an Italian university, master, or post-graduate (Phd) course, and for some specific professional figures test (like interpreters, teachers working in Italy, high-qualified managers, and others). Another exemption from the ministerial test is that of people suffering from some
handicap or learning difficulties, these being certified by a public health institution.

Certificates and qualifications which attest the achievement of a proficiency level corresponding to the A2 (or higher) level and which are authorized by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs can be used to replace the test: these qualifications can be obtained at Università degli Studi di Roma Tre, Università per Stranieri di Perugia, Università per Stranieri di Siena e Società Dante Alighieri (the four Italian examination boards). Attendance on a CPIA (or CTP) course and passing the final exam can also replace the ministerial test.

3.5 Evaluating basic proficiency levels

The ministerial test required for obtaining the EU long-term resident status can be compared to gaining a language certificate or to a proficiency test (see section 2.2.1), as the people applying are evaluated regardless of the methods or kind of education leading to that proficiency level, and the test ascertaining the possession of that proficiency profile is the same for all subjects. Starting from this assumption, here below we would like to reflect briefly on the possibility of evaluating the language proficiency profile of a basic user. This is an issue which has long been neglected, as the processes which are behind a linguistic product are very difficult to detect, particularly when the proficiency level is at the beginner stage.

Providing a description of the linguistic and communicative proficiency can be carried out by using “appropriateness” as an evaluative parameter, instead of that of accuracy as when evaluating higher proficiency levels. A basic learner’s “knowing” and “knowing how to do”, even if they are of a very low level, can be described, and thus be measured and evaluated, even at the first stages of the learning process, because they are “appropriate” to the management of the communication within specific linguistic domains and contexts of use, which are different in terms of form and nature from those characterising higher proficiency levels. This means that the learner’s own linguistic needs can be satisfied even if the linguistic knowledge he/she possesses counts for just a few of structures and utterances; the linguistic and communicative competence is therefore “appropriate” to the semiotic exchange.
The evaluation of linguistic and communicative proficiency is generally linked to the notion of “communicative autonomy”. As far as regards basic users, the concept of autonomy must be reconsidered, as in A1 and A2 level it is lower than the degree of social and individual acceptance, these two being the essential aspects a proficiency certificate is intended to guarantee. Social acceptance is related to the interaction with native speakers, whereas individual acceptance is that which is felt by the learner him/herself and which triggers the learning process: the two acceptance levels together constitute the communicative autonomy. Evaluating basic proficiency levels implies therefore evaluating the learner’s autonomy within specific social contexts, which have to be previously specifically determined only considering those the learner is likely to be familiar with. Therefore a unified certificate test valid for any kind of learner, regardless of his needs and life context is not possible. (Blasi, Marcato, 2007)

The ministerial language test is indeed specifically designed taking into consideration those domains which immigrants are more likely to have to face in the new environment (which are different from the domains related to the linguistic needs of a person studying Italian abroad, or by an Erasmus students) and aims at guaranteeing language spendibility in those social contexts.
4. The research project

The work in this thesis consists of research conducted in the CPIA in San Bonifacio, near Verona, where the researcher lives. The study focuses on the evaluation of the proficiency acquired by a group of immigrants who study Italian as a second language, from the perspective of both students and teachers. The research is conducted by administering a questionnaire to 4 teachers and 61 students attending Italian classes at the CPIA. Data will be analysed in chapter 5.

4.1 Purposes of the research and research questions

The idea of conducting research on evaluation comes from the researcher’s interest in how proficiency levels which are below the threshold, or close to it, are evaluated, and how the evaluation process is actually conducted by teachers in multi-cultural, multi-level, and multi-skilled classrooms, and how it is experienced by students. At the same time, the researcher was interested in analysing the importance school evaluation might have for adult students who live in the country where the language to learn is the most common spoken, and thus are continuously “tested” by the everyday life situations they must face. We wished to test a “hypothesis” - probably a prejudicial one – regarding the importance attributed to school evaluation (in terms of marks and qualifications gained) by basic users in a SL context: the researcher wanted to see whether there are correlations between instrumental motivation - for example that of obtaining a residence permit – and the student’s interest in the evaluation - teachers’ judgment, which she presumed to be lower compared to those students showing integrative motivation and possibly a higher proficiency. Indeed, teachers have confirmed that many students leave formal education once they have obtained an A2 qualification. The possibility of comparing A2 students and B1 students might allow the researcher to understand if there is a change in the perception of the evaluation and in the desire to be corrected according to the proficiency level and/or the different motivations behind the choice of studying Italian as a SL.

There are three main objectives for this research, which are 1) to analyse how the students’ learning process is monitored and evaluated in terms of procedures used and instruments adopted, and in terms of factors and aspects taken into account by the teachers when assessing their students, 2) to discover how students perceive the evaluation experience – also from an emotional point of view – and
3) to see whether they consider evaluation as an important part of their learning. By administering questionnaires both to students and their teachers, it is possible for the researcher to obtain a cross-check of the data, once answers are gathered.

The questions the research is intended to answer are:

1. Do teachers monitor and assess their students proficiency throughout the whole course, during the normal teaching routine, and if so how do they do that (do they systematically use specific measurement instruments to evaluate students’ improvement)?

2. Is communication between teachers and students efficiently conducted (i.e. is there a sharing of the evaluation criteria between teachers and students, are students learning to self-evaluate their improvement, can students understand their teachers’ feedback, and at the same time are teachers aware of their students’ preferences and needs)?

3. How do students perceive the evaluation process, both in cognitive (is it clear what is evaluated and what their errors are, are students learning to self-evaluate their competence) and affective terms (do they feel good about it or are they worried in class)?

4. Are students interested in school evaluation?

It should be noted that this research is not been intended to be a “test” of the teachers’ work in CPIAs or the validity of these courses, which are undoubtedly valid and a good example of an educational system which works and contributes to integration and sharing among different cultures. The purpose is rather to study possible connections between factors related to the students’ personalities and backgrounds and their perception of the above process, and to understand whether students and teachers share the same idea as to how evaluation is conducted and perceived.

4.2 The context: the CPIA in San Bonifacio

The CPIA in San Bonifacio is a district of the CPIA of Verona. It offers adult education to those living in the towns and villages constituting the eastern area of Verona province, and it operates in the schools of San Bonifacio (2 schools), Caldiero, Monteforte d’Alpone, Montecchia di Crosara, San Giovanni Ilarione, and Veronella. For the present research the two schools in San Bonifacio, the one in Caldiero and the one in Monteforte were surveyed.
As far as the so-called “literacy courses” are concerned, that is Italian language courses for immigrants, the CPIA in San Bonifacio mainly offers basic courses for beginners, corresponding to the pre-A1, A1 and A2 levels of the Framework, and a smaller number of courses corresponding to higher proficiency levels (B1, B1+). Both the A2 courses and the B1 courses start in October and end in February (a second session is from March to June) and last 80 hours overall. At the end of the course, those who have attended at least 70% of the total number of course hours can take a final exam, and obtain a proficiency qualification.

The final exam at the end of the A2 level is the same for the whole province and corresponds to the ministerial test required for the issue of long-term resident status. The test is integrated with an oral exam, conducted by 2 examiners-commissioners (one is the teacher, the other is external). The course coordinator is always present, sometimes he/she is a commissioner him/herself. The qualification obtained can replace the ministerial exam when applying for a residence permit. As regards proficiency levels higher than A2, students are generally tested through tests similar to those issued by the Italian examination boards CILS, CELI, PLIDA and ROMA3. It must be said that the documents issued are not certificates, but a statement of proficiency.

Generally, the teachers prepare their students and assess them throughout the whole course by administering past papers or mock exams similar to the ministerial tests and to those issued by examination boards.

4.3 Participants

It was decided to survey students attending A2 and B1 courses, because the largest amount of foreign people attending CPIA courses in the area of Eastern Verona province are basic level users. Teachers agree with the statement that classes are heterogeneous, and even within the A2 group there are some students whose proficiency level is a little bit lower (actually A2 and B1 represent the leaving proficiency levels students are expected to achieve at the end of the course). Due to the continuous arrival of people throughout the school year, with the consequent integration of new students into classes which have already been set up, levels within the same class can vary a lot. Nevertheless, as stated by the teachers, integrating these newly-arrived people into the class is very important, and even if they will not be able to reach the same level as their classmates during this first school year or achieve the required proficiency expected at the end of the
course, school and socialisation must be encouraged in order to motivate them towards future learning and trigger a positive attitude towards formal learning and the school environment, as well as towards the host society.

Students attending pre-A1 and A1 classes were not surveyed because their proficiency level at the end of November and in December, that is only a couple of months after beginning, did not allow them to understand questions which drift away from simple topics like introducing oneself and little more, and therefore answers would not have been reliable.

Students surveyed were 61 overall, that is 38 attending A2 courses and 23 attending B1 courses. Questionnaires were administered to small groups during several lessons between the end of November and the first half of December. Unfortunately attendances were very irregular, and therefore it was impossible to interview the whole number of students enrolled on the language courses.

A questionnaire was also answered by those teachers teaching the surveyed students. A2 and B1 courses in the CPIA district in San Bonifacio (including the courses in Caldiero and Monteforte, which have been object of the present study) are all taught by the same 4 teachers.

4.4 Methodology

As it may be inferred from what has been said so far, the research aims at obtaining qualitative – rather than quantitative – data. As far as concerns the type of data collected, they are behavioural (how evaluation is perceived) and procedural (how evaluation is conducted).

Our research was conducted by using questionnaires administered to both students and teachers. Although questionnaires are instruments normally used to obtain quantitative data for statistical purposes, in this context they were used to obtain data relating to the quality of the evaluation process and to the perception students have about it, and there is no intention to use the results as a general picture of all CPIA literacy courses. It was decided to use questionnaires because this instrument allows for a larger number of people to be reached at any one time compared to using other instruments such as interviews. Due to the amount of time at our disposal and the number of people involved, it was essential to use an easy-to-administer instrument whose results could be easily analysed. Moreover, particularly in the case of basic learners (A2 courses) whose proficiency level was still not sufficiently developed, data collected were thought to be more reliable if a
multiple-choice was given to those surveyed. Closed-input questionnaires are indeed the ideal instrument to obtain the information the researcher is looking for, without leaving any room for ambiguity or misinterpretation.

Questionnaires were handed out in paper-form during lessons, so that answers could be obtained immediately, in order to cope with the discontinuity of the students’ attendance, and to allow all students to answer it, even those who did not have a computer or Internet connection. Moreover, this allowed us to be sure that students answered truthfully, by giving them the possibility of asking the researcher for clarification.

Before starting the research, a trial questionnaire was administered, by asking a small group of A2 students to answer the questions designed for the questionnaire for our research. In this way, it was possible to determine whether the questions were appropriate for the proficiency level of A2 students and clear enough in terms of the information the researcher wanted to obtain. According to the results of this trial, some questions have been modified by inserting options which the researcher had not previously thought of or by changing the lexicon where terms were too technical (such as for example “evaluating”, which has been paraphrased to “assigning you a score”, as none of the students could understand the former), while others have been removed in the questionnaire for A2 students (but they have been kept in that for B1 students). Moreover, it was noticed that the questionnaire was too long for A2 students, a fact that, combined with the difficulty of understanding the questions, could have demoralised some of the students, who left the questionnaire unfinished. For this reason it was decided to remove all those questions of marginal importance and to only focus on specific, ad hoc, questions. Moreover, questionnaires for A2 students were then prepared in French and English, in order not to demotivate those whose proficiency was not high enough yet. At the same time, this allowed us to obtain a more reliable feedback, giving students the chance to answer more comfortably.

Before administering the questionnaire, the purpose of the survey was explained and the researcher tried to motivate them. They were told that answers would be anonymous and untraceable.

As classes were not very large, the administration was done collectively, the researcher interacting with students. In some cases, a free discussion arose spontaneously, and the researcher took notes to analyse later. Also teacher questionnaires were accompanied by a follow-up interview.
Once the data were collected, we tabulated the results of each single question into tables, one for each group surveyed, as in the example below.

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<tr>
<th>Question no.</th>
<th>Option a)</th>
<th>Option b)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. x</td>
<td>No. x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While reporting the results of the analysis of students’ questionnaires, graphs and charts are inserted as visual support, in order to better display what has emerged.

In the next two sub-paragraphs, we are going to analyse the questionnaires we designed for our research in depth.

4.4.1 The questionnaire for teachers

Some of the questions are not reported in this section, but the complete questionnaire can be consulted in the Appendix B in the final part of the present work.

The first four questions concern the course format in general, and are intended to find out whether the course is designed specifically according to the needs of the students or if it is established in advance instead, and whether the syllabus is flexible and adapts to the needs, demands, and interests of those attending the course. Question no. 4 is intended to see whether the aims and objectives of the course are shared between the teacher and the students, presuming that a sharing attitude is an unavoidable aspect of adult teaching: adult students must be helped to develop those cognitive skills which allow them to be autonomous and make the most of any opportunity they come across to acquire new knowledge, in line with the notions of Lifelong and Lifewide learning (see section 1.5). Question no. 4 is linked to a corresponding one in the students’ questionnaire, in order to compare results and see whether teacher-student communication has been efficient in this respect.
1. Have the topics and activities of the course been chosen according to the needs of the students?
   □ Yes, we did a prior analysis of the students’ needs.
   □ No, we follow a pre-established syllabus (which is based on our teaching experience)
   □ Other. ________

2. Are students encouraged to bring topics and materials they are interested in to class?
   □ Yes, they are and they do.
   □ Yes, but they do not do it.
   □ No, they are not.

3. Do students express their preferences about, and do they judge, the activities you do in class?
   □ Yes, they do. □ No, they do not.

4. Are the objectives of the course clear to the students?
   □ Yes, I explained them at the beginning of the course.
   □ Yes, we discuss the objectives from time to time throughout the course.
   □ I have not explained them, but objectives are quite clear from the syllabus.
   □ I do not know whether they are aware of the objectives or not.

This brief introductory part is followed by a first block of questions (no. 5-11) regarding the modalities and procedures according to which evaluation on the part of teachers occurs. These questions answer the first question of our research: whether teachers monitor and assess their students’ proficiency throughout the whole course, during the normal teaching routine, by systematically using specific measurement instruments. The researcher wants to see how evaluation is conducted in practice in class: in this respect, research consists in observation which helps her to see how lower and threshold proficiency levels can be
evaluated, and which instruments are used.

5. During the course, when do you usually evaluate your students’ progress and proficiency?
   □ I regularly prepare tests (for example at the end of any teaching unit) to collect data.
   □ During the normal teaching activity, I collect data about my students’ learning.
   □ I evaluate their progress just at the end of the course.
   □ Other. ___________________________________________________________

6. During the normal teaching activity, do you normally use:
   observation grids? yes □ no □
   checklists? yes □ no □
   personal diary? yes □ no □
   portfolio? yes □ no □
   other:______________________________________________________________

7. In order to evaluate your students’ work, do you predominantly use traditional grammar exercises or practical ones (such as problem solving)?
   □ Grammar exercises to improve their mastering of Italian rules.
   □ Practical activities.
   □ Both to the same extent.

The questions reported above are intended to detect how frequently and in which way the teacher usually monitors his/her students and assesses them, if he/she evaluates their progress in specific moments dedicated to assessment (formal testing), or if on the other hand he/she prefers to collect data throughout the whole course (distributed testing). Then follows an analysis on the instruments and techniques used by the teachers to collect data about students’ performance (questions no. 6 and 7). Questions about the techniques used allow the researcher to better understand both how the course is managed and what its purposes are.
The questions from no. 9 to 11 below concern the evaluation proper, in order to understand whether students are made aware of the criteria used, and which aspects are taken into account. As far as the sharing of the criteria adopted (question no.9) is concerned, the same is asked of the students in order to cross-check the answers and understand whether communication is efficiently managed, or needs to be improved. Questions no. 10 and 11 allow the researcher to understand what elements are taken into account when the teacher evaluates his/her students’ progress. According to the Affective-Humanistic approach, the distance between native and target language, and the cultural background of the learner should be taken into consideration, as - together with one’s experiences - they are the two aspects which mostly affect SL learning (see section 1.6). Considering that in multicultural classes all students are SL learners with different backgrounds and different school experiences (differently from children who study within L1 classes), this can be particularly difficult to do.

9. Do you share your evaluation criteria with your students?
   - Yes, I explain them each time when they are required to perform a task.
   - Yes, I told them at the beginning of the course.
   - No, only when students ask me to do so.

10. When evaluating, do you take into account your students’ origins and the distance between Italian and their native language, varying your evaluation criteria in this respect?
   - Yes, I do.
   - No, because I do not think it is fair.
   - No, because we cannot do it.

11. While evaluating, do you take into account the starting level of your students, or do you consider their single performance?
   - Yes, I do take into account their learning history.
   - No, I consider the single performance only.

The following part (question no. 12-16) is specifically dedicated to the test and
error correction. Some questions (no. 12-14) are about the way in which the teacher prepares the class test and helps his/her students to cope with it. As regards question no. 12, it refers to the adoption of the so-called “diversified” or “stratified” tests, which are a useful and efficient way of coping with the “problem” of teaching a heterogeneous group of students and evaluating their work in an appropriate and equal way. In order not to demoralise those whose proficiency is lower, and not to demotivate those whose proficiency is higher, tests which are made up of different tasks, or tests with exercises graduated from the easiest to more difficult ones, can be administered. In this way, the teacher can monitor all his/her students at the same time, and students are not asked to fulfil tasks which are too difficult or too easy for them at the same time too.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
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| 12. Do you diversify tests according to each student’s proficiency level? | □ Yes, I usually prepare different tests according to the different level.  
□ Yes, I prepare “stratified” tests, which consist of exercises of gradually increasing difficulty, so each person can do it according to his/her level.  
□ No, I prepare tests that are the same for all students.  
□ Other. ____________________________________________ |
| 13. Are students familiar with the techniques in the test? | □ Yes, the exercises in the tests are similar to those they do in class.  
□ No, because in class we do not do exercises.  
□ No, they are new.  
□ It depends, some exercises are new, some others are similar to those done in class. |

Questions no. 15 and 16 analyse the procedures adopted when correcting errors, and once answers are tabulated, they can be compared with answers given by students about their understanding and preferences, to see whether these procedures are efficient or not in terms of comprehensibility.
The following question is asked in order to analyse whether students are encouraged to evaluate their progress personally, that is self-evaluation. This is particularly important with adults, who generally want to play an active role in their own learning. Self-evaluation, by attributing responsibility towards one’s learning, allows students to increase their motivation and self-esteem as well.

17. Are students encouraged to self-evaluate their progresses on their own?
   □ No, because I do the correction. □ Yes, they are.

The final part (questions no. 18-23) of the questionnaire for teachers focuses on their perception of how students experience evaluation. A cross-check of the answers given by teachers and students allows us to infer whether teachers interpret the students’ attitude towards learning and evaluation in the same manner learners do.
18. How do you think your students experience evaluation and error correction?
   - Calmly, in a positive and constructive way.
   - Anxiously. Why do you think they feel this way? ____________
   - Indifferently. Why do you think they feel this way? ____________
   - Other._______________________________

19. Do you think students are able to understand by themselves whether they are improving or not?
   - Yes, they can perceive their progress and achievements.
   - No, they are still not able to self-evaluate: they rate themselves too highly/underestimate themselves.

20. Do students ever ask you for clarification on marks/feedback they get?
   - Yes, they do.
   - No, they do not. Why do you think they do not? ____________

22. In your opinion, what are the parameters according to which students perceive their learning is improving?
   - The scores they get in tests.
   - My feedback about their performance.
   - The way they interact outside school.
   - Other.___________________________________________________

A blank space for personal comments about the evaluation process has been added.

4.4.2 The questionnaire for students

Examples below mainly refer to the A2 questionnaire, the B1 being similar for almost all items. Some of the closed-answer questions have been replaced in the questionnaire for B1 students by open-answer questions, and a pair of extra questions have been added. Some questions are not reported The two
questionnaires can be consulted in the Appendix section of the present work.

The questionnaire is introduced by some questions about the students’ personal data and their education. The purpose of this opening part is that of gathering some information about the class group attending Italian classes at the CPIA in order to contextualize the research. Moreover, this information can allow the researcher to find out whether there are possible correlations between the learners’ origin, age, education level and the answers given to the following questions. A question has been added about the motivations which have driven the learners towards learning Italian in a school context. The answer to this question is of particular interest, above all for A2 classes, considering that A2 is the level required for obtaining a residence permit. This might allow us to understand if there is a correlation between the kind of motivation driving the learner and his/her perception of the evaluative process and his/her interest in error correction and feedback.

What is your main reason for attending this Italian language course?

- Work
- Study
- I want to help my children/family
- I would like to be able to communicate with Italian people
- I would like to meet people and make friends
- To obtain a residence permit
- Other. Please, specify.______________________________________________

The first part of the questionnaire (question no. 1-6) concerns general aspects of how students perceive the Italian language, the objectives and evaluation methods, and their feelings during class activities. This first part of the questionnaire aims at acquiring data about the general idea students have of the Italian course they are attending, and the dynamics in class, between the students and the teacher.

1. Do you think Italian is:
   - An easy language to learn.  
   - A difficult language to learn.
Questions no. 2 and 3 are intended to verify whether students are aware of what it is expected from their attendance on the course, and of how their learning is monitored by their teacher. As stated in the present work (section 2.7), when teaching adults, sharing objectives and methodologies is an essential aspect in the succeeding of the adult students’ learning process, and in reaching one of the teaching goals, that of self-directed learning. Adults want to be made aware of decisions regarding their learning and although they need continual monitoring, they want to be able to evaluate their progress by themselves. The teachers are asked the same questions too, as it is interesting to see whether communication between the protagonists of the educational process is efficient: sometimes, due to the insufficient proficiency level of students, teachers and students are not even aware that communication is not completely successful. In this case (answers not matching), the questionnaire can be helpful for teachers to reflect on the reasons behind their students’ negative answers and to find appropriate ways of sharing objectives and evaluation criteria efficiently. Questions no. 4 is also intended to see whether errors and advice are correctly understood by students. Question no. 5 here below aims at understanding how students feel in class, whether they are worried and nervous, or relaxed and constructive. When negative emotions are felt during class activities, affective filters can arise and inhibit the learning process. The atmosphere and relational environment which develops in the class is of central importance when dealing with adults, as their willingness to participate and express themselves is often inhibited by the fear of making

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Option 1</th>
<th>Option 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you know the objectives of the course?</td>
<td>□ Yes, I do.</td>
<td>□ No, I do not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you know how you are evaluated by your teacher?</td>
<td>□ Yes, I do.</td>
<td>□ No, I do not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Does the teacher explain your mistakes clearly?</td>
<td>□ Yes, I can understand when I make a mistake.</td>
<td>□ Yes, but I am still not able to understand my mistakes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
mistakes or of sounding ridiculous, and consequently of being judged by the others.

5. How do you feel during lessons?
   - I feel relaxed, but I prefer to keep silent.
   - I feel enthusiastic.
   - I feel nervous, I am afraid of making mistakes and not doing well.
   - Other ________________________

Question no. 6 analyses the preferred modality of work, in order to see whether the group is homogeneous and whether the course management meets students’ preferences. An open question related to the reason of their choice has been added, in order to understand if there is an emotional aspect linked to their answer (i.e. affective filters inhibiting group work).

6. Do you prefer to work alone, in pairs or in groups, during lessons?
   - Alone.
   - In pairs.
   - In groups.
   - Why? _________________________________

The second part (questions no. 7-13) of the questionnaire specifically concerns the students’ perceptions about the testing experience: how difficult they find the test, whether they understand what they are required to do, and whether they find it appropriate to their level.

7. Do you think that the tests you are required to do in class are:
   - Easy to do.
   - Difficult to do.

8. Are instructions clear?
   - Yes, they are.
   - No, sometimes I cannot understand what I am required to do.

10. Are the exercises in the test similar to those you have done during the lessons?
    - Yes, they are similar.
    - No, they are new, different.
    - Both.
Question no.10 refers to the techniques to evaluate the students’ progress, in order to see whether they are familiar with the exercises and activities constituting the test. There can be a correlation between their finding difficulties in understanding instructions (question no.8) and consequently doing the activities, and the novelty of the techniques used. Question no.12 is intended to see whether students are able to self-evaluate their skills and proficiency, or whether they are completely dependent on their teacher’s feedback. A question about the final exam (at the end of the course) has been added in order to analyse what their worries are.

The following part of the questionnaire is related to error correction. Questions in this part are intended to verify in which way students prefer to be corrected, if they ask for clarification, and in general how they experience correction. Being corrected by the teacher is always a tricky experience, which can be very demoralising if it is experienced in an atmosphere where the student does not feel accepted or respected, or when he/she has not been informed that errors are an essential part of the learning process and an unavoidable stage of interlanguage.

11. What is the most difficult part of the test?
   - Listening.
   - Reading and comprehension.
   - Writing.

12. Would you, yourself, be able to say whether you have done well or not in the test?
   - Yes, I would.
   - A little, it depends.
   - No, I need the help of my teacher.

13. Are you worried about the final test?
   - Yes, I am.
   - No, I am not.
   Why? ________________________________
The final part of the questionnaire has been designed to detect the interest students show towards the final judgment and the correct use of Italian. This last part will also help us to see whether there are correlations between the proficiency level, the motivation driving the choice to attend a language course, and the interest in learning the language appropriately and obtaining a good result in the final test. Question no. 19 will allow us to understand whether students predominantly perceive their improvement by referring to school evaluation or to extracurricular experiences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
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| 14. How do you prefer to be assessed? | - I prefer the teacher to correct my own performance and tell me what my errors are.  
- I prefer it when we all correct together.  
- I prefer to correct the test by myself. |
| 15. When you cannot understand, do you ask for clarification? | - Yes, I do.  
- No, I do not. |
| 16. How do you feel when the teacher corrects your errors? | - I am relaxed, I want the teacher to correct my errors so that I can improve my proficiency.  
- Quite uncomfortable, I feel embarrassed.  
- I feel easy about it, as usual. I am neither embarrassed nor positive about it.  
- Other. ____________________________________________ |
- Quite a lot.  
- A little.  
- It does not matter. |
In the next chapter data will be analysed in depth and discussed in order to answer the questions we have set for our research.

19. How do you understand that your proficiency is improving?
   - By the marks I obtain in tests.
   - By the feedback the teacher gives me.
   - By what Italian people say about my language and behaviour.
   - By the way in which I succeed in managing my life outside school.
   - Other. Please specify. ____________________________

20. How important is it for you to know the Italian language properly?
   - Very important. I want to learn Italian appropriately, without making errors.
   - A little. The important thing is to make myself understood.
   - Not very much.
5. Data analysis and results

In this chapter, we are going to analyse and sum up the data collected by using the questionnaires. Due to the fact that the number of students in each class was very small (also because of their irregular attendance), and thanks to the availability of the teachers, the survey was accompanied by a free discussion which allowed the researcher to take notes for later analysis, obtaining further and interesting information, and better understanding the answers in the form. After a deep question by question analysis of the questionnaires, the results emerging will be interpreted and discussed, and some personal observation will be reported.

5.1 Analysis of the questionnaires for teachers

The teachers surveyed are the four teachers working in the CPIA district in San Bonifacio (including the schools in San Bonifacio, Monteforte d’Alpone and Caldiero) and teaching the groups of students surveyed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Group of students they teach</th>
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</table>
| Teacher 1 | - 2 groups of A2 students (class 1 and class 2)  
|           | - 1 group of B1 students (class 5)                              |
| Teacher 2 | - 1 group of A2 students (class 3)                              |
| Teacher 3 | - 1 group of A1/A2 students (class 4)                           |
| Teacher 4 | - 2 groups of B1 students (class 6 and class 7)                 |

- General information about the course

We are going to analyse the first part of the questionnaire, which is aimed at obtaining some general information about the courses offered by the CPIA.

1. Have the topics and activities of the course been chosen according to the needs of the students?

Only one teacher answered indicating a prior analysis of students’ needs and motivations is carried out before the beginning of the course. The remaining 3
teachers answered that they follow a syllabus which has been previously established. The syllabus is based on the indications provided by the Italian examination boards (CELI, CILS, PLIDA e ROMA3) and on the guidelines provided by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR). As far as A2 level is concerned, their application is ultimately specified by regional agreements on terms of evaluation, organisation, etc. It must be said that the teacher who answered that a prior analysis of students’ needs is carried out is the coordinator of the CPIA district, therefore she took part in the planning of the course and had met students before the beginning, and the setting up of classes.

2. Are students encouraged to bring topics and materials they are interested in to class?

Only 2 of the teachers agreed in saying students are encouraged to bring topics and materials to class, while the 2 other teachers said they are not, as lessons strictly follow the syllabus. Lessons, as observed directly by the researcher, generally begin with a free conversation between the teacher and the students, where there is the opportunity to discuss topics outside the syllabus, although probably not to change what has been planned.

3. Do students express their preferences about, and do they judge, the activities you do in class?

All teachers except one answered that students do express their preferences about activities and topics dealt with in class. This is quite important as a means through which an analysis of the ongoing needs and motivations of students is carried out, allowing the teacher to monitor and detect eventual shifts in his/her learners’ interest. Moreover, by expressing their preferences in terms of specific activities/exercises, students also provide the teacher with useful information about their own cognitive and learning styles. The teacher could also seize the opportunity to discuss about students’ likes and dislikes as a starting point to talk about learning strategies, and different ways to cope with a task.

4. Are the objectives of the course clear to the students?

Of the 4 teachers, 3 answered that they usually discuss the objectives from time to time throughout the course, for example whenever they are going to introduce a new teaching unit. Only 1 answered that he has not discussed the objectives of the
course with students, but they know what the objectives are as they are quite clear from the syllabus. He also explained that, generally, students attending the CPIA have two types of personal goals: a) obtaining a qualification or statement of proficiency that allows them to regularise their legal situation as non-EU immigrants, and b) achieving a proficiency level which allows them to get a job. It is only when these primary goals are reached that other kinds of objectives, such as those connected with cultural enhancement come into being. This reflects what Maslow states in his theory (see section 1.6.1).

- Evaluation methods

This second section of the teacher questionnaire focuses on the evaluation proper, and investigates the procedures adopted and the criteria taken into consideration.

5. During the course, when do you usually evaluate your students’ progress and proficiency?

Answers to this question show that all teachers evaluate students regularly, both through class tests and during the normal teaching activity, by collecting data about students’ learning and performances. Taking up the dichotomy described in section 2.2.1, formal testing and distributed testing are combined, in order to obtain a more complete and exhaustive (as well as more objective) picture of students’ proficiency. One of the teachers also highlighted the importance of evaluating incoming competences, which help her to evaluate future learning.

As added by one of the teachers, formal testing actually serves as confirmation of the data and observations that have been gathered throughout lessons. The same teacher also argued that individual work during lesson is far more reliable than tests, where many variables come into play, not least the fact that often students, particularly in classes where several people coming from the same country are present, tend to identify the “best in the class” and copy during the test. Furthermore it must be remembered that anxiety linked to the testing can cause misleading results.

6. During the normal teaching activity, what instrument do you normally use?

From the answers given by the teachers, we can generalize by saying that no standard instruments are adopted by all of the teachers, but they adopt their own
data collecting tools. One of the teachers also indicated that she writes her notes in the students’ exercise books too, in order to involve them and to make them aware of their learning progress.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Teacher 1</th>
<th>Teacher 2</th>
<th>Teacher 3</th>
<th>Teacher 4</th>
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<tr>
<td>Personal diary</td>
<td>Register</td>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>Other instruments</td>
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<td>Checklists</td>
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7. *In order to evaluate your students’ work, do you predominantly use traditional grammar exercises or practical activities?*

All teachers argued that the course lessons consist of a combination of grammar teaching and practical-real life activities, and they do use both kinds of techniques, (cloze tests, jigsaw, fill-in the blanks, as well as problem solving and tasks) to evaluate their students. Authentic assessment seems to be encouraged, by asking students to fulfil tasks based on real life situations, although the instruments which are normally adopted in this kind of process, the portfolio and the rubric, are not used by teachers.

8. *How do students predominantly work in class: alone, in pairs or in groups?*

All teachers answered that students generally work individually during class activities, although some group work is done. This can sound as rather strange, considering that communication and acquiring pragmatic skills form the core and ultimate purpose of a language course in a SL context; nevertheless it can be explained by the fact that classes are so heterogeneous that it is quite difficult to let students work on the same task together and at the same pace. One of the teachers also explained that there are many dynamics of which teachers and students are often unaware, such as mild forms of racism or closure, which can render group work a little delicate to manage. What is interesting is that most of students, on the other hand, stated that they prefer to work in groups, as we will see in the next paragraph (5.2).
9. **Do you share your evaluation criteria with your students?**

Only 1 teacher out of 4 answered that she shares the criteria she adopts to evaluate her students with them. The other 3 teachers make criteria explicit only when (and only if) students ask them to do so. This is due to the fact that the linguistic (and in some cases cognitive as well) skills of students are often considered as not high enough to permit teachers to share notions of higher cognitive complexity and linked to teaching. This could be done – probably gradually (i.e. selecting single aspects of assessment) and later during the course for A1+/A2 classes - by suggesting activities which involve students in creating their own criteria and comparing them with those actually used by teachers, and openly discussing what emerges, or by asking students to correct their mates’ work.

10. **When evaluating, do you take into account your students’ origins and the distance between Italian and their native language, varying your evaluation criteria in this respect?**

Answers to this question demonstrate that generally teachers vary their evaluation criteria according to the distance between Italian and the native language of the student (that is, for example, they cannot assume a Chinese or Indian student will make progress at the same pace as a Romanian student). Two teachers, though, specified they make this kind of distinction only during the initial stages, but then they must be objective, considering that they will not be allowed to judge according to personal observations when issuing the qualification at the end of the course. In this respect, the final exam at the end of the course consists of a proficiency test, that aims at certifying one’s proficiency as regards a syllabus, rather than an achievement test strictly connected to the course. Nevertheless, during class activities, encouraging students by showing their efforts are appreciated and teachers recognize difficulties linked to the distance between the target and native language and their situation as immigrants is very motivating and lets students feel they are considered as individuals with their own peculiarities, this being in line with an affective-humanistic (student-centred) kind of teaching approach (see section 1.3).
11. While evaluating, do you take into account the starting level of your students, or do you consider their single performance?

Results to this question are the same to question no. 10. Feedback is particularly encouraging at the beginning of the course, but then there cannot be distinctions of any kind during the examination.

- Tests and error correction

The final part of the teacher questionnaire focuses on the test and on the correction of errors. Moreover, we are going to analyse teachers’ answers to questions about how they think students experience the evaluation moment and error correction.

12. Do you diversify tests according to each student’s proficiency level?

Only 2 teachers answered that sometimes they prepare stratified tests which consist of exercises of gradually increasing difficulty, so each person can do them according to his/her level, while the other two teachers stated that tests are the same for the whole class (generally past papers from ministerial tests, or parts of them). Although this has the advantage of preparing all students for the final exam, it can also be discouraging for those whose proficiency is lower, as they can have a wrong perception of their progress, which they feel is not actually occurring (for example by referring to their fellow students’ performance). If evaluating means “highlighting one’s value”, as Tessaro (2002) argues, it is important that students feel tests are within their capability.

13. Are students familiar with the techniques in the test?

Of 4 teachers, 3 claimed tests are made up of exercises which are similar to those used in class, so that students are tested through tasks they are familiar with. Only 1 teacher (teacher 2) stated that she sometimes includes some new activities together with familiar ones. This is quite important because, as we have seen, evaluation and testing are also a communication process, that is learners identify the objectives and goals of their education according to what they are tested on (see section 2.2).
14. Do you normally spend time to go through the test together with your students?

All 4 teachers answered they spend time to go through the test with their students, in order to let them do it calmly and prevent them from being discouraged by difficulties in understanding instructions.

15. Do you normally correct each student individually, or do you all correct the work together?

Collective correction is the preferred modality for checking students’ exercises for 2 of the teachers, while the other 2 teachers wrote they combine the two modalities according to the kind of task. Collective correction is often and insistently encouraged because it is a way to make students aware of their own progress and to involve them in this process actively, not passively as teacher correction does (students just look at the errors and then probably forget). This also helps them to become more autonomous. Nevertheless, teacher correction, particularly with lower students, needs to be adopted as well, because not all students can self-correct their performance while this is done collectively.

16. When you correct your students’ work, how do you normally express your judgment?

Teachers generally prefer to use numerical scores in the case of structural tests, where a maximum score is given, and students are evaluated by taking a point off each time they make an error or attributing 1 point to each correct answer (this is the structure of the listening and reading and comprehension sections of the final exam). For written compositions or other kinds of exercises they prefer to give detailed feedback (highlighting both good results and learning gaps) or short qualitative judgments (i.e. excellent, good, etc.). Only one teacher makes references to the CEFR indicators.

![Bar chart showing the number of teachers using different methods to express judgments.](chart.png)

- Numerical score: 3 teachers
- Short qualitative judgments: 2 teachers
- Detailed feedback: 2 teachers
- CEFR indicators: 1 teacher
When past papers from exams are adopted, and during the final examination, teachers follow the evaluation grid we have inserted in Appendix A. We can notice that, apart from the written compositions, exercises are mainly multiple-choice (each answer corresponds to a specific score).

17. Are students encouraged to self-evaluate their progresses on their own?

All teachers answered students are encouraged to self-evaluate their progress. They generally do so by involving students in the correction of their own work, as if they were the teacher. This is generally done on exercises or texts they have already worked on (not necessarily for the same purpose or task), which serve as a reference and a comparison for new learning. These materials not only allow an objective comparison between errors and correct answers, but they also allow students to go back to something previously started and develop this further. As the coordinator of the CPIA district underlined, this kind of work should not be done on texts or exercises which have never been dealt with before, because it can be really demotivating: students must be helped towards understanding and awareness and this cannot be done except with materials they are already familiar with. Demotivating experiences are one of the main reasons students decide to drop out of a course.

18. How do you think your students experience evaluation and error correction?

All teachers feel their students react positively to the evaluation moment. They experience evaluation and error correction in a constructive way, considering it an essential moment for them to become competent and qualified language users.

19. Do you think students are able to understand by themselves whether they are improving or not?

3 out of 4 teachers think their students are able to self-evaluate their progress, while 1 teacher stated that he thinks progress cannot be evaluated by students by
considering what they do in class, but rather they generally measure their learning in their life outside school. This is quite a surprising result, and could be taken as a starting assumption for further analysis on the actual vs perceived capacity of students.

20. Do students ever ask you for clarification on marks/feedback they get?

Interest in formal evaluation can also be seen by the extent to which students ask for clarification about the marks or feedback they obtain in tests, class activities, or homework. All teachers reported that their students do ask and are interested in feedback.

21. Do students spontaneously ask an explanation or judgment about expressions they have heard/learnt outside school?

As for the previous question, students generally turn to their teachers as facilitators and “language professionals” to obtain an explanation and a formal judgment about the correctness and appropriateness of expressions they come across outside school.

22. In your opinion, what are the parameters according to which students perceive their learning is improving?

This question is strictly connected to question no. 19 in detecting if and how students evaluate their own learning. According to 2 teachers (B1 teachers) evaluation can mainly be perceived outside school, through students’ social interaction with native speakers and the way in which they succeed in managing their everyday life (going to the doctor, doing shopping, talking with their children’s teachers, etc.). Indeed, as added by one teacher, students are not aware of the learning sequences (that is the succession of interlinguistic stages), and therefore they are prevented from having this kind of self-perception. However, the other 2 teachers (A2 teachers) claimed school evaluation combines with these extra-school evaluations, as students can perceive their progress also thanks to the feedback given in class by their teachers.

As underlined by the coordinator of the CPIA district, an important source of information about the students’ own learning progress is from their families interested in their achievements. Children, studying in Italian schools, are often
the main and most reliable “judges” for adult students, leading to an unusual family dynamics.

In order to conclude this section, we report some observations emerged during our conversation with the coordinator of the CPIA in San Bonifacio about the courses and learning in general. There are many external factors which make the course planning and the students’ learning “imperfect”, such as the lack of family support, financial difficulties, transport (in particular for those living in isolated areas), moves from a place to another, and frequent returns to the native country. This last element is known to cause a “learning reversibility” (interlanguage can regress to previous stages, not only progress), and is particularly affecting for women, who often spend long periods in their native country, where they do not use Italian at all; once they are back to Italy, they are inserted in classes corresponding to the proficiency level they reached before leaning, but they show difficulties related to the “absence period”. Taking up Krashen’s dichotomy (see section 1.3.1), unstable learning, if not transformed into acquisition is likely to disappear.

5.2 Analysis of the questionnaires for students

The research concerned 61 students: 38 attending 4 different A2 courses, and 23 attending 3 different B1 courses. Students are assigned to the different courses according to their needs, level, and to where they live. Classes 1 to 4 are A2 classes, while classes 5 to 7 are B1 classes.

Students are very heterogeneous in terms of origins, although the greatest majority are from a non-EU country, in first place India, followed by Morocco and Romania.

![A2 students chart]

80
As for the gender of students, the great majority of students are women, both during morning and evening classes. Particularly as far as morning classes are concerned, this could be due to the fact that many of these women are not working, or have a part-time occupation. Moreover, as confirmed by one of the teachers, this can also be explained by the perception men and women have about their need for school learning: generally men can manage to reach a basic proficiency level in Italian by interacting with their work colleagues or by doing some other activities outside the home, while women who do not work generally spend most of their time at home and have few opportunities to learn the Italian language outside school, therefore to reach the basic level they need to integrate or do the ministerial test. Furthermore, recent data about immigration tendencies, show that the number of women migrating to the Veneto in recent years has been higher than that of men (see section 3.2.2).

Most of these students are young people, their age ranging mainly between 20 and 35 years old, both in A2 and B1 classes. Some older students are also present.
The duration and the kind of prior schooling of learners varies a lot, but in general most of them possess a diploma or even a university degree. This data can be quite surprising, but - as explained by teachers – most of the uneducated students or those who did not complete their schooling in their native country, generally spend many years attending pre-A1 and A1 courses before achieving a level which permits them to attend A2 classes.

This can be a telling result about how much prior schooling can influence both the desire and above all the success in reaching high proficiency levels. Highly-educated students are indeed more “well-trained”, meaning that they have fewer difficulties and a more active attitude towards learning. Taking up again what we have seen in chapter 1, there are many advantages connected with the level of schooling, as for example the development of learning styles, and consequently of specific and personal learning strategies, which obviously make the learning process easier or at least quicker. Furthermore, the so-called learning skills allow for the transfer of learning from one field or subject to another. Surprisingly, many of the students attending B1 courses – highly educated - have been living in Italy for less than three years. This data seems to confirm what was stated about uneducated students and their difficulty in reaching higher levels (who first need to learn how to learn).
A question was asked about the motivation leading students to attend a language course. Most of the students claimed that the most urgent reasons that have brought them to school are the desire to be able to interact with Italian people and to be able to find a job, or to be more efficient in the job they already have. Unexpectedly, considering the kind of language courses in question, only 8 students (7 A2, and 1 B1) answered that they are mainly driven by the need for acquiring a residence permit. This is quite a positive result, as, although A2 is the minimum required level for achieving a long-term residence permit and teachers stated they are studying for that purpose as well, many students declare that they feel this is a secondary motivation, while socialisation is more important.

![Motivations of students (A2 and B1)](chart.png)

Considering A2 and B1 students separately, we can see that there are no considerable shifts in the reasons given, although we can notice that for A2 students “social interaction” predominates over “work”, while for B1 the trend seems slightly inverted.

![Motivations of students (A2 and B1) separately](chart2.png)

A positively surprising result is that 7 people ticked the option “other”, and wrote their own motivation:

- “per me, mi piace”
- “pour la culture italienne et surtout pour éviter d’être ignorant”

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1 All quotations in this chapter are students’ own spelling.
To return to the dichotomy between instrumental and integrative motivation (see section 1.6.1), if we consider “job”, “family”, “residence permit”, and “living in Italy” as representing _instrumental motivation_, and “interaction with Italian people”, “friends”, and “culture” as representing _integrative motivation_, we can say that these elements are both present in the group to almost the same percentage.

Nevertheless, if we consider work as a fundamental part of the migrant’s integration in the hosting society, and not only as an aim in itself, we can label it as an integrative motivation as well, and therefore generalise by saying integrative motivation predominates much more over instrumental.

- General perception about the course and the Italian language

  We are going to analyse the answers students gave about their feelings and impressions about the courses they are attending. In some cases answers have been divided according to the 7 classes, in order to see whether there are correlations between answers and class management.

1. _Do you find Italian to be an easy or difficult language to learn?_

   Answers to this question are varied both within each A2 and B1 student group.
Analysing the answers of the different classes separately, it has been noticed that among A2 group (classes 1 to 4) answers are in fact quite homogenous: 2 classes predominantly answered “easy” and 2 classes “difficult”. These latter 2 classes (class 1 and 4) are mainly made up of A1+ students (they possess a proficiency which is potentially higher than that of A1 students, but still have a lower proficiency level than the real A2 level students). In particular, in class 4, there are some refugee students who have been living in Italy for less than one year, some for just a couple of months (being highly educated and from an Anglophone country - Ghana and Nigeria - they have been inserted in this class). On the contrary, the proficiency level in class 2 and 3 is on the whole a little higher. We could thus hypothesise that this different level is a partial reason for their perception. This cannot be said for B1 students, where answers were more varied within classes.

Unexpectedly, there are no particular correlations between students’ origin and native language and their answer, particularly as far as A2 students are concerned. Indeed, many students who answered “easy” come, for example, from India (and do not completely understand English either), while some who answered “difficult” are from Romania, so a different answer was expected. This result changes a little when taking into consideration B1 students’ answers. Here a correlation has been noticed between students’ mother tongue and their answer: students whose mother tongue is a Romance language (i.e. Romanian, French or Spanish) mainly answered “an easy language” while those speaking a non-Romance language (i.e. Japanese, Russian, Ukrainian, Arabic, and Indian), mainly answered “a difficult language”. However, there are many exceptions which do not allow us to generalise this assumption. While answering the questionnaire, students in class 7 also expressed they are aware of the difficulties related to the
distance between the native and target language, and they are very cooperative towards one another, showing a greater awareness of the aspects which can influence one’s learning.

B1 students were also asked to write down what they prefer to do in class and what they find instead most difficult to cope with among the class activities. As was expected, preferences vary a lot from one to another. Each student has developed his/her personal cognitive style and intelligences (i.e. logical-mathematical, verbal-linguistic, visual-spatial and so on., according to Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences) to a different degree, also due to his/her native culture and to the kind of education he/she had had (school systems in the various countries involved can be very different and cause the development of some skills and strategies to the detriment of others). Moreover, personality can also influence one’s preferences (introversion and extroversion in particular). Teachers should take students’ preferences into account and vary activities, so that the school learning process can be a positive and pleasant experience for each student, and useful in satisfying their needs.

As for the difficulties, although the format of this issue was an open question, students were quite homogeneous in answering it. Most of them find difficulties in understanding and learning grammar rules (11 students), and in speaking (8 students). The other 4 students answered that they have problems in writing (no. 3) and reading (1).
In general, considering answers in detail, it has been noticed that those speaking a Romance language such as Romanian or Albanian mainly answered that they find it most difficult to understand grammar rules and write, while those coming from countries where a very distant language is spoken, such as from Japan, the Ukraine or India, speaking is perceived as the most difficult activity in the course. Due to the small number of the people surveyed, and to some exceptions, we cannot however generalise this result.

In order to encourage awareness of self-evaluation, B1 students were also asked to think about what their strong points are: only 3 students out of 23 answered that they are not able to tell what they are good at. Most of the students feel they are very good at reading (15 people), as they consider it the easiest characteristic of the Italian language. Only 2 students answered writing, 1 speaking, 1 listening, and 1 doing practical activities.

2. Do you know the objectives of the course?

Most of the students stated that they are aware of what the objectives of the course are: only 11 out of 61 admitted they have no idea. The awareness of objectives is very important in order to comprehend the reasons and results of the
evaluation, as goals and aims are the parameters according to which evaluation is carried out.

In detail, 7 of those answering “no” attend classes 4 and 1, and this can be connected to what we have just said on question no.1 about the proficiency level of the students.

3. Do you know how your teacher evaluates you?

As for the previous question, the great majority of the students answered they do know how the teacher evaluates them. Only 11 students answered that they do not know what teachers take into consideration when they evaluate their performance.

Considering that all teachers but one, in their questionnaire, answered that evaluation criteria are not shared with students, this result is quite unexpected. Nevertheless, considering the test modalities (that is the adoption of a kind of scoring where each correct answer corresponds to a specific score, or where a maximum score is established and for any wrong answer a point is taken off, at least for the listening and reading parts), this answer can be due to the structural frame of the test and the objectivity of the scoring. Nevertheless, this is valid only for tests or exercises like cloze, fill-in-the-blanks, etc, but not for written compositions or class activities. It would be interesting to suggest an activity where, for example, students are asked to create their own evaluation grid, in order to see whether their positive answer to this question actually corresponds to their understanding of their teacher’s evaluation criteria, or whether it is perhaps
based on criteria adopted in their prior school system, or on assumptions they infer from the classes etc.

4. *Does the teacher explain your mistakes clearly?*

Communication, in general, seems to be efficient. Of 61 students, 52 answered that they can fully understand when their teacher explains their mistakes. Sometimes, understanding the teachers’ corrections is still difficult for 7 A2 students and for just 1 B1 student. Only 1 A2 student answered that the teacher does not explain mistakes.

**A2 students**  
- Yes: 79%  
- Yes, but I cannot understand: 3%  
- No, she/he does not explain my mistakes: 18%

**B1 students**  
- Yes: 96%  
- Yes, but I cannot understand: 0%  
- No, she/he does not explain my mistakes: 4%

B1 students were also asked whether their teachers just correct their errors or they also provide them with advice for improving their performance and embellish their speaking and written compositions. All of them agreed teachers do give them this kind of feedback as well. This is quite motivating, as it pushes learners to continue aiming at the highest standard, and, by reformulating the students’ ideas, the teacher helps them to unconsciously increase their skills.

5. *How do you feel during lessons?*

The affective filter – an emotional wall which is triggered by fear or anxiety as a psychological system of defence - is always one of the biggest hindrances to learning success. The affective filter is even more strongly felt and inhibiting for adult learners, who have more difficulties in challenging their self-perception as learners and individuals and in exposing their vulnerabilities and weaknesses to other people. For this reason, it is important to create a welcoming and non-frightening environment, where adults feel comfortable. Answers to this question indicated that the atmosphere which has come into existence within the classroom is positive and constructive for almost all of them, who feel free to interact spontaneously and actively without feeling anxiety or embarrassment. The great
majority of students (46) answered they feel enthusiastic and happy to learn, the environment being quite relaxed and friendly. The researcher herself had the opportunity to take part in a couple of lessons, and noticed the atmosphere being quite relaxed and constructive, the teacher giving opportunities to practise on the same topic/activity more than once and in different modalities, and encouraging anybody to participate according to their ability, not forcing or criticising anybody. Nevertheless, some (7) students indicated they still prefer to keep silent during lessons, although they are positive and relaxed, while 8 learners feel nervous and uncomfortable, as they are afraid of making mistakes and sounding ridiculous. One specifically wrote down that the idea of not being able to master the language appropriately, blocks her.

Of the 8 students who answered “nervous”, 5 have been living in Italy for less than a year, and therefore this is the first time they are attending Italian school. Therefore they probably need time to renegotiate their self-perception as students and integrate in the class environment, as well as in the host society.

Pair work could be a good way to get students used to expressing themselves gradually, feeling more comfortable than, on the one hand, being forced to face the whole class and, on the other, than being left alone to cope with their learning.

6. *Do you prefer to work alone, in pairs, or in groups, during lessons?*

Answers to this question have produced one of the most interesting results of the research. Choices change from A2 to B1 students, and motivations change as well. As far as A2 students are concerned, 29 out of 38 answered they prefer to work collectively, in a group, while 5 students prefer to work in pairs, and just 3 alone. The same question produced different results with the B1 students: group work is still the preferred modality, but the choice was not as predominant as for A2 students, being indicated by 12 students out of 23, while individual work is preferred by 7 people and pair work by 4 people.
Students were asked (optionally) to write down why they do prefer that particular modality. We have noticed that A2 students prefer group work mainly because they feel it less compromising rather than facing the task alone, and because they perceive discussion can help them to acquire what they still have not mastered. In detail, they answered they prefer working in groups mainly because this allows them to understand better and learn more (9 out of 15 people giving this answer). Other reason given are:

- “it’s more easy”
- “because of group discoution is very good for leaning education”
- “perchè e una posibilità comunicare con altri”
- “perche e interesante”
- “sono più tranquilla”
- “mi piace imparare gli uni dagli altri”

B1 students, instead, prefer this modality not so much as help to cling on to, but as an opportunity for talking and practice, and even enjoying themselves. 5 people answered that they think they learn more by interacting with their classmates, while the other students answered that:

- “perché in gruppo è più didactico e divertente”
- “in gruppo possiamo parlare insieme”
- “è sempre più interessante”
- “parlo di più”
- “mi sento meglio”
- “mi piace parlare di più”

During our discussion with students, we have noticed that while A2 students when answering “I understand better” refer to the fact that they can ask for help from other classmates whenever they lack the language to understand or complete a
task, B1 students, on the other hand, refer to the fact that “discussion” is an opportunity to overcome one’s limits and learn from other people’s experiences. This is obviously a consequence of the different proficiency level students have already achieved, as A2 students have not overcome the basic stage which allows them to manage simple situations yet and this prevents them from expressing and sharing complex opinions yet, while B1 students feel they can master the language enough to try to widen their scope of expression.

As for those answering they prefer to work in pairs, the reasons given (by both A2 and B1 students) are similar to those relating to group work. Most students wrote that they like to discuss with a friend, and that in this way they can help each other:

- “because I discuss with my friends”
- “because in pairs, we can share minds, thoughts, and mistakes, for easy understanding”
- “because I want to be frequent in speaking of the language”
- “posso fare esercizi e parlare in tranquillo”
- “perché quando siamo in due uno aiuta l’altro”
- “secondo me la lingua si impara meglio se una persona fa dialogo con altra persona”

Finally, those who prefer to work alone find this modality more useful, as they can monitor their own learning and it is an inducement to work harder on the task, or because they feel more comfortable (both A2 and B1 level). This option was chosen by 31% of B1 student (7 out of 23), while only 8% of A2 chose it (3 out of 38). Some of the given answer are:

- “I think I can do by myself”
- “I can see my improvement when the teacher checks it”
- “I want to understand it well”
- “quando senti sola faccio tutti possibilità per capire bene”
- “non mi piace incontrare con altri. Da solo lavoro bene”
- “non sono brava a explicar”
- “perché io conosce le mie errori”
- “perché mi sento meglio, più tranquilla da sola”
This represents a good result in terms of importance given to the formal evaluation, as students agree in saying that individual work, and consequently individual assessment, allow them to monitor their improvement.

What is striking is that teachers declared that they mainly manage the lessons in order to let students work individually, alone, as they feel – among other reasons reported in the previous analysis – this is the modality which adults prefer from an emotional point of view (see the analysis of teacher questionnaire in section 5.1, question no.8). In this respect, communication could be improved, by asking students their opinion, and sharing the impression teachers have about this with them.

- The test

The following section of the questionnaire is about students’ perception about class tests. In the case of A2 classes, class tests are generally past papers from the ministerial test they will have to be able to do in order to obtain a long-term residence permit, and which is based on the CEFR’s indications; in the case of B1 classes, tests are generally similar to the exams prepared by the examination boards (CELI, CILS, ROMA3, and PLIDA).

7. Do you think that the tests you are required to do in class are:

This question has produced different answers among students.

Particularly in the case of A2 students, answers vary a lot according to the class attended, therefore there might be some correlations according to the teaching activity and the testing procedures adopted and the answers given. The teacher of class 3, for example, explained she generally administers single elements of what will make up the final exam, so that students just have to concentrate on specific tasks at one time. A quite surprising result is that class 2, where students mainly answered question no.1 stating that Italian is an “easy language to learn”, to this question answered that tests are difficult.
As for the reasons students find it difficult, in general students feel they cannot master the language properly, considering vocabulary and grammar as the two biggest areas they have to improve in. In detail, A2 students wrote down that they are mainly worried about grammar and writing (7 out of 12 answers given), while B1 students mainly wrote that tests often present words they cannot understand (4 out of 6 answers given). Other reasons are connected to the lack of confidence in one’s own proficiency, to the little practice students have at home, and to the fact that they cannot refer to the book during tests. Answers to question no.11 will provide us with the most detailed information about what section of the test is most difficult for learners.

Those who find class tests easy feel that they possess the required knowledge to do the test and because the test is based on things they already know (14 out of 22 answers given), almost all of them answering “I can understand the answers” (7) or “I have already learnt things asked in tests (7)”. Curiously, some of them attribute their understanding to the teacher’s good teaching:

- “Perché il maestro e molto bravo a spiegare e farsi capire dove sbagliamo”
- “perché l’insegnante mi spiega in modo chiaro”
- “because the teacher explains it well to be able to understand”

Other reasons given are:

- “non c’è la paura d’esame”
- “perché mi piace”
- “possiamo parlare” (2 peple).
8. *Are the instructions in the test clear?*

Of the 38 A2 students, 25 answered indications are clear, while 13 answered that sometimes they cannot understand what they are required to do. Most of those students who answered they cannot understand the instructions also stated that exercises in tests are of different typology from those done in class (question no.10). Of the 23 B1 students, only 4 answered they sometimes have difficulties in understanding instructions. This result confirms what was stated as regards the previous question, that is that students seem to have difficulties more in mastering language components, rather than in understanding the type of exercise or instructions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A2 students</th>
<th>B1 students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34% Yes</td>
<td>17% Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66% No</td>
<td>83% Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. *Do you think the time at your disposal is: too much, fair, or too little?*

The vast majority of students answered that they find the time at their disposal to do the test is fair with respect to the typology, the difficulty, and the number of the exercises; 9 students answered they would need some more time; only 3 people think time is too much.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Too much</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Too little</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. *Are the exercises in the test similar to those you have done during the lessons?*

Surprisingly, there seems not to be an agreement among students on this issue, neither in A2 nor in B1 classes (with the exception of class 4). Of 61 students, only 36 confirm that exercises are similar to those used in class, while 18 stated that exercises are new, and 7 students wrote that tests are made up of both kinds of exercises.
Comparing students’ answers with the teachers’ answers to the matching question in their questionnaire (see section 5.1 question no. 13), we can immediately notice a contradiction. All of the teachers except one (teacher 1, teaching class 1, 2 and 5) stated that tests normally consist of exercises and tasks which have already been used in class; many students in class 3, 6 and 7 answered tests are made up of exercises which are new. As the graph helps us to illustrate better, it would seem that the only matching result between teacher and students occurs in classes 5 and 4. This inconsistency might be explained by taking into consideration the discontinuity of the learners’ attendance. As stated by teachers, many students – in particular women having little children – attend just a minimum number of hours which allow them to apply to take the final exam. Moreover, some students often miss some classes one after another for brief periods (for example, when the husband has a morning shift at work and there is nobody to stay with the little children but the mum-learner, or brief periods when students go back to the native country for family reasons). It might be that the students who answered “new” had missed those classes where particular types of tasks had been dealt with.

As stated above, almost all students answering “new”, also answered question no. 8 that they cannot always understand instructions. As there is no particular correlation between this result and “difficult” answers to question no.7, probably teachers’ explanations partially help the students in understanding what they are required to do and how to do so.
11. What is the most difficult part of test?

As stated by the CEFR, learners have just a partial competence, which does not cover all the different skills transversally. Moreover, each student has developed the different kinds of intelligence to a different extent, has his/her preferred cognitive styles, and has elaborated his/her own learning strategies (see section 1.6): this means that some people can find some activities more difficult than others and vice versa. This is confirmed by the results given to this question, which is intended to understand which part of the course exam students find more difficult to cope with.

A2 students were asked to tick the part of the exam they find the hardest. The test is made up of three different parts: 2 listening activities, 2 reading and comprehension, and 2 written compositions of different length and complexity (see appendix A). Students produced different answers, and the percentage of each answer was distributed quite uniformly within the classes. For this reason, it is important to give students the opportunity to practice on all skills, so that all can increase their mastering of the particular skills they feel less able in.

A2 students

Considering classes separately, we can notice that in class 1 and 2 (taught by the same teacher) almost nobody answered “writing”, while in the other two classes this is the part which is mostly perceived as difficult by students. As we have already reported above, students of class 2 stating to question no. 7 (do you think that test you are required to do in class are easy or difficult?) that tests are difficult, wrote that it is because they feel they cannot write properly or master grammar rules. This is quite inconsistent with the answers they gave to this question. It could be useful to let students reflect upon what they think about their skills and tests, and monitor their progress by suggesting activities of self-
correction, or activities which, for example, involve discussion soon after the test, as well as comparing pre-test predictions about what they will find difficult and actual performance, so that they get accustomed to analyse their own performance. Another useful instrument could be the portfolio (D’Annunzio, Serragiotto, 2007), personal or even collective, where students collect their works and see how they are improving, also comparing their performance with that of their classmates or “models” provided by the teacher.

As the group of students is too heterogeneous in terms of students’ origin to obtain telling percentages, it is difficult to make correlations between answers given and the distance between mother tongue and target language. Nevertheless, again it has been noticed that students who answered “writing” are mainly those speaking a Romance language (Romanian, Moldavian, and Bosnian) along with some students who speak a distant mother tongue (like an Indian language or Chinese) but have been living in Italy for a long time.

As for B1 students, differently from A2 students, this was an open question (because class tests can vary and we did not want to constrain answers to fixed options). The question produced diverse answers, although in general we can notice that students mainly have difficulties in writing (10 people) and listening (6 people), these two skills achieving 77% of all answers. Only 2 people answered they have some problems in reading and comprehension, and 3 students wrote they do not find any difficulty in tests. For 2 students what is most difficult is to discuss answers: the teacher in fact usually asks students to report back what they have listened to, or written about. This result is not surprising as productive skills (i.e. writing) generally develop completely later in time compared to receptive skills (written comprehension and listening) (D’Annunzio, 2007).
The difficulties in writing strictly reflect what students declared when answering question no.3 (what is most difficult for you?), that is they find it very difficult to use grammatical rules. As for the listening part, this is quite a surprising result, as nobody answered question no.3 by mentioning “listening”, therefore it would be good to investigate the reason of this inconsistency (is there the listening part practised in class or do they just face this kind of activity in tests?).

B1 students were also asked to write the reason of their choice. They mainly answered that they find it difficult to learn and remember grammar rules, in particular verb conjunction and double consonants (writing) and to understand new words (reading and comprehension and listening).

Writing:
- “sbaglio sempre scrivere, sbaglio le dopie”
- “facio fatica da scrivere le doppie”
- “deve cercare parole, fare verbi in tempo giusto”
- “appena d’imparare la grammatica”
- “io non so bene grammatica”
- “devo ancora imparare come scrivere bene, senza errori, per me parlare è più facile”
- “non mi ricordo melio le doppie”
- “io parlo e scrivo spagnolo per me ci sono fanti falsi amici”

Reading and comprehension:
- “perché non conosco le tante parole” (2 people)
- “alcuni parole difficile”

Listening:
- “molto veloce”
- “ogni tanti ci sono le parole nuove che io non conosco e diventa difficile capire il senso”
- “tante volte non riesco a capire bene”
- “non conosco te tante parole”
- “le parole strane”

It can be noticed that students seem to be able to detect what their difficulties are properly, showing a developed capacity of self-analysis.
What is interesting about the written part is that, although students’ proficiency level is higher than basic, they are still more worried about accuracy than for example about lexical richness or originality. Equating language learning with mastery of grammar and vocabulary seems to be quite frequent when learning a FL (Harris 1997), the teacher should ensure that students are aware that actual performance is made up of many other elements. However, in general, this result can also be interpreted as a confirmation of the interest students have in formal evaluation, and in acquiring language properly and accurately.

12. Would you, yourself, be able to say whether you have done well or not in the test?

Most of the students perceive they can understand by themselves whether they have done well or not in tests, at least a little. Only 10 (7 A2 and 3 B1 students) out of 61 indicated they need the feedback of their teachers, as they cannot tell how the test has gone.

![Pie chart]

Again, students could be encouraged to adopt the so-called performance self-assessment (Edele A. et al., 2015), that is to ask students to self-estimate their performance immediately after a test of linguistic ability. Comparison between what students think and the actual result of the test allows us to see in practice whether the two kinds of evaluation (self-evaluation and test-evaluation) do in fact correspond. As this kind of self-evaluation refers to a concrete task and situation, this is usually more reliable and specific than general self-assessment about one’s ability (ability self-assessment according to the dichotomy of Edele et al.). This would not only allow the teacher or the researcher to understand whether students are actually able to self-evaluate themselves, but also to introduce them to some notions about evaluation and assessment criteria, which we have seen are not generally shared by teachers.
13. Are you worried about the final test?

This question aims at detecting how students feel about the final exam and therefore the external evaluation of their learning achievements. Answers are varied both as far as A2 students and B1 students are concerned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A2 students</th>
<th>B1 students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32% Yes</td>
<td>39% Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68% No</td>
<td>61% No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All students were also asked to write why they feel worried or calm about the final exam. In general, almost all students feeling afraid attributed that to a) uncertainty about what the test will be like; b) uncertainty about one’s own proficiency, sometimes referred to specific skills (these two motivation given by 13 out of 20 people answering the question); c) nervousness (3 people). Two people answered they absolutely need the qualification issued at the end of the exam, therefore they feel pressured. Other reasons given are:

- “sono una persona perfezionista”
- “volo fare tutto bene, corete”

Students who are not worried, mainly feel that they still have the required level (7 out of 17 answers given) or that they still have enough time to reach the required level for the exam (5 people). Other reasons given are:

- “It’s only a test”
- “I attend all the lessons and my teacher is very hard worker”
- “If I failed I would be perfect next time”
- “It is possible so I must exercise myself”
- “perche normale fare il test”

It has been noticed that men tend to be less afraid than women about the final exam. Indeed, out of 15 men attending classes, 10 answered they are not worried, while women answering the same were just 10 out of 46.
Error correction and students’ perception about evaluation

The final part of the questionnaire is given over to the moment when tests, exercises, and performances are checked and errors corrected, and to the feelings students have about their improvement and the importance evaluation has to them.

14. How do you prefer to be assessed?

In the same way as for the preferred work modality (question no. 6: do you prefer to work alone, in pairs, or in groups, during lessons?), this question has produced answers showing an interesting shift between students in A2 classes and in B1 classes. The great majority of A2 students (26 out of 38) prefer to be assessed individually, that is the teacher checking their own performance and giving them a feedback about it. Only 8 people out of 38 prefer collective correction, and 4 individual self-correction. Although this result may seem discouraging, as it would be more consistent with a pedagogical (teaching-dependent) approach, it is absolutely positive in terms of interest, as we can consider it as evidence of the students’ interest in evaluation. During the survey, indeed, learners expressed their preference by telling the researcher that it is only by having their test or exercises checked by the teacher that they can properly and better understand how their skills are improving. On the contrary, as regards the
B1 learners, more than half of them (13 out of 23) answered they prefer collective correction, that is checking exercises by speaking out loud what the correct solutions are. Of the other students, 9 prefer individual correction on the part of the teacher, while 1, a Japanese girl, prefers to correct her test on her own.

If we consider “collective correction” in its broader sense, it is a kind of self-evaluation as well, because each student marks errors in his/her own exercise book. This change in the way students prefer to be evaluated can partly be connected to the higher autonomy students of this level possess (apart from personality-linked preference). This also confirms the efficacy of the teachers’ encouragement for self-evaluation.

15. When you cannot understand, do you ask for clarification?

As confirmed by their teachers, students do generally ask for clarification when they do not understand their teacher’s explanation or judgment. Only 8 students out of 61 (6 A2 students and 2 B1 students) answered they do not ask for clarifications. One of these students added that he would like to ask, but he feels he does not master the language to do so. On the whole, most of those who answered “no” have only been living in Italy a short time and speak a distant language (for example, an Indian language, Arabian, Thai), confirming what this learner wrote down. However, this result can be considered an evidence of the students’ interest and participation in the evaluative process too.
16. How do you feel when the teacher corrects your errors?

The answers to this question were almost completely unanimous in all classes: 36 out of 38 A2 students and all of 23 B1 students answered that they feel relaxed and happy, as they desire to be corrected in order to improve. The other 2 people answered it does not matter to them when teachers correct them. The positive result is that nobody feels nervous or uncomfortable with error correction, not even those who, in answer to question no.5, wrote they generally feel agitated during class activities.

Students in general agree that this positive attitude is due to the relaxed and friendly environment within the class. This is very important, as a competitive or unfriendly environment can be source of discouragement and lead to the failing of one’s learning (see affective filter in section 1.3, and the analysis of question no. 5 in the present section). One B1 learner also explained that her teacher often repeats the importance of making errors, not only for the students, but also for the teachers themselves, because it is through knowing what errors learners make that they can become aware of what they need to change in their teaching.

17. How much does the final assessment matter for you?

The final assessment, that is the score students obtain in the final exam, is considered to count a lot for almost all the students (44 people out of 61). It must be added that there is no correlation with the motivation expressed in the first part of the questionnaire. This means that even those students who attend school for obtaining a residence permit or for work reasons are however interested in achieving a good result, as a confirmation that their proficiency is increasing.
There is no particular correlation between the course level and the answers given.

18. Once you have completed the course, would you like to start a more advanced course?

Answers to this question have produced an interesting result, which would be worth analysing more deeply. Most of the students answered they do intend to attend a more advanced course once they have passed the A2/B1 exam. Only 10 learners (6 A2, and 4 B1 students) indicated that they do not intend to continue studying Italian. There is no correlation between the motivations given in the first part of the questionnaire and this answer.

Teachers all agree in stating that generally students leave school once they have achieved that basic proficiency which allows them to obtain a permit and to manage the common situations of their everyday life in the host country. This is also confirmed by the number of students who are now attending B1 courses, which is very small compared to that of students in A1-A2 classes. It would be interesting to further analyse what the reasons of this inconsistency between students’ statements and actual enrolment are, so as to detect whether it is connected with students’ family or job commitments, to the distance between their houses and the school (B1 courses are only held in San Bonifacio, and B2 courses in Verona), or whether there is a lack or a decrease in interest in learning the language and reaching higher proficiency levels, or whether the results in the exam are discouraging and compromise students’ willingness to continue.

84%
A2 students

18%
5% 3%

74%
B1 students

9%
22%

69%
Very much
Quite a lot
A little
Not important

Yes
No

16%
84%
19. How do you understand that your proficiency is improving?

The answers to this question show that students would seem to mainly perceive their improvement outside school (that is by native speakers’ feedback and the way they manage everyday life) and in school (by test marks and teacher’s feedback) almost to the same extent. This difference between students’ answers could be linked both to the kind and extent of contact they have with Italian people outside school, and to the reaching of a meta-linguistic competence (see section 1.4) and cognitive skills which allow them to discuss about the language and consequently interpret school results properly.

Factors involved are many and different, presumably connected with the extent of social life and interaction with native speakers learners have. Considering the great number of nationalities of the students attending the courses and the fact that there are mainly only 1-2 students for each nationality, generalisation about a possible correlation between an ethnic group (and the extent of its closure/openness towards the host group) and the given answers cannot be carried out. Nevertheless, taking into account the two main ethnic groups constituting the students surveyed, that is India (26% of the students) and Morocco (15% of the students), it has been noticed that Indian students seem to be more dependent on teacher’s feedback and test results; this can make us believe it can be connected with an attitude of closure towards the host society, or maybe, considering the breadth of the Indian community, with the fact they have more opportunities to speak their mother tongue and “escape” from the urgent need to use Italian. On the contrary, all Moroccan students answered they perceive their improvement by the interaction in the host society and with the host community. Of course, we would need further research in order to confirm these assumptions.
While discussing with students, some women stated that as they do not work, nor have little children studying in Italian schools, they have few opportunities to talk Italian outside school, as their husbands and grown-up children do not want to talk Italian at home, and for this reason they feel that it is difficult to get an idea about their improvement outside school. This would seem to confirm that social interaction is the key factor.

Nevertheless, although it could be assumed that in general those answering that they can perceive their improvement through class feedback probably have few external contacts with native speakers, or that they are still school-dependent in terms of learning direction because of their low proficiency level, this would be a misleading conclusion which cannot be generalised. For example, 3 B1 students in class 7 (all coming from Romania) expressed the reason of their choice (school feedback) by saying that having lived in Italy for more than 7 years, they have already been able to manage their everyday life and have been speaking fluently for a long time. This implies that in order to understand further progresses they are making, they must turn to a language specialist such as the teacher. This is rather an observation one would not expect, if we consider autonomy to be a final goal and not a starting point, but it shows a great capacity for introspection and
self-analysis. It must be said that analysing all the questionnaires and looking for correlations between time spent in Italy and answers to this question, there are too many exceptions which make it impossible to generalise the observation expressed by the three students. This makes us realise how many and how varied the factors involved are.

Moreover, as for the two proficiency levels taken separately, there are no significant differences to signal.

An interesting issue further research could work on might be the creation of a material or of an instrument which would help students to integrate school evaluation and real-life evaluation in order them to be able to self-monitor their progress in any situation they use the language. This might be realised, for example, by creating grids or rubrics (see section 2.3) which display different indicators related to specific language components on the one hand, and different attitudes on the other, or, again through self-evaluation grids (such as grids made up of the so-called “Can you…? questions”).

A2 students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marks</th>
<th>Teacher's feedback</th>
<th>Life management</th>
<th>Native speakers' feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B1 students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marks</th>
<th>Teacher's feedback</th>
<th>Life management</th>
<th>Native speakers' feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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20. How important is it for you to know the Italian language properly?

Almost all students (55 out of 61) declared learning Italian properly, without making errors, is very important to them. This answer is in line with the answers given throughout the whole questionnaire.

5.3 Discussion of the results and personal observations

This research has allowed the researcher to see how evaluation is conducted in practice within the CPIA in San Bonifacio, by analysing different courses and classes within the CPIA district through the use of questionnaires. The opportunity also arose to not only use questionnaires but also have follow-up interviews with most of the teachers thereby obtaining more detailed information by integrating the data collected with the teachers’ personal observations and feelings. This was possible with students as well, as classes were not very large, and free discussion on their part arose spontaneously.

According to what teachers indicated in their questionnaire the teaching activity and the evaluation process are managed with criteria set at provincial level and put into practice by the teachers working in the CPIA, who share the same approach, syllabus, and some common procedures. Specifically, the courses are planned according to the CEFR indicators and its specifications provided by the Italian examination boards, and to the guidelines provided by the Italian Ministry of Education, University, and Research. In the case of A2 courses, their application is ultimately specified by regional regulations.

One major issue which has emerged from the analysis of the teacher questionnaire is that teaching – and consequently evaluating - adult learners learning a SL in the context of CPIAs cannot always be conducted by adopting the same procedures used in other educational contexts. The two main and biggest “limitations” that have been detected are 1) the heterogeneity of the class-group in terms of actual starting proficiency, mother tongue and needs, and 2) the fact that accredited qualifications are issued. These two aspects together make the planning
of the language courses and the consequent evaluating procedure difficult to manage in a way which can benefit all students individually: on the one hand, it would be necessary to differentiate the course activities, materials, tests, rate of progress, and evaluation criteria, according to the personal variables characterising each single student, such as his/her past learning history, his/her migratory project, or his/her L1; on the other hand, the social spendability and above all the legal validity linked to the final exam and the qualification issued often prevent teachers from diverting from the syllabus or modifying it during the course, and taking into consideration personal variables during the final exam, such as the student’s efforts and learning development process. Teachers cannot differentiate materials or modify the scheduled lessons and topics too much in order to meet students’ personal needs and interests, although they try to “personalise” lessons in accordance with the linguistic level of the group members. Moreover, the discontinuity of students’ attendance makes things even more difficult. Students often miss classes because of valid personal reasons (work, family, finance, transport, periods they spend in their native country, etc.), and this implies that the learning process is sometimes not the same for all the learners attending one class. Nevertheless, all these aspects can be coped with, at least partially, by not considering the final exam as the ultimate and main purpose of these language courses. Evaluation - in particular as far as basic users are concerned – is indeed a predictive procedure about the student’s potential in order to motivate and direct his/her future learning. What teachers normally do is to encourage students by giving positive feedback and recognising their efforts and progress (even if the proficiency achieved continues to be lower than that required for the exam), helping them to improve and acquire those skills they need to direct their learning by themselves and to connect their school learning with their extracurricular experiences. This motivational feedback and evaluation will allow all students, above all those with a lower proficiency, to persist in their studies, with the awareness that progress is indeed occurring, even if they are still not ready to get through the final exam. Testing allows students and teachers to obtain information about individual progress and, in the end, to orient students towards the more appropriate final exam at the end of the course (which is not the same for all the members of the class).

In general, teachers’ answers to their questionnaire have shown that class teaching is managed in a way which aims at making the adult student aware of
his/her own learning process - as suggested by the Affective-Humanistic Approach and by the andragogical model - by generally preferring individual work to group work, and to traditional teacher-led learning. Teachers indeed tend to serve as language consultants who guide students towards autonomy, although sometimes learners still require a teacher-pedagogue, who manages their learning and provides them with the feedback they need and cannot obtain elsewhere. Therefore, teachers usually and mainly ask students to work autonomously on exercises and activities, but combine this kind of practice with collective discussion and traditional lessons where the teacher explains grammar rules also adopting a deductive method. Individual work also allows to cope, at least in part, with the fact that students within the same class are of different levels and work at different pace.

By comparing teachers’ and students’ answers, an interesting result emerged: indeed students, in particular in A2 classes, mainly declared that they prefer to work in groups, as they feel they learn better and because they consider it less compromising, therefore contradicting teachers’ beliefs that individual work is preferred by adult students themselves. The teachers themselves were surprised by this result as well, and this will probably be an issue they will discuss further.

Evaluation is carried out both during the normal teaching activities and in specific moments where formal testing is regularly administered using mock exams or past papers (ministerial exams and tests issued by the examination boards). Formal testing allows students to become aware of their level and skills by referring to the CEFR levels according to which the final exam is based upon. Teachers’ feedback allows them to obtain clearer information about the rate and extent to which they are improving. This kind of testing and consequent evaluation - which is mainly objective, meaning that it is based on results producing a numerical score - is normally combined with a more personal – subjective - kind of evaluation on the part of the teachers, who observe students’ attitudes and participation in the classroom and make notes, personal comments or remarks in class registers or diaries (with reference to what we have stated in chapter 2, this practice could be considered as “spontaneous evaluation” carried out through “distributed testing”). The students’ progress is thus monitored by considering many variables, apart from their fulfilling a specific task. Although this kind of assessment is perhaps more subjective, it is, paradoxically, often more reliable than formal testing because students are observed in relaxed situations
where the affective filter linked to stressful or frightening experiences is less likely to arise. On the contrary, tests are often a source of concern for students, and this sense of anxiety can sometimes produce results which are below the students’ actual capabilities. As stated by one of the teachers, these notes or observations gathered during the class routine serve as prediction about students’ results in tests: tests are generally a means to confirm (or gauge) whether teachers’ hypotheses about students’ skills and progress are actually true.

As far as the factors involved in the evaluation process as affecting students’ learning are concerned, it emerged that prior schooling, the initial proficiency level, and the distance between the student’s L1 and Italian are generally taken into account by teachers while giving their feedback; this is also specifically prescribed by the indications stated in the CPIA educational policy plan which was provided to the researcher by the coordinator teacher. Nevertheless, as stated by 2 of the teachers, this is possible only during the initial stages of the course, in order to motivate and encourage students. As no distinction at all can be made during the final examination, where students are objectively evaluated with reference to the CEFR syllabus and by adopting a standardised test designed for the whole Verona province, teachers consider that – once they have motivated and encouraged their students – students should also be made aware of their achievement objectively, regardless of variables affecting their learning.

Teacher evaluation is often accompanied by students’ self-evaluation, which is generally conducted in two different ways: by 1) collective correction (the whole class correcting exercises or tests all together, each student checking his/her own paper) or self-correction (mainly for discrete-item or closed-item exercises involving numerical scores), and by 2) working on texts which have already been studied and are used again for new purposes. As far as correction is concerned, an interesting result emerged, as a shift between A2 students and B1 students’ preferences has been noticed: almost all students in A2 classes prefer to be assessed individually, the teacher correcting their mistakes and giving feedback about their individual learning, so that they do not miss important information and are specifically made aware of what they are still expected to achieve; among B1 students, on the contrary, a large percentage of students prefer to be assessed collectively, each checking his/her own paper. This could be interpreted as evidence of students’ interest in being evaluated and monitored, and, above all, as a confirmation that the capacity of managing correction by oneself changes and
improves with the increasing of one’s proficiency.

However, the conditions in which language is learnt - that is the heterogeneous environment of the class and the flexibility and complexity of the language components - do not always permit teachers to share the evaluation criteria they have adopted with their students (apart from numerical scales used for scoring standard tests), as these criteria vary from task to task and are often too technical, both in cognitive and terminological terms, to be explained to the learner, or to the group of learners, made up of people who do not always share the same idea of school, and thus of evaluation. In other words, this means that students do not often possess a high enough language proficiency to understand the terminology relating to the evaluation practice and the school system in general. Furthermore, prior schooling should be considered as well, as each culture is characterised by its own system of rules and therefore shapes any student’s relationship with knowledge and education (see section 1.6). These hindrances make sharing not only difficult, but even frustrating for both teachers and students, therefore teachers prefer to guide their students learning, by giving them the feedback they need about their advancement and the quality of their learning themselves. In order to make students more involved in and aware of the evaluation system, and consequently to help them to achieve learning autonomy, self-evaluation might be further encouraged and developed, by gradually introducing students to some basic knowledge about language and assessment strategies, and integrating the practice of self-assessment into the normal lesson activity, starting from a single task or skill in order to get students accustomed to this practice. Of course, this will take longer than it normally takes with FL students, who study a language for different purposes, and often for longer periods, and who generally share the same school and evaluation system. This can be done, for example, by asking students to reflect upon how the teacher should evaluate their performance. By way of an example, see below a grid designed by Harris (1997), in this case related to the written composition (but it can also be adapted for other skills, like speaking):
According to Chamot and O’Malley (Harris, 1997) self-rating “requires the student to exercise a variety of learning strategies and higher order thinking skills that not only provide feedback to the student but also provide direction for future learning” and this is desirable with adult learners in particular. Moreover, considering that sometimes students tend to equate language learning with mastery of grammar and vocabulary, as opposed to actual performance, and equate progress with increased accuracy (Harris, 1997) - as also confirmed by the students’ answers to some questions in our questionnaire - this kind of activity, particularly when applied to productive skills, could also help them to realise that there are many other aspects to take into consideration which determine one’s progress (as for example pragmatics, creativity, etc.).

Although teachers do not generally share evaluation criteria with their students, they do discuss the objectives and goals the course with them, and tend to give comprehensible feedback and encourage self-correction and discussion. From the answers given by students to their questionnaire, it emerged that this results in the students’ impression that they can generally manage to monitor their learning by themselves and they can understand their teachers’ feedback properly. Communication would seem to be efficient, but it would be interesting to analyse in further depth whether students’ perceptions actually correspond to their teachers’ ones, or whether students – when the evaluation criteria are not shared -

1. How do you think I should mark your work? Which of these are important?
   - presentation (handwriting, etc.)
   - organization of ideas (e.g. introduction, development, conclusion, use of paragraphs)
   - interest and relevance of content
   - linking: the way ideas are linked together (e.g. use of linkers, etc.)
   - accuracy: how many and what sort of mistakes there are
   - vocabulary

2. How many marks should I give for each area? (For example: Interest: 5 marks; Presentation: 5 marks; Organization of ideas: 5 marks; Accuracy: 5 marks).

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tend to infer wrong conclusions for example by referring to their past experiences, or by interpreting results with reference to personal assumptions.

Questions about the formal testing have allowed us to realise what students’ concerns are, and from their answers - although sometimes inconsistent between each other - it has emerged that grammar accuracy and insecurity about one’s proficiency (apart from the emotional aspect connected with testing) are the main reasons of concern for students. As regards what students find difficult when tested in class, answers varied a lot. A shift between A2 and B1 students has been noticed for the reading and comprehension section, which still seems to be difficult for A2 students (39%) while it is not so for B1 students. Analysing A2 students’ answers, it would seem that the problems with written comprehension can be connected with the distance between the students’ mother tongue and Italian, or to the little time spent in Italy.

Probably due to the discontinuity of students’ attendance at classes, many answers regarding formal testing were inconsistent within the same class group, in particular with reference to the familiarity with test typologies and techniques. Nevertheless, although some of the students declared they do not always understand test instructions, it generally seems that test typologies and techniques are not perceived as problematic or disorienting for students, but it is more their imperfect mastering of the language which is perceived as causing difficulties.

Answers were not only inconsistent within the class group, but have also shown that students are not completely able to judge their difficulties and skills by themselves, although most of the students declared they are, at least a little. Actually, many questions which were connected to each other in order to obtain a more exhaustive picture of the student’s perception (for example questions no. 7 Do you think that the tests you are required to do in class are easy or difficult to do? Why?, no. 11 What is the most difficult part of test) were answered by the same student giving inconsistent answers. This could be resolved by systematically asking students – as suggested during our analysis – to self-estimate their performance immediately after a test of linguistic ability or after an exercise or task (the so-called “performance self-assessment” according to Edele A. et al., 2015), and through moments of class discussion guided by the teachers. In this way students get used to reflecting in depth on language components and what can cause one’s difficulties. Following the example provided by Harris (1997), and the indications suggested by Edele (Edele et al. 2015), a performance-
assessment grid might be similar to the one designed by the researcher below. In this case we have prepared it for the listening activity, but it can be also prepared for other language skills such as reading and comprehension, by altering the factors considered).

**Reflecting on the test. - Listening.**

Was the listening text:

a) easy   b) quite easy   c) quite difficult   d) very difficult

How many answers do you think you did correctly: ___ out of ______

Audio-picture matching:

- Could you immediately match audio and picture?
  a) Yes.
  b) Not immediately, I had many doubts between one or the other.
  c) No, I could not understand.

Let’ see why!

- The audio quality was:   a) ok   b) not ok
- The person was speaking  a) clearly   b) not clearly
- The person was speaking  
  a) too fast   b) normal speed   c) too slow
- The person’ accent was   a) clear   b) not clear
- Did the person use words you have never heard before?  
  a) yes   b) no
- The situations depicted were:  
  a) familiar   b) not familiar

As argued by Nunan (Harris, 1997), “self-assessment can increase awareness of individual progress, not only in terms of language but in terms of communicative objectives, so that skills development can be seen as gradual rather than all-or-nothing process”. Therefore this kind of activity can, not only help students to reflect upon their own performance, but can also function as a “motivator”: students are made aware that although there are still difficult things
(or even impossible) for them, there are many other areas where they have been improving.

The integration of the syllabus with these kinds of self-evaluation and the already mentioned gradual teaching of some strategies and evaluation criteria which allow students to infer how their learning is proceeding, not only in class but also in real life, should also be encouraged as we consider the positive results which emerged from the questionnaire analysis about the positive atmosphere characterising the class, and the students’ interest in evaluation and feedback (confirmed by teachers’ answers to their questionnaire). Answers indeed have shown that students mainly have a positive attitude towards teachers’ feedback, demonstrating an awareness that being evaluated and judged is the first step in learning from one’s errors and in teachers improving the course. All students but 6 answered they feel it is very important to learn the SL accurately, in order not to make mistakes (the other options to that question was “the important thing is to make myself understood” and “not very much”), and 44 out of 61 stated that they consider it very important to obtain a good score in the exam, and not only to pass it. Moreover, all students showed a constructive and positive attitude towards the formal environment, which is perceived as anxiety-causing only for a small minority of students. Of course, considering each student as a unique individual and the core of the teaching, the reasons which cause this small minority to experience school as anxiety-causing should be further analysed in order to be coped with, but in general, results are very positive; indeed, even those students stating that they generally feel anxious at school, answered that they accept corrections and feedback enthusiastically as essentially useful for their learning. This positive framework would be congenial for the introduction of practices leading to self-direction-, such as peer assessment (which could be risky or even useless in a non-friendly, or competitive, environment) and, as said before, self-evaluation. If we consider motivation to be the impetus triggering learning and allowing learners to overcome difficulties (Balboni, 2002), the friendly atmosphere and the general interest of students will probably allow the introduction of this kind of work into teaching.

Since in SL contexts self-evaluation on the part of learners generally occurs both in school and outside school, in natural “contexts” (Semplici, 1997), a question was asked to detect how students think they mainly monitor their own improvement, i.e. according to which feedback (school-outside school). Answers
were quite varied, not much between A2 and B1 students, but rather between one
student and another within the group surveyed. Many students declared that they
can predominantly monitor their improvement by taking into consideration how
well they are managing their everyday life compared to when they arrived in Italy,
and how comfortable they feel when using the Italian language. Some stated that
they receive positive feedback from Italian people (for example at work), which
they consider an index of improvement. These two kinds of monitoring, that we
can define as “outside school feedback”, constitute 56% of students’ answers. At
the same time, 44 % of students stated that it is in fact the teacher’s feedback and
test scores which are the main source they take as a reference in order to
understand whether and at what rate they are improving. Discussing this with
some members of class 7, students gave two reasons for this “school-
dependency”: some women who do not work and do not have little children of
school age claimed that they do not have many opportunities to use the Italian
language; on the other hand, people who have been living in Italy for many years
already possess the basic language to manage their lives, therefore they feel they
need a language professional to monitor higher level improvement. Nevertheless,
as stated while analysing students’ answers (section 5.2), these assumptions
cannot be generalised because they are not confirmed by the overall data collected
through the questionnaire.

The amount of interaction with the host country and the cohesiveness of each
ethnic group might seem to be the explanation for students’ answer to that
question (also considering Schumann’s Acculturation Theory). Correlations have
been detected between students’ native countries and their answer to this question,
considering the two largest ethnic groups, that is Moroccan and Indian. In the case
of Indians, who mainly answered they can understand how their learning is
proceeding through school feedback, one could assume that it is a large, close,
cohesive community therefore they do not feel the need to interact with native
speakers; on the contrary, all Moroccan students answered they use outside school
feedback as a reference, in particular life-management, leading us to think that
perhaps the community is more open towards the host country. In order to be able
to validate this hypothesis, further research involving more and wider ethnic
groups would be needed.

As we have suggested in section 5.2, it might be appealing to design an
instrument which could help students to integrate school feedback with outside
school feedback, in order to be able to self-assess their proficiency in any situation students come into contact with. The arrangement of grids made up of “Can you…?” questions could be useful, for example, in particular for monitoring proficiency outside school. These are very easy to design and can be integrated with new items (also by students themselves) and are often used in textbooks for self-assessing one’s achievement at the end of a teaching unit, and are therefore very familiar to students.

Finally, an interesting and positive result is that there is no connection between students’ declared motivations to enrol on a SL course and their interest in school evaluation: even those students who answered they have enrolled because they need a qualification and therefore school learning in order to obtain a residence permit, or because they were asked by their employer to do so, do in fact state that they consider it very important to obtain a high score in the final test and to learn the language accurately, in order not to make mistakes. The great majority of students also stated that they intend to continue studying in the future and attend more advanced courses. On the whole our research has refuted our prior “prejudicial” hypothesis that formal evaluation might be uninteresting and disregarded by people who are continuously faced with their own language proficiency by the everyday tasks.

When describing the purposes of the present research project in chapter 4, we stated that possible correlations between students’ origins and characteristics would be investigated. Apart from what we have said so far, some correlations between students’ native language (Romance v. non-Romance languages) and the skills in which students feel to be lacking, and a correlation between students’ gender and attitude towards the test (men are generally less worried than women) have been detected. It must be said that, due to the limited number of participants and the large number of variations in each variable (i.e. many nationalities, age), or imbalanced variables (i.e. gender), it was impossible to obtain correlations to percentages which can be generalised.

To sum up, results have been positive both in terms of students’ interest and of efficiency of the evaluation practice, although communication and sharing of the teaching strategies could be improved, for example through the systematic integration of self-assessment. In fact, according to the researcher, most of the issues which would require to be developed further would need to be considered not only by teachers, but also and above all by those designing CPIA courses, as
there is often too little time and too little space to manoeuvre in order to integrate communication and sharing practices.

5.4 Limitations and further considerations

During the development of the project, some aspects emerged that could be better developed in order to obtain a more exhaustive picture of the actual perception students have of evaluation.

The first issue that emerged from the analysis is that there are many inconsistencies between one student and another (for example, about the techniques used in class) and in terms of single student’s answers (as for example what they find most difficult in class tests and what they consider particularly difficult in the Italian language, and again their worries about the final exam), which should have been examined in more depth, in order to understand whether these inconsistencies are due to a limited capacity for self-analysis or due to other reasons. Indeed, it might be interesting to further investigate students’ actual capacity to self-perceive and self-evaluate their learning both in class and in real life, by questioning them in more detail about specific tasks and situations where they should be expected to be able to observe their progress and success in using the language. This means widening the last part of the student questionnaire in particular, which is related to the issue of self-evaluation: this could be done for example by adding more items or questions which would involve students’ introspection regarding their attitude towards the language and their capacity of using it in real life. We did in fact decide to keep the questionnaire short in order to let students to answer it truthfully, without the pressure of having too many questions and too little time. Further research could probably integrate these results with more specific information. The questionnaire might be accompanied with other instruments for data collection, such as interviews and direct observation during class activities. This might also compensate for the fact that many students did not answer questions, particularly open questions, in the questionnaire.

Due to the timing, that is the fact that our research was carried out in the first few months of the courses, it was decided to plan the research in order to obtain a general idea about the evaluation process within the CPIA, as it was not possible to refer to specific evaluation procedures which the learners cannot yet identify or compare with one another. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to continue the
research for a longer time in order to accustom students to the different terminologies and the evaluation procedures, and obtain more reliable and telling results, also about specific techniques and methods. Indeed, as students had not been made familiar with linguistics or teaching methods, it was not possible to suggest such a detailed analysis to be carried out all at one time, but this might be done, by gradually inserting self-observation and discussion sessions within the course. Another reason why it would be worth having further ongoing monitoring and development of this early analysis, is that this could help in obtaining more precise and spendable data to improve the course management, and see students’ reactions to new contributions and changes.

Another issue which could increase the validity of the research is involving a higher number of students, perhaps, by also including A1 classes, which constitute a significant part of the courses offered by the CPIA. As regards A1 students, it was not possible to include them this time because of the use of questionnaires, as their proficiency did not allow them to understand questions and answer open questions in particular, and it could discourage them. Direct observation might be a solution, but again the time our research was carried out was too early in the course for these students. On the contrary, as far as highly proficient students are concerned, the number of surveyed students was limited by the discontinuity of their attendance at classes.

Further study might not only be in terms of taking into account specific skills (like self-evaluation) or methodology (such as the use of a specific kind of scoring, or of speech reformulation in order to correct errors, or the encouraging of peer feedback, etc)., but might also involve comparing the results provided by the present research with data gathered just after the final exam (through, for example, post-exam interviews) and during the second part of the school year (February-June), to see how many of the students continue to attend classes, and how whether passing or not passing the exam will have influenced their feelings about formal evaluation.
6. Final summary

This research project originates from our conviction that evaluation has an important role to play both for teachers and students, not only as a source of information about one’s progress, but – particularly for students - as a “motivator” towards personal improvement as well. Our study was conducted by taking the main and most recent, up-to-date contributions from the field of language teaching as our point of reference. The questionnaires we designed were prepared by following the indications provided by scholars, in order to examine how these are or can be implemented in teaching within the CPIA. Our study allowed us to obtain a clear picture of how the courses offered by the CPIA in San Bonifacio are managed and how evaluation is conducted by teachers in this context. Moreover we examined how students perceive their learning of Italian as a SL and experience the evaluation process and error correction in class. However, this work should be seen as an early investigation, which would be interesting to develop further in future - in collaboration with the teachers - by integrating it with more detailed investigations of specific evaluation methods and instruments and by monitoring the group surveyed for a longer period of time.

In order to sum up the results of the present work, we will try to answer the four questions we set as those the research is intended to answer. In general, results to all our research questions have been positive, although the many inconsistencies, in particular within students’ answers to their questionnaire, make us think that there is still room for further research and action:

1) Teachers monitor students throughout the whole course of instruction both by administering formal tests and by observing them during the course activities. Teachers generally use personal instruments according to their preferences, such as personal diaries or registers, in order to collect data on students’ progress, rather than shared tools. As far as class tests are concerned, teachers mainly administer past papers from exams, or prepare tests which are similar to those issued by the examination boards; only two out of four teachers stated that sometimes they use stratified (difficulty-graduated) tests in order for each student to be allowed to do them according to his/her capabilities.

As for the factors taken into account when evaluating their students, teachers agree in stating that variables such as the distance between Italian
and the students’ mother tongue or the students’ initial level and ongoing progress should be taken into consideration, at least at the beginning of the course. This should be done in order to encourage students and to trigger a constructive attitude towards learning, by creating a positive relationship with the learners; nevertheless, no distinctions at all can be made during the final examination, therefore these variables cannot be taken into account.

Self-evaluation is encouraged as well, and students are in fact often asked to self-assess their performance. Nevertheless, according to the researcher, self-evaluation other than self-correction could be introduced and developed, in order to increase students’ autonomy. Inconsistent answers on the part of many individual students, in fact, make us think that not all students are able to self-evaluate their proficiency or performance.

2) Although most students stated that they can understand their teachers’ advice and feedback, teachers admitted they do not always share their evaluation criteria or scales with students, mainly because they feel students do not possess the language and basic teaching notions which would permit this sharing. This leads us to think that further analysis of students’ actual understanding of their teachers’ criteria would be needed. Sometimes there were inconsistencies also between students’ and teachers’ answers, so we can generalise that communication could be improved, for example by introducing moments of discussion and systematically sharing and adopting practices of self-evaluation and self-observation.

3) Students experience the evaluation moment in a very constructive way, by asking questions and showing great interest in the feedback received. This is particularly due to the relaxed and non-frightening atmosphere which characterises the classroom environment, confirming the assumptions of the Affective-Humanistic Approach in this respect.

4) School evaluation is perceived by students as important and essential for them to understand their progress and to improve their proficiency. Their interest is also confirmed by the answers given to questions related to their difficulties and worries about class tests and the final exam: although in a SL context the primary goal of learners is to acquire the pragmatic aspect of communication, students’ answers showed that they are very interested in
language accuracy.

Moreover, for many students, school evaluation in terms of marks and teacher’s feedback is the main and sometimes the only source of information in order for them to monitor their progress in the mastery of the language. Although outside-school evaluation is also part of the students’ experience, not all students are able to understand by themselves whether or not the language they use in their everyday lives is improving.

Some differences have been detected between how an A2 group and a B1 group experience the evaluation process. A2 students would seem to be more teacher-dependent than their B1 fellows, as they prefer their performances to be judged individually by the teacher, and at the same time they prefer to work in groups because they feel this is less compromising. On the other hand, B1 students’ answers showed a higher willingness to compromise and higher confidence (for example, they prefer collective evaluation rather than the teacher’s). Furthermore, answers given by individual B1 students were much more consistent than those of A2 students, that is they do not contradict themselves by giving different answers to similar questions, showing a greater capacity of self-analysis and introspection.

Finally, it emerged that in general the format, duration, and legal validity of the CPIA courses do not give teachers much room to manoeuvre. Although classes are very varied, differentiation and personalisation prove to be difficult. According to the researcher, this issue should be considered further by those planning the Centres at national level, perhaps arranging longer courses and providing teachers with guidelines about how to differentiate and personalise the curricula to satisfy students’ needs, and how to introduce teaching elements and SLA notions to students, in order to create an environment and an awareness which allows for a deeper sharing between teachers and students on learning issues. All this will require greater efforts on the part of all those involved, but give better results in the long term, forming higher qualified learners and better citizens as well.
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Appendix A

Past paper from the ministerial test required for obtaining a long-term residence permit.
ASCOLTO

Ascolterai dei testi numerati. Li ascolterai due volte. Scrivi il numero del testo nella casella vicino all'immagine.

ESEMPIO
Ascolterai dei testi numerati. Li ascolterai due volte. Per ogni testo, scegli con una X la risposta corretta. Ora hai un minuto di tempo per leggere la prova.

**ESEMPIO**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0. L’annuncio dice che ...</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>si può cambiare il giorno di raccolta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>i rifiuti si raccolgono in base al tipo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7. Puoi ricevere le bollette ...</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>all’ufficio postale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>sul computer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>8. Puoi andare al mare in pullman ...</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>con la famiglia a prezzo scontato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>tutti i giorni durante l’estate</td>
</tr>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>9. Si vende una moto ...</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>quasi nuova</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>di colore nero</td>
</tr>
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</table>

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<tr>
<th>10. Il Comune seleziona persone ...</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>solo di sesso femminile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>per accompagnare i visitatori</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FINE DELLA PROVA**

ATTENDI IL PERMESSO PER PROSEGUIRE

Settembre 2013
LETTURA

Guarda le foto e leggi i testi.
Per ogni testo, scegli con una X la risposta corretta.

QUESTO È UN ESEMPIO

Azienda termoidraulica cerca operaio idraulico specializzato con almeno 2 anni di esperienza.

Questa azienda cerca ...

A   un operaio generico con esperienza

B   un operaio idraulico esperto
Sei arrivato in Italia da poco e cerchi una casa in affitto?

Ecco cosa devi sapere.

- Per affittare una casa o un appartamento è obbligatorio un contratto scritto con il proprietario dell’abitazione. Ci sono diversi tipi di contratto, che hanno durata diversa.
- Prima del contratto devi presentare copia della carta d’identità, del codice fiscale, della dichiarazione dei redditi e il permesso di soggiorno valido.
- Il proprietario della casa può chiedere una cauzione, cioè l’anticipo di 3 mesi dell’affitto (al massimo).
- L’affitto va pagato ogni mese con regolarità, di solito entro i primi giorni. Ricorda che, oltre all’affitto, devi pagare le spese delle bollette di luce, acqua, gas e le spese condominiali.

**Per affittare casa devi …**

A pagare la cauzione per le spese condominiali

B firmare un contratto con il proprietario

**L’affitto …**

A va pagato ogni 3 mesi

B è mensile
Iscrizione al Sistema Sanitario Nazionale per cittadini extracomunitari

Hanno diritto all’assistenza sanitaria i cittadini extracomunitari che:
- hanno un lavoro subordinato o autonomo
- sono iscritti nelle liste di collocamento
- sono in carcere
- hanno il permesso di soggiorno

L’assistenza sanitaria spetta anche ai familiari a carico regolarmente soggiornanti e viene assicurata fin dalla nascita ai figli minorenni di extracomunitari.

Cosa serve:
- Permesso di soggiorno valido
- Residenza
- Codice fiscale

Quanto dura:
- Fino alla scadenza o revoca del permesso di soggiorno
- Illimitata in presenza di carta di soggiorno
- Per tutta la durata dell’attività lavorativa per il lavoratore stagionale

L’assistenza sanitaria nazionale è un diritto ...

A solo per chi è iscritto nelle liste di collocamento
B anche per i figli che non hanno diciotto anni

L’assistenza non scade se la persona ...

A ha la carta di soggiorno
B si trasferisce all’estero
**Scegli con una X la risposta corretta**

**ESEMPIO**

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perché sei arrivato in ritardo?</strong></td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hai pagato la bolletta?</strong></td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quando fai l’esame?</strong></td>
<td>A</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Come stanno i tuoi amici?</strong></td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Venite alla festa?</strong></td>
<td>A</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hai letto il giornale?</strong></td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cosa vuoi per cena?</strong></td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>B</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**FINE DELLA PROVA DI LETTURA**

PUOI PROSEGUIRE CON LA PROVA SUCCESSIVA
Ora devi scrivere.
Rispondi ai messaggi. Usa almeno tre parole.

Dov'è la bici?

Perché hai preso il treno?

Cosa ti cucino per cena?
Utilizzando da 20 a 40 parole, parla di uno di questi argomenti.

- uno sport che ti piace

Oppure

- una festa che ti ricordi

FINE DELLA PROVA

Come sono state le prove dell’esame?
Indica una sola risposta per ogni riga

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>facile</th>
<th>difficolte</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>prova di ascolto</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prova di lettura</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prova di scrittura</td>
<td>😊</td>
<td>😊</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Settembre 2015
ASSEGNAZIONE PUNTEGGIO

Test 04 SETTEMBRE 2015

CANDIDATO/a ______________________________ N. ____

Nota: nuova attribuzione dei punteggi per la prova scritta

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PUNTEGGIO PARZIALE</th>
<th>PUNTEGGI TOTALI</th>
<th>Punteggio assegnato</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASCOLTO</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prova 1</td>
<td>___ /6</td>
<td>_____ /10</td>
<td>x 3 ___ /30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prova 2</td>
<td>___ /4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LETTURA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prova 3</td>
<td>___ /4</td>
<td>_____ /10</td>
<td>x 3.5 ___ /35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prova 4</td>
<td>___ /6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRODUZIONE SCRITTA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROVA 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prova SMS</td>
<td>___ /15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prova Testo</td>
<td>___ /20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTALE PUNTEGGIO OTTENUTO**: 

_______ /100

San Bonifacio, 04-09-2015

Commissario/a
CRITERI DI ASSENGNAZIONE DEI PUNTEGGI

ASCOLTO: Ogni item = 3 punti
Punteggio massimo (3 x 10) = 30 punti

LETTURA: Ogni item = 3,5 punti
Punteggio massimo (3,5 x 10) = 35 punti

PRODUZIONE SCRITTA

N.B. La commissione valuta la coerenza con i temi proposti nella consegna. Nel caso in cui non si rilevi alcuna corrispondenza, la valutazione dell’item è nulla.

Prova: “risposta agli SMS” (punteggio massimo = 15 punti)
da 0 a 5 punti per ciascun SMS:
0-1 punti: la risposta non è coerente con la consegna o è incomprensibile
2-3 punti: la risposta è poco comprensibile
4-5 punti: la risposta è efficace sul piano comunicativo (anche se riporta qualche imprecisione di sintassi o di ortografia)

Prova: “testo lungo” (punteggio massimo = 20 punti)

EFFICACIA COMUNICATIVA (15 punti)

0 - 5 punti: il testo non corrisponde alla consegna o il numero di parole è insufficiente (inferiore a 16 parole);
6 - 10 punti: il candidato dimostra di aver sostanzialmente compreso la consegna, ma la porta a termine solo parzialmente;
11-15 punti: il candidato dimostra di aver compreso la consegna e la porta a termine (anche se con qualche incertezza).

CORRETTIZZA MORFO-SINTATTICA (3 punti)

0 punti: scrittura totalmente incomprensibile;
1 punto: scrittura spesso incomprensibile;
2 punti: scrittura a volte incomprensibile;
3 punti: nessun errore A2 (o sporadici errori che NON generano difficoltà di comprensione).

CORRETTIZZA ORTOGRAFICA (2 punti)

0 punti: errori ortografici che rendono il testo totalmente incomprensibile;
1 punto: errori ortografici che spesso rendono il testo incomprensibile;
2 punti: nessun errore ortografico (o sporadici errori che non compromettono la comprensione del testo).

N.B. Gli errori fuori livello A2 non devono essere considerati
Gli errori ripetuti devono essere computati una sola volta

F

soluzioni – settembre 2015
Appendix B

Questionnaire for teachers.

Le domande del questionario che segue mirano a capire a livello generale come è gestito il corso e soprattutto come avviene la valutazione degli studenti, da un punto di vista sia procedurale sia affettivo.

Insegnante del corso A2 □ B1 □

1. Gli argomenti trattati e le attività proposte sono scelti a seconda delle necessità degli studenti?
   □ Sì, viene effettuata un’analisi preventiva delle esigenze.
   □ No, si segue un programma prestabilito (ma basato sull’esperienza di insegnamento).

2. Gli studenti sono incentivati a portare in classe argomenti/materiali di loro interesse?
   □ Sì.
   □ Sì, ma non lo fanno.
   □ No.

3. Gli studenti esprimono preferenze in merito alle attività svolte?
   □ Sì.
   □ No.

4. Gli obiettivi che il corso si prefigge sono ben chiari agli studenti?
   □ Sì, li esplicito a inizio corso.
   □ Sì, ne discuto più volte, ad esempio a ogni inizio unità.
   □ Non sono stati esplicitati, ma gli studenti ne sono consapevoli in quanto sono facilmente deducibili dal contesto e dal tipo di corso.
   □ Sono spiegati nel programma del corso a cui si sono iscritti.
   □ Non so.

5. Durante il periodo di corso è solito/a valutare i Suoi studenti:
   □ Con una cadenza regolare, attraverso prove specifiche (es. a fine unità).
   □ Monitoro ad ogni lezione, durante il normale svolgimento delle attività, così da poter “aggiustare” il programma.
□ Soltanto alla fine del corso.
□ Altro.
   Specificare.__________________________________________________________

6. Durante il normale svolgimento delle lezioni si avvale di:
griglie di osservazione      sì □      no □
-  checklists          sì □      no □
-  diario personale    sì □      no □
-  portfolio in cui raccogliere lavori degli studenti  sì □  no □
-  altro: (indichi eventuali strumenti con cui raccoglie dati e monitora l’apprendimento) _____________________________________________

7. Per valutare i Suoi alunni predilige esercizi/attività tradizionali di tipo grammaticale (ad esempio cloze, esercizi di abbinamento, o completamento) o attività pratiche (di problem solving o task)?
   □ Attività di sistematizzazione grammaticale.
   □ Attività pratiche.
   □ Utilizzo le due modalità pressoché nella stessa misura.

8. In classe gli studenti di solito lavorano individualmente, a coppie o in gruppo? (scegliere la modalità predominante)
   □ individualmente   □ a coppie      □ in gruppo

9. Condivide con gli studenti i criteri di valutazione utilizzati?
   □ Sì, li esplicito di volta in volta, ad ogni inizio unità o in vista della verifica.
   □ Sì, a inizio del corso.
   □ No, solo se richiesto dagli studenti stessi.

10. Quando valuta, tiene in considerazione e a volte modifica i criteri di giudizio a seconda della provenienza degli studenti e della lontananza tra L1 e italiano?
    □ Sì.
    □ No, perché non mi sembra giusto.
    □ No, perché non è concesso.
11. Quando valuta i Suoi studenti, prende in considerazione la situazione di partenza oltre alla la prestazione singola?

☐ Sì. ☐ No.

IL MOMENTO DELLA VERIFICA E LA CORREZIONE DEGLI ERRORI

12. Propone prove differenziate ai Suoi alunni in base al loro livello di competenza?

☐ Sì, di solito preparo prove diverse a seconda del livello.

☐ Sì, preparo prove stratificate, contenenti esercizi dal più semplice al più complesso, e ogni alunno esegue a seconda del livello.

☐ No.

☐ Altro. ________________________________________________________

13. Le tecniche che usa nelle prove di verifica sono familiari agli alunni?

☐ Sì, le prove consistono in esercizi e attività della stessa tipologia di quelli che sono stati eseguiti in classe.

☐ No, perché in classe non svolgiamo esercizi.

☐ No, perché in classe di solito svolgo lezioni frontali.

☐ Dipende, alcune sì altre invece sono nuove.

14. Dedica del tempo a osservare insieme la prova prima dell’esecuzione?

☐ Sì. ☐ No.

15. Normalmente la correzione avviene singolarmente o collettivamente, correggendo insieme?

☐ Individualmente. ☐ Collettivamente. ☐ Altro. __________

16. Quando corregge le prove, come esprime il suo giudizio?

☐ Con votazione numerica.

☐ Con brevi giudizi (bene, ottimo,…).

☐ Do un feedback esaustivo (bene X, da migliorare Y…).

☐ Riferendomi al Framework europeo.

☐ Altro. ________________________________________________________
17. Gli studenti vengono incentivati e aiutati a valutare i propri errori e progressi in prima persona?
   - No, correggo io.  
   - Sì.

18. Secondo Lei, come vivono il momento della valutazione/correzione i Suoi studenti?
   - Tranquillamente, in maniera positiva e costruttiva.
   - In modo ansiogeno. Secondo Lei, perché? __________________________
   - Con indifferenza. Secondo Lei, perché? __________________________

19. Secondo Lei, gli studenti sono in grado di percepire il loro miglioramento/non miglioramento?
   - Sì, riescono a cogliere i loro progressi.
   - No, non sono ancora in grado di autovalutarsi.

20. Gli studenti Le chiedono mai chiarimenti sul giudizio/voto conseguito?
   - Sì.
   - No. Secondo Lei, perché? __________________________

21. Gli studenti chiedono in maniera spontanea un giudizio su espressioni sentite/imparate in ambito extrascolastico?
   - Sì.  
   - No.

22. Secondo Lei, quali sono i criteri che caratterizzano l'autopercezione dell'apprendimento da parte degli studenti?
   - I voti delle prove.
   - I feedback dati da me in classe.
   - Il grado di interazione e integrazione in contesto extrascolastico.
   - Altro. __________________________

Spazio libero per osservazioni ulteriori (facoltativo)

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

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Appendix C

Questionnaire for A2 students.

Scegli solo 1 alternativa tra quelle proposte (□) , ed esprimi il tuo pensiero dove indicato (______).

(Facoltativo) Nome e Cognome: _________________________________
Sesso:   m □   f □
Età: ______________________________
Vengo da: _________________________
Tempo in Italia: _____________________

Che scuola hai fatto?

□ Scuola elementare
□ Scuola media
□ Scuola Superiore non completata
□ Scuola superiore completata
□ Università
□ Altro (Specificare) ________________

Perché vai a scuola di italiano? (scegli 1 alternativa)

□ Per lavoro
□ Per aiutare i miei figli (ad esempio, con i compiti, con gli insegnanti)
□ Per parlare con gli italiani
□ Per fare amicizia, conoscere persone
□ Per il permesso di soggiorno
□ Altro. Specifica. ________________________________

1. Come è l’italiano per te?

□ Una lingua facile.
□ Una lingua difficile.
2. Conosci gli obiettivi del corso?
   □ Sì. □ No.

3. Sai come decide i voti il tuo insegnante?
   □ Sì. □ No.

4. L’insegnante ti spiega in modo chiaro cosa sbagli?
   □ Sì, capisco bene i miei errori.
   □ Sì, ma è comunque molto difficile capire cosa sbaglio.
   □ No.

5. Durante le lezioni, come ti senti?
   □ Contento, felice di imparare.
   □ Agitato. Ho paura di sbagliare e fare brutta figura.
   □ Contento, ma preferisco non parlare.
   □ Altro. Specifica ____________________________________________

6. Ti piace di più lavorare da solo o con i tuoi compagni?
   □ Da solo. □ A coppie. □ In gruppo.
   Perché? ______________________________________________________

LA VERIFICA

7. Le verifiche in classe come ti sembrano?
   □ Facili. □ Difficili.
   Perché? ______________________________________________________

8. Le consegne degli esercizi sono chiare?
   □ Sì. □ No. A volte non capisco cosa devo fare.

9. Il tempo per fare la verifica è:
10. Gli esercizi delle verifiche sono come quelli che hai fatto a lezione o sono nuovi?
   - □ Sì, sono simili.
   - □ No, sono diversi, nuovi.
   - □ Alcuni sono nuovi, alcuni sono simili.

11. Cosa è più difficile per te?
   - □ Ascolto.
   - □ Leggere e rispondere alle domande.
   - □ Scrittura.

12. Riesci a capire da solo quando hai fatto bene e quando male?
   - □ Sì.
   - □ Un po’.
   - □ No. Devo chiedere all’insegnante.

13. Sei preoccupato per il test finale?
   - □ Sì. □ No.
   - Perché? _______________________________________________________

CORREZIONE DEGLI ERRORI
14. Come ti piace correggere gli esercizi?
   - □ L’insegnante corregge il mio compito.
   - □ Correggiamo tutti insieme.
   - □ Preferisco correggere da solo la mia prova.

15. Quando non capisci qualcosa, chiedi all’insegnante?
   - □ Sì. □ No.

16. Come ti senti quando l’insegnante corregge i tuoi errori?
   - □ Tranquillo e felice, voglio che l’insegnante corregga quando sbaglio per diventare più bravo.
   - □ A disagio, mi vergogno.
   - □ Normale. Non sono né a disagio né felice.
17. Quanto è importante per te il voto finale del corso?
   - Molto.
   - Abbastanza.
   - Poco.
   - Non è importante.

18. Quando finisci il corso vuoi fare un corso più difficile?
   - Sì.
   - No.

19. Come capisci che stai diventando bravo?
   - Dai voti delle verifiche.
   - Perché l’insegnante dice che sono bravo.
   - Perché so fare tante nella mia vita in Italia.
   - Perché gli italiani dicono che sono bravo.
   - Altro. Specifica. ________________________________

20. Quanto è importante parlare bene l’italiano?
   - Tanto. Voglio imparare a parlare l’italiano, senza fare errori.
   - Un po’. La cosa importante è farmi capire.
   - Poco.
Appendix D

Questionnaire for B1 students

Scegli solo 1 alternativa tra quelle proposte (□), ed esprimi il tuo pensiero dove indicato (______).

(Facoltativo) Nome e Cognome: ________________________________
Sesso: m □ f □
Età: ______________________________
Vengo da: _____________________
Tempo in Italia: ____________________
Titolo di studio: ____________________

Quali sono le motivazioni che ti hanno spinto a intraprendere un corso di italiano? (scegli 1 alternativa)

□ Per lavoro
□ Per aiutare i miei figli (ad esempio, con i compiti, con gli insegnanti)
□ Per parlare con gli italiani
□ Per fare amicizia, conoscere persone
□ Per il permesso di soggiorno
□ Altro. Specifica. ________________________________

1. Come è l’italiano per te?
   □ Una lingua facile.
   □ Una lingua difficile.

2. Cosa preferisci fare?
   □ Esercizi di grammatica
   □ Scrivere.
   □ Attività pratiche.
   □ Parlare.
   □ Leggere.
   □ Altro. ____________________

3. Qual è la cosa più difficile di questo corso di italiano (scrivere, parlare, fare esercizi di grammatica)? ________________________________
4. Ci sono attività dove ti senti più bravo rispetto ad altre (ad esempio, sono bravo a leggere)?
   ☐ Sì. Fai un esempio._________________________________
   ☐ No, non lo.

5. Conosci gli obiettivi del corso?
   ☐ Sì. ☐ No.

6. Sai come vieni valutato?
   ☐ Sì. ☐ No.

7. L’insegnante ti spiega in modo chiaro cosa sbagli?
   ☐ Sì, capisco bene i miei errori.
   ☐ Sì, ma è comunque molto difficile capire cosa sbaglio.
   ☐ No.

8. L’insegnante ti spiega come migliorare?
   ☐ Sì, l’insegnante mi da dei consigli.
   ☐ No, l’insegnante corregge solo gli errori.

9. Durante le lezioni, come ti senti?
   ☐ Entusiasta, felice di imparare.
   ☐ Agitato. Ho paura di sbagliare e fare brutta figura.
   ☐ Tranquillo, ma preferisco non intervenire.
   ☐ Altro. Specifica ____________________________________________

10. Ti piace di più lavorare da solo o con i tuoi compagni?
    ☐ Da solo. ☐ A coppie. ☐ In gruppo.
     Perché? ______________________________________________________

LA VERIFICA

11. Le verifiche in classe come ti sembrano?
    ☐ Facili. ☐ Difficili.
Perché?

12. Le consegne degli esercizi sono chiare?
   □ Sì. □ No. A volte non capisco cosa devo fare.

13. Il tempo per fare la verifica è:

14. Gli esercizi delle verifiche sono come quelli che hai fatto a lezione o sono nuovi?
   □ Sì, sono simili.
   □ No, sono diversi, nuovi.
   □ Alcuni sono nuovi, altri simili.

15. Quale parte del test è più difficile per te?

16. Riesci a capire da solo quando hai fatto bene e quando male?
   □ Sì.
   □ Un po’.
   □ No. Devo chiedere all’insegnante.

17. Sei preoccupato per il test finale?
   □ Sì. □ No.

Perché?

CORREZIONE DEGLI ERRORI

18. Come ti piace correggere gli esercizi?
   □ Individualmente (l’insegnante corregge il mio compito).
   □ Collettivamente (correggiamo tutti insieme).
   □ Preferisco correggere da solo la mia prova.

19. Quando non capisci qualcosa, chiedi all’insegnante?
   □ Sì. □ No.
20. Come ti senti quando l’insegnante corregge i tuoi errori?
- A disagio, mi vergogno.
- Tranquillo e felice, voglio che l’insegnante corregga quando sbaglio per diventare più bravo.
- Indifferente. Non sono né a disagio né felice.

21. Quanto è importante per te il voto finale del corso?
- Molto.
- Abbastanza.
- Poco.
- Non è importante.

22. Quando finisci il corso vuoi fare un corso più difficile?
- Sì.
- No.

23. Come capisci se stai migliorando bravo?
- Dai voti delle verifiche.
- Dai feedback dell’insegnante.
- Da come gestisco la vita quotidiana.
- Da quello che dicono gli italiani su di me.
- Altro. Specifica. __________________________________________

24. Quanto è importante parlare bene l’italiano?
- Tanto. Voglio imparare a parlare l’italiano, senza fare errori.
- Un po’. La cosa importante è farmi capire.
- Poco.