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Motivation in Adult Students of
Italian as a Foreign Language: a
Research Based in Prague and Two
Teaching Proposals

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Acknowledgments.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Chapter 1 <i>Motivation in Language Learning</i>.....	7
1.1 What is Motivation?.....	7
1.2 Types of Motivations and Orientations.....	8
1.2.1 Integrative and Instrumental Motivation.....	8
1.2.2 Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation.....	10
1.2.3 The Venetian Language Teaching Methodology tradition.....	11
The Ego-Dynamic model.....	12
The Tri-polar model.....	13
1.2.4 Stimulus Appraisal theory.....	14
Chapter 2 <i>Italian abroad: Italian as a foreign language</i>.....	17
2.1 Italian as a second language and Italian as a foreign language.....	17
2.2.1 “Italiano come lingua straniera” LS.....	17
2.2 The Italian language abroad.....	20
2.3 Italian and foreign languages in the Czech Republic.....	22
Chapter 3 <i>The Adult Language Learner</i>.....	25
3.1 Who is an adult?.....	25
3.2 The Andragogical model.....	26
3.3 Adults and language learning.....	28
3.3.1 The teacher’s role.....	28

3.3.2 Language learning problems in the adult learner.....	30
3.4 Teaching techniques and methodologies for adults.....	31
Chapter 4 “Motivation in Adult Foreign Language Learning: a Research Based in Prague”.....	34
4.1 The context.....	34
4.2 Survey preparation.....	35
4.2.1 Planning.....	35
4.2.2 Questionnaire creation.....	37
4.3 Distribution.....	42
4.4 Analysis and results discussion.....	47
4.4.1 Data analysis.....	47
Chapter 5 Adults and Motivation in the Language Classroom: Two Learning Units.....	60
5.1 Course types and levels.....	60
5.1.1 Teaching coordinates.....	60
5.1.2 The video as authentic material.....	61
5.2 Activity 1: <i>Bruschette di melanzane</i>	62
5.2.1 Structure.....	63
5.2.2 Development.....	64
5.3 Activity 2: “ <i>La vasca</i> ”.....	68
5.3.1 Structure.....	69
5.3.2 Development.....	69
Conclusions.....	75
References.....	78
Web References.....	81

Abstract

This paper deals with the large field of motivation in language teaching and learning, but, in particular, with motivation in adult learners who chose to study Italian as a foreign language. With the use of an online questionnaire, shared with 60 adult students of Italian in the Czech Republic, participants were asked to express their opinions on different language teaching aspects. Discovering what factors trigger motivation in adult learners before, during, and after the real contact with the language course was the objective of this research. This paper also includes two learning units that have been tested in class and were found to be particularly motivating for the adult students involved in the research.

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Introduction

This research was designed in Prague during my Erasmus + for Traineeship stay. In the second semester of the academic year 2015/2016 I had the chance of teaching Italian at Language Atelier, a language school offering courses of different languages and providing translation services.

This working experience was the starting point of my research: the great majority of the students assigned to me were adults who openly displayed their love for the Italian language. In some of them I could recognize common patterns concerning motivation (e.g. preferences for certain teaching materials, methods etc.), while some others preferred, of course, different approaches. That is why I did not focus only on the initial motivation that students had towards the study of Italian, but also on which elements, in class, would sustain their motivation of learning a foreign language. These elements were all the collateral aspects of a language course: the teacher, the classmates, the environment, the teaching materials and so on.

In order to obtain a more complex and complete report, the research was extended to a larger audience: a questionnaire was posted online and shared with other adult students of Italian in the Czech Republic, through Facebook groups or forums. 60 adult students were willing to participate and answered the survey's questions.

Chapter 1 will deal with motivation as matter of research, both from the point of view of psychology and language education. A brief account of models and theories that are believed to be suitable for this research's purposes will be outlined and described.

Subsequently, **Chapter 2** will be dedicated to the theme of Italian as a foreign language. Differences with Italian as a second language (L2) will be shortly depicted, along with a synthetic description of the role of Italian abroad and in the Czech Republic.

Chapter 3 will deal with the adult, focusing on the definition of being one. Adulthood will then be considered exclusively from a foreign language learning perspective: characteristics, challenges, methodologies.

Chapter 4 will be the one dedicated to the online questionnaire itself. Its preparation, planning and distribution will be explained into detail and then results will be displayed and discussed.

In **Chapter 5** two learning units will be outlined in all of their parts. These units were tested in class with some of the students who took part in the survey and they will deal with a number of aspects that resulted to be motivational, according to the questionnaire's results.

Finally, the **Conclusions** will sum up and highlight the most interesting findings of this research in light of the themes previously discussed.

Chapter 1

Motivation in foreign language learning

This chapter will deal with motivation within the language teaching and learning framework. It will be a synthesis of a number of models and theories proposed by different scholars through time. These were selected because they are considered to be congruent with the purposes of the research.

1.1 What is motivation?

Motivation is a multifaceted concept that has been largely studied in psychology and that has been successfully applied to the field of foreign language learning. It is not easy to explain it in a thorough way, though. As Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan (2000) point out, to be motivated means *to be moved* to do something, and in fact, etymologically, the word derives from the notion of *movement*. Moreover, in Ryan and Deci's words,

motivation is hardly a unitary phenomenon. People have not only different amounts, but also different kinds of motivation. That is, they vary not only in *level* of motivation [...], but also in the *orientation* of that motivation (Deci & Ryan 2000: 54).

In other words, the amount of motivation you have as an individual and what type of motivation pushes you are two factors that can easily fluctuate.

Since motivation changes according to different factors, it can evolve in time: it can grow and strengthen if the results of the activity carried out are satisfactory, or it can decrease in case the results have not been successful.

It is easy to understand, then, that motivation plays an important role in foreign language learning, where the student often has a long and demanding learning path ahead: in those situations, being driven if fundamental and the type and amount of motivation plays a crucial role in directing the student's action towards a learning goal.

1.2 Types of motivations and orientations

In this first chapter we are going to consider only some of the most important motivational models, which have been chosen because they are relevant to the research carried out. The choice of the following categories seemed adequate with respect to the subject of the research. Nevertheless, it is not to be considered as a thorough list.

1.2.1 Integrative and Instrumental motivation

Gardner and Lambert (cf. 1972, Gardner 1985) were pioneers in the research field of motivation concerning foreign language learning. The scholars made a first important distinction between *integrative* and *instrumental* motivation that would be used for many years to come.

They carried out their first studies in the multicultural context of Montreal, investigating which kind of attitude English speaking students had towards French. They built a multi-componential construct made up of three components: *integrativeness*, *attitude towards the learning situation* and *motivation*. Inside this framework, Gardner recognized that the individual differences in motivation are reflected in 4 factors: (1) a goal, (2) an effortful behaviour, (3) a desire to attain the goal and (4) favourable attitudes toward the activity in

question (Gardner 1985: 50). It is the goal that defines which type of motivation the individual has: it tells us why the individual is studying that language.

Types of motivations, then, can be many:

To be able to speak with members of that language community, to get a job, to improve one's education, to be able to travel, to please one's parents, to satisfy a language requirement, to gain social power etc. It may even be that there are as many reasons for learning a language as there are individuals (Gardner 1985: 51).

Gardner and Lambert mainly distinguished between two large groups, introducing the concepts of *instrumental* and *integrative* orientation of motivation; in particular, Gardner (1985) suggested that L2 learning could not be related solely to people's aptitude. He then formulated his “*socio-educational model*” asserting that there are other factors, mainly social and cultural, that affect learners' attitudes towards language learning.

Gardner and Lambert's motivation framework is the most commonly used one for understanding the different types of motivation that language learners typically have. They introduced two distinct kinds of orientation in language learning motivation (1972):

- an *instrumental motivation*, concerning the practical reasons behind the study of a language (getting a salary bonus, passing the exam) and the learner's needs to fulfil certain language requirements (for benefits, status, prestige);
- an *integrative motivation*, where the learner aims at learning the L2 in order to get closer and closer to the other language community. In this case, there may be a large variety of reasons why the learner is motivated in doing so (cultural interest, family members or significant others that belong to that community, immigration etc.).

Gardner considered the integrative orientation of motivation to be the strongest driving force which can lead to the achievement of a specific learning goal. Studies have shown that

integrative motivation usually lasts longer because it deals with the personality, identity and affection of the individual; Gardner himself wrote that motivation always has an integrative component. On the other hand, instrumental motivation has more to do with external factors and is linked to a more practical necessity.

However, a number of scholars, in more recent years, argued that Gardner's considerations were mostly valid for the multicultural setting where he carried out his first studies: Montreal (Gardner had investigated which kind of attitude English speaking students had towards French). For this reason, among scholars, especially during the 1990s, there was a feeling of "growing dissatisfaction with the concept of integrativeness/integrative motivation which [...] had been at the centre of L2 motivation research for almost five decades" (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2009: 22). In fact, the "integrative" metaphor does not have any obvious meaning nor direct implications in different learning situations, namely where the learner is not seeking integration.

1.2.2 Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Another ground-breaking study in the field of motivation towards a foreign language was Deci and Ryan's *self-determination theory* (1985), where they "distinguished between different types of motivation based on different reasons or goals that give rise to an action" (Deci & Ryan 2000). The simplest distinction that they made was between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivation.

When someone's motivation comes from external factors, such as obtaining a good mark, a reward or avoiding punishment, that kind of motivation is considered *extrinsic*. The outcome that the person gets is separable, e.g. a student who does his homework only in order to avoid his parents' scolding is extrinsically motivated. When, on the other hand, motivation

comes from within, in that the person engages in a behaviour or takes action because it is personally rewarding, it is possible to speak about *intrinsic* motivation.

As Noels lines out, the interest in intrinsic orientation for L2 learning has grown over the past decade: intrinsic motivation “has been associated with lower anxiety, more positive attitudes toward language learning, and increased feelings of self-efficacy in language learning” (Noels in Dörnyei 2001). However, for Deci and Ryan, “it is critical to remember that intrinsic motivation will occur only for activities that hold intrinsic interest for an individual – those that have the appeal of novelty, challenge, or aesthetic value for that individual” (Deci & Ryan 2000). In this regard, when the activity is not considered to be intrinsically interesting in itself, the motivational factors that will come into play will be extrinsic.

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation do not exclude each other: it is often possible that they coexist inside the individual, mainly due to the fact that taking action does not always involve only one single motivational factor.

Intrinsic motivation is strictly connected to the dimension of pleasure: pleasure in learning something and pleasure of learning. In the next section we are going to see how critical pleasure is considered to be in language learning.

1.2.3 The Venetian Language Teaching Methodology tradition

Along with the studies on motivation dealt with in the first section of this chapter, some among the principal scholars within the Venetian Language Teaching research program have repeatedly recognized, throughout decades, the importance of motivation as a *dynamic-genetic element of learning*, as Titone (1987) describes it. For the purposes of this research, we are going to go deeper into Renzo Titone and Paolo E. Balboni’s models.

The Ego-Dynamic model

Within the Venetian school, Renzo Titone is considered as one of the founding fathers of the Italian language education field. His Ego-Dynamic model (1973) clearly revolved around the learner's *ego* and it is the learner who plays a central role in the acquisitive activity:

learning, as a profound and durable acquisition, is especially dependent upon the active presence of the "I" as a subject. It is at this level that the affective factors in general find their rightful place, factors (motivation, attitude [...]) that determine, so to speak, the tenacious sedimentation of the acquisitions" (Titone 1987: 47-48)

Titone underlines how the psychological dimension plays a fundamental part: his model is based on the principle that, at the very start of the acquisitive process, there is the ego. As Caon (2006) writes, the term "ego" here refers to the project that every person has for themselves.

From this point of view, everyone has particular needs they need to satisfy. In order to do so, the ego will make a series of strategic choices that will become operative. For example, concerning the study of foreign languages, if a person has the need (or the *project*) to learn Italian, he or she will try to make it happen by buying a DVD language course or attending classes of Italian (*strategic level*). The actual contact with the chosen strategy is the *tactic level*: the English lesson, the didactic materials chosen, the teacher etc.

If the strategy works (the person feels like he or she is learning the language effectively and likes it), then the tactic phase will have confirmed the initial strategic one. Only in this case, "will the subject then activate his profound motivational resources, supporting and increasing the motivation and tolerating possible assignments that even if unpleasant are necessary with respect to his particular objective" (Caon 2006).

Therefore, in Balboni's words (2008: 33),

Se si ottengono risultati non troppo distanti dall'attesa [...] si rinforza la strategia e questa invia un feedback positivo all'ego, che quindi continua a mantenere in movimento il processo [...] in caso contrario il feedback è negativo e il progetto di apprendere una lingua cade.

Balboni himself, then, proposes his own motivational model which we are going to present in the following section.

The Tri-polar model

In his Tri-polar Model (cf. 1994, 2004), Balboni investigates the origins of motivation of studying in general, not confining himself to the field of foreign language learning. The Tri-Polar model revolves around three fundamental factors that are able to activate motivation:

- *duty*, which is extremely common in traditional teaching situations. According to the scholar, within the school environment, studying is rarely connected to a real interest in the contents of what is being studied. Rather, it is more often connected to what we feel we must do. Duty can be:
 - *hetero-directed* – induced by external factors such as scholastic programs where a foreign language is required or induced by the “authoritarian attitudes of the teachers who [...] impose contents and methods without giving any space to dialogue or to listening to their students’ formative needs and interests” (Caon 2006: 17);
 - *self-directed* – for example in order to avoid a bad impression, a punishment or a bad mark.

Both hetero-directed duty and self-directed duty are not durable and do not lead to meaningful learning, mainly because they rarely generate intrinsic pleasure and they produce an affective filter (cf. Krashen 1982) which blocks acquisition;

- *need*, which is connected to personal objectives. It can be strong, but, according to Balboni, it might have one significant limit: once the need has been satisfied, the student might lose his or her interest towards what was being studied (needs can be strong and firm, but also temporary);
- *pleasure*, in which Balboni recognizes the most powerful source of motivation. Pleasure is the intrinsic motivation par excellence and, potentially, it never ends. It is considered to be stable and durable. In Balboni's words, pleasure is not only a pleasant and positive feeling or emotion, but also a gratification of a cognitive need, the pleasure of making new experiences, of challenging one's self, and discovering new concepts connected to the ones already possessed (Balboni 2015; Caon 2006).

It is clear how pleasure plays an extremely important role in motivating the human being. We saw that it can be considered as a positive emotion that makes us keep doing what we are currently doing; in other words, positive emotions motivate us.

1.2.4 Stimulus Appraisal theory

J.H. Schumann explained from a neurobiological point of view how crucial emotion is in the cognitive process. In *The Neurobiology of Affect in Language* (1997) he asserts that “no cognitive process is generated without an emotional process being generated first” (Schumann

in Caon 2006: 20). On this matter, La Belle explains Schumann's findings from an accurate neurobiological perspective:

As Schumann notes, the amygdala works in concert with other parts of the body to help the individual make some significant assessment of experience. The amygdala does this by assigning motivational and emotional value to the different experiences encountered by the individual (La Belle 1999: 84)

The value that is assigned by the amygdala is the evaluation, the *appraisal*, that the individual makes of something. What the individual evaluates are stimuli, inputs; once they have been evaluated, on the basis of emotion and appreciation, that person decides if he wants to analyse and acquire them, in other words, if the effort our brain has to make is worth it or not. This is Schumann's *Stimulus Appraisal* (1997) theory.

Following this theory, our brain decides what to select thanks to 5 different motivations; we are going to consider them from a Second Language Acquisition (SLA) point of view, and that is why we will refer to a “learner”:

- *novelty*: the learner checks if stimulation has new or unexpected patterns (activities, teaching materials, contents...);
- *intrinsic pleasantness*: for the learner, an experience can be either pleasant, and thus foster approach, or unpleasant, so that it blocks further engagement.

Balboni (2014) also refers to the “beauty” and the appeal of the teaching materials chosen;

- *goal/need significance*: if the stimulus is relevant with respect to the learners' needs, goals and hopes, it will be acquired more easily;
- *coping potential*: the learner must be able to cope with the stimulus, to understand it and consider it as possible;

- *self compatibility with respect to the language environment:* the learner feels that the environment in which he faces the stimulus is compatible with social norms and with his expectations; he feels psychologically safe and his self-esteem is not put at risk (Balboni 2014).

These motivational factors have been widely recognized as very important in foreign language learning before Schumann's study (cf. Gardner 1985; Edelman 1989; Dörnyei 1994), but what Schumann did was to gather them together and prove them neurobiologically (Balboni 2014).

Chapter 2

Italian abroad: Italian as a foreign language

In the following chapter we will be focusing on Italian as a foreign language. First of all we are going to enquire into the differences between learning and teaching Italian as a foreign language (LS) and Italian as a second language (L2). Subsequently the study will go more into detail and explore the presence of the Italian language abroad, how it is promoted and the tendencies of the Czech Republic concerning our language and foreign languages in general.

2.1 Italian as a second language and Italian as a foreign language

When learning a language, the context inside which it is learnt makes a difference. Balboni (2014) distinguishes between four different teaching situations: Italian as native language, Italian as ethnic language (spoken by the learner's community or family), Italian as a second language and Italian as a foreign language. For research purposes we are going to focus on the teaching and learning peculiarities of Italian as a foreign language (to which we will refer with LS – *lingua straniera*) in contrast with Italian as a second language (to which we will refer with L2 – *lingua seconda*).

2.2.1 “Italiano come lingua straniera” LS

Italian is studied as a foreign language in a situation where the language is not found around the learner, in his or her environment, but is only spoken and delivered by the teacher

in the classroom. This means that the teacher has the (almost) total control on the input offered to the language students.

Santipolo (2006) reminds us that in recent years, Italy has changed from a country whose people migrated a lot abroad, analysing a period that goes from 1876 to 1976, to a country that has become the destination of an extremely high number of immigration flows. From that moment on, as the scholar remarks,

L’italiano ha cominciato a essere studiato sempre più non solo in quanto LE (lingua etnica), ma in modo più generale come lingua straniera (LS). Contemporaneamente, la richiesta d’italiano si è estesa [...] ad altri paesi dove gli italiani non sono mai giunti in massa, dal bacino nord e centroafricano e medio-orientale, a quello dell’Europa orientale fino, negli ultimi anni, all’estremo Oriente. (Santipolo 2006:5)

This change might be due to the increasing interest for the Italian culture or products that have been continuously exported by our ancestors for centuries: the interest in the Italian culture and lifestyle is still one of the major reasons why people choose to approach the language.

Italian L2 and Italian LS have often been confused in terms of terminology: as Balboni (2014) remarks, even Stephen Krashen, in his world-famous *Second Language Acquisition Theory* (cf. 1981, 1982) uses “second language” to refer to any kind of situation in which you learn another language (be it in your own country or abroad).

In *Didattica dell’italiano come lingua seconda e straniera* (2014), Balboni outlines some of the principal aspects in learning and teaching Italian as a foreign language (and not, for example, as a second language). One of the aspects he focuses on the most is the linguistic input to which students are exposed. When Italian is not studied in Italy, but in another country, the linguistic input that the students receive is exclusively delivered by the teacher,

whose language is seen as “the model” to follow. In this case language learning technologies are fundamental so that the student can get in touch with native speakers more easily.

The teacher also “mediates” socio-cultural references and has the power to manipulate them, make a selection of them and adapt them (Santipolo 2006) by choosing what to share or not with the students.

Of course, in a “Italian LS” context, there is less chance for the students to be exposed to authentic use of the foreign language, that is why there is the need to provide them with authentic materials. As *Cambridge English* outlines, authentic materials are

written by native speakers and published in contexts designed specifically for native-speaker consumption, with no thought given to non-native accessibility. The topics, language, syntax, structure, etc., are all pitched at a target audience of native speakers and offered through media intended primarily for native speakers (2014).

Authentic materials allow the comparison between the Italian spoken and taught by the teacher and other varieties existing in Italy. About this, Begotti adds that these materials are always motivating for the foreign language student if it is close to the student’s need and interests and

presenta, inoltre, la lingua straniera in un contesto preciso, e ciò fa aumentare la comprensione del messaggio comunicativo e quindi innalza la motivazione, illustra diversi modelli di lingua orale e scritta e diverse variazioni sociolinguistiche secondo il mezzo utilizzato, il registro, la classe sociale e la provenienza geografica degli interlocutori. (Begotti 2006)

Another crucial difference between Italian LS and Italian L2 is that, in the second case, the learner often has the *need* of learning the language: a person who came to Italy needs to know the language for their everyday life. So in this case there is a situation where

motivation is mostly based upon need and not pleasure, at least at the beginning (see above 1.1.3). When Italian is studied abroad, on the other hand,

Nella stessa classe possono convivere tutte le forme di motivazione [...]: il dovere imposto dal curriculum scolastico; il bisogno per studenti che si preparano a venire in Italia; il piacere per chi ha scelto l’italiano perché gli piacciono certi elementi della nostra cultura (Balboni 2014).

Speaking about Italian as a foreign language or as a second language, we can recall our discussion about *integrative* vs *instrumental* motivation (see above 1.1.1): in both cases, the type of motivation can vary, even though we could say that an immigrant who has just arrived to Italy has an integrative need, whereas a learner of Italian in London might have an integrative desire (wants to understand more of the Italian culture or feel closer to it). We can also highlight what Santipolo says about motivation in Italian LS:

La motivazione per lo studio della lingua, specie quando questa non venga appresa per necessità strumentali (ad esempio un progetto migratorio verso l’Italia), deve essere continuamente stimolata e mantenuta viva (Santipolo 2006:5).

The stirring of motivation is always necessary in order to encourage effective acquisition.

2.2 The Italian language abroad

Obtaining reliable and updated data about the number of Italian speakers around the world is difficult. It seems that data is not collected periodically and universally.

Ethnologue, a comprehensive reference work that catalogues the world’s known living languages, reports that the total users of Italian in all countries around the world are 66,498,657, stating that the users who speak it as a second/foreign language are 3,085,000.

Italian is an official language in Italy, Vatican City, San Marino, Switzerland and Istria. It is still largely spoken in countries where it used to hold an official status, namely Albania, Malta and Monaco.

Italian is among the 23 recognized languages within the European Union. The European Commission's *Eurobarometer* of 2012 ("Europeans and their Languages") mentions Italian as the second most widely spoken mother tongue (13%), along with English (13%) and after German (16%). The Eurobarometer also shows that there has been a little growth in the number of the survey respondents who think that Italian is important: the percentage grew from 3% (2006) to 6% (2012). In this respect, one in twenty respondents (5%) stated that Italian is among the most useful languages: it is the most studied 6th language (after English, German, Spanish and Russian) among people aged 20+ who finished their full-time education.

The Italian language and culture are promoted abroad thanks to different organizations and associations, among which we would like to recall the Istituto Italiano di Cultura and the Società Dante Alighieri. The Istituto Italiano di Cultura (IIC) is a non-profit organization created by the Italian government. It is directly supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and it has 93 institutes worldwide. It is involved in the teaching of the language and in cultural exchanges between Italy and the country where the institute is found. It also promotes contacts between universities, institutions, official bodies and academies inside the scientific world. The Dante Alighieri society, on the other hand, is a private society founded in Rome in 1889 that has the same goals of the Istituto Italiano di Cultura. There are 3300 schools worldwide that function thanks to the society's foreign committees.

The Dante Alighieri society is also a member of the CLIQ (*Certificazione Lingua Italiana di Qualità*) association, born in 2013, made up of a different number of Italian authorities (*Università per Stranieri di Perugia, Università per Stranieri di Siena e Università*

degli Studi Roma Tre), that deals with recognizing and sending abroad the official Italian certificates promoted by these authorities: the CELI, the CILS, the .IT and the PLIDA. These different language certificates have been united under the same legal identification by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, so that all of them are official language certificates that prove the knowledge of Italian.

The *Annuario Statistico* of 2015, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' yearly report, accounts for 288.141 registered students of Italian language and culture courses in the year 2013/2014, with 50.870 in Europe only. This data, of course, refers only to the Italian courses officially recorded and promoted by the Italian government, therefore there is no official account for all the universities, private language schools, public schools and so on where the Italian language is taught all around the globe.

2.3 Italian and foreign languages in the Czech Republic

Due to the focus of this research (adults studying Italian inside the Czech Republic, and more specifically in Prague), we are going to consider to what extent the Italian language is present in the Czech Republic along with the attitudes of Czechs towards foreign languages.

Collecting data from the European Commission and from *Ethnologue*, it is clear that Italian is a minor language in the country, in terms of importance and also in terms of immigrant language on the territory.

In fact, *Ethnologue* (2016) reports that Italian is spoken by 1.420 people as immigrant language, the first being Ukrainian (48.300), followed by Russian (31.600) and Vietnamese (30.800), on a population of 10.543.000 people (2015 UNDESA).

Exploring again the 2012's *Eurobarometer* "Europeans and their Languages", and this time focusing on the Czech Republic, we see that Czech is the country's official language spoken by 98% of the population. The member state seems to face a remarkable decrease in the number of people able to speak at least one foreign language, with a drop of -12 points from survey of 2006, going from 37% to 49% (-12 points). A striking figure is that 51% of the Czech respondents are unable to speak a foreign language.

If we go into detail and consult the Eurobarometer's report about languages and attitudes towards them in the Czech Republic, it will be possible to discover something more. Out of 1.003 interviewees, 63% think that everyone in the EU should be able to speak one more language in addition to their mother tongue, with a strong 25% that disagrees. However, a strong 91% of the respondents stated that all EU languages should be treated equally and 78% still prefers to watch dubbed foreign films and programs rather than subtitled.

Some interesting data for the purposes of this research is that, concerning motivation in learning a foreign language, 41% of the interviewees recognize that the lack of motivation is the main reason that discourages people from learning a foreign language, followed by lack of time (22%) and lack of money to pay for a language course (27%).

As for the Italian language presence in the Czech Republic, we won't find much in the Czech *Eurobarometer*. 1% of the interviewees find that Italian might be useful for their own development, similarly to Spanish (1%) and following English (59%), German (32%) and French (3%).

The *Istituto Italiano di Cultura* and the *Società Dante Alighieri* are found in the capital city, Prague. The Istituto was founded in 1942 and the first bilateral agreements were made in 1971. The institute , in the year 2013/2014, had 612 registered students for 85 courses of Italian (*Annuario Statistico* 2015) and is involved in many activities such as art exhibitions,

concerts, poetry and translations prizes, the creation of a centre for Italian studies and so on. It has also worked strictly with the *Congregazione Italiana di Praga*, a congregation that was founded in 1573 and that used to help Italian immigrants who wanted to live in the Czech Republic or emigrate to Eastern Europe.

The *Dante Alighieri* society's committee of Prague was founded in 2005 and it also offers Czech language lessons for Italian native speakers specifically. Inside the Czech Republic, it is the only authorised body that can offer the PLIDA certificate (Progetto Lingua Italiana Dante Alighieri), with which you can be immediately accepted in an Italian university without taking further exams (with a B2 or C1 level).

The Italian language also covers an important role at public school level and at university level. On the Italian Embassy in the Czech Republic's website it is possible to find a list of secondary schools recognized by it, such as Liceo Bilingue Italo-Ceco Ustavni, Liceo Modrany, Liceo Linguistico Sazavska; Scuola J. Gutha Jarkovskeho as a primary school and the Piccole Pesti kindergarten, which offers a multicultural environment and activities, involving Italian as well. All these schools are based in the capital city, Prague.

Finally, Italian is taught in the oldest and biggest universities in the Czech Republic. Charles University (Univerzita Karolina) is probably the most important one and third oldest in Europe, founded in 1348 by the Bohemian king and Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV. Courses of Italian language or Italian studies are always present in universities with humanities degrees and with a Romance Languages Department. In addition to Charles University, we can recall the Palacký University of Olomouc (founded in 1573) and the Masaryk University of Brno (founded in 1919).

Chapter 3

The Adult Language Learner

The adult age and the processes involved in becoming an adult have always been important research topics in pedagogy and psychology. Concerning language learning, the adult learner of a foreign language started to be considered as matter of study only around the 1970s and is still not considered as important as the young learner.

In the following chapter we are going to explore adult learning and, in particular, what is involved in learning a language as an adult: definitions, problems, methodologies and challenges. But first we will try to define who an adult is.

3.1 Who is an adult?

Being an adult means something different to everybody. There is no “official” start but we know that it is the longest age of all. As Begotti (2006) outlines, some scholars, like Léon (cf. 1974), have considered the psycho-biological and socio-psychologic factors such as the sense of physical, intellectual, sentimental and professional “completion”; some others have focused more on legal, biological and social aspects (cf. Knowles 1973). Balboni (2015) states that, educationally speaking, an adult is someone who finished their compulsory educational path (in the western world, someone aged 18+); therefore, it is a person who makes decisions autonomously and choose to learn.

Often adults are seen as *complete entities*, in other words, as beings who have already learned everything they could in life and who reached a point where they are fully developed. In this perspective, it is interesting to read Begotti's words when she remarks that

La radice di "adulto" in latino deriva dal verbo adolesco, ossia "crescere", "svilupparsi", e per questo motivo pare particolarmente adatto poiché ci riconduce all'asserzione che l'adulto continua a crescere, non tanto fisicamente, quanto psicologicamente, nelle sue competenze e abilità (Begotti 2006:8).

The Latin root of the word seems to underline the process of constant growth that goes on during our entire life and never stops, not even when we reach what is called, nowadays, the *mature age*. Relevant, here, are the words of Balboni, who refers to *adultità* as a *dynamic* concept (Balboni 2006).

Serragiotto (in Caon 2008) also underlines how impossible it is to give a precise definition of "adult", because this concept is characterized by instability and it is above all linked to a certain community's point of view.

3.2 The Andragogical Model.

A ground breaking scholar in the field of adult learning is Malcolm Knowles, who began speaking about *andragogy* in his work *The Adult Learner: a Neglected Species* (1973). The American scholar wrote that "pedagogy became a millstone around education's neck" (1973:42), in that education is often considered only as a synonym for pedagogy, which studies children's development. He also dates back the loss of an education dedicated to adults to the fall of Rome, underlining that all the great teachers in history (Lao Tse, Confucius, Cicero, Quintilian, Socrates, Plato, Aristoteles etc.) were teachers of adults.

Therefore, Knowles's concept of andragogy clashed with pedagogy: the scholar saw andragogy as the art and science of helping adults learn (Knowles 1980). Eventually, "andragogy became a rallying point for those trying to define the field of adult education as separate from other areas of education (Merriam 2001)".

Knowles (1973) then formulated 5 assumptions that make up his Andragogical theory. These assumptions differ from those of pedagogy. The adult learner:

- (1) Has a personal *self-concept*: a person who grows and matures develops a sense of self-directedness and autonomy. In Knowles's opinion, whenever there is a situation in which this autonomy lacks, the adult experiences tension. He is not dependent on others like a child would be, therefore "any experience that they perceive as putting them in the position of being treated as children bound to interfere with their learning" (Knowles 1973:45);
- (2) Has a *past experience*: experience occupies a central role within the adult, who often compares new knowledge and new learning to past similar situations. In this sense, adults might use "their experience as a resource for learning" (Knowles 1973:46);
- (3) Is *ready to learn*: andragogy assumes that adults learn what they *need* or *want* to learn, in contrast to children, who are ready to learn things that they *have to* learn because of their academic and biological development (Knowles 1973:47);
- (4) Is *oriented to learn*: adult learners are problem-centred, in that they tend to learn something that they feel they need in the immediate future, e.g. that might help them in problem-solving (Serragiotto 2004);
- (5) Is deeply *motivated*: for adults the biggest motivations come from internal pressures and are often not influenced by external factors. The adult chooses his educational path from the beginning to the very end.

This andragogical approach is still, nowadays, taken into account and applied to the field of language learning in order to find new and original paths in language teaching for adults.

3.3 Adults and Language Learning

The 5 assumptions belonging to Knowles's Andragogical model seen above can become extremely helpful when approaching the teaching of a foreign language to an adult. Balboni (2006; 2015) and Begotti (2006) are among those scholars, within Italy and in the Venetian framework, who applied Knowles's concept of andragogy to language education.

3.3.1 The Teacher's Role

Balboni (2006) underlines how the adult learner is at the same level as the teacher; teacher and students are *peers* and there is no institutional relationship between the two. Moreover, since the adult often chooses to start a language course and pays for it, the so-called "value for money" (Balboni 2006) comes into play: the adult language learner may be a client, and his demands need to be listened to.

Concerning the relationship between the teacher and the student, for Serragiotto (2004; 2008) the adult student is not willing to be guided by the teacher without questioning his or her choices: the adult learner

Vuole essere coinvolto nelle decisioni che lo riguardano, vuole che sia chiaro il percorso che sta facendo, vuole avere la possibilità di misurare continuamente il percorso effettuato, vuole anche essere autonomo nell'apprendimento (Serragiotto 2004:113).

For these reasons the teacher is seen as a *facilitatore* (facilitator, enabler) who hands the students the right *tools* so that they can follow their educational path as autonomously as possible. Begotti goes further and adds that “il formatore di adulti investe una molteplicità di funzioni nell’ambito dello stesso ruolo professionale, in quanto può essere un counsellor, [...] un facilitatore, un tutor” (2006:12).

In case the student has already studied a foreign language in the past, his capacity for abstraction and metalinguistic awareness ensures that metalinguistic considerations about the foreign language should be explicit: rules and grammar must be organized and ordered in a way that teachers may often find obsolete (Balboni 2006). To support these claims we can rely on Slobin’s words, based on a comprehensive study made in *Adult Language Acquisition: Cross-linguistic Perspectives* (1993), edited by Clive Perdue, about the differences between child language acquisition and adult language acquisition. He acknowledges that

Child learners obsessively fine-tune their language, whereas adult learners appear reluctant to deal with detailed phonological, morphological and syntactic distinctions. Here we seem to have a critical difference between FLA and ALA: what little children do unthinkingly, adults can only achieve with some degree of care and attention (Slobin in Perdue 1993).

This “degree of care and attention” described by Slobin can be obtained through that explicit, *on the nose* and straightforward approach to grammar and rules Balboni described.

And it is Balboni (2006) who adds his own view of an andragogical approach summing up some of the point we have just discussed. In the scholar’s opinion, an andragogical approach is characterized by:

- The necessity of constantly measuring the student’s progress *with* the student and highlighting specific targets;
- The student’s explicit availability to shape his knowledge;

- The teacher's awareness of the student's need to be autonomous;
- The teacher's transformation into a *facilitatore*.

3.3.2 Language Learning Problems in the Adult Learner

Some of the 5 Andragogy assumptions we have discussed in 3.2 may represent an obstacle, or a problem, concerning foreign language teaching to adults. One of these is certainly assumption n.2, that has to do with the adult student's past experience. Using Knowles's words, we have said that adults consider their own experience as a resource for learning. This is true for languages, too: the adult learner is going to rely on those methodologies and techniques that he has already seen and experienced; on the other hand, it may happen that he is sceptical about new approaches (Serragiotto in Caon 2008). This had also been written by Freddi back in 1974, when the scholar had stated that “l'esperienza di vita dell'adulto, la sua percezione sensoriale individuale e le “mappe” mentali che si è creato influiscono notevolmente nell'apprendimento di una lingua straniera” (1974:32).

Nowadays, psycholinguistics scholars firmly believe that during our life span it is always possible to learn a new language, but what changes is the speed with which we do so. In fact, studies show that if we begin to study a foreign language after we have turned, more or less, 12 years old, chances are that we are never going to acquire a native speaker accent or proficiency (Balboni 2014). This must be explained to the adult learner in order to avoid *amotivation* (the lack of motivation) during his learning path.

One important psychological aspect, studied by Bouton (1969), is what he calls the *sens du ridicule* (“a sense of the ridiculous”), often caused by a lack of self-confidence, which makes the adult feel inadequate and clumsy when he speaks the foreign language (even though it can only be his own wrong perception). This phenomenon might be the reason why

it is preferable to avoid teaching techniques that involve game like activities (Serragiotto 2004). We are going to better explore this in the following section which deals with teaching techniques and methodologies for adults.

3.4 Teaching techniques and methodologies for adults

Balboni (2006) divides the teaching techniques into four groups:

- a. Techniques with which the learner faces his abilities alone;
- b. Techniques with which the learner interacts with peers;
- c. Techniques with which the learner faces the “teacher-judge”;
- d. Techniques that make the learner “play”.

The first category of techniques is seen as ideal for the adult foreign language learner (Balboni 2006; Serragiotto 2004) who may be afraid , sometimes, of opening up in front of the rest of the class and challenge his self-concept (see above 3.2).

Interaction techniques are those techniques that involve activities done with peers inside the class: roleplay, dialogues, dramatization. As pointed out above (3.3.2), these techniques may endanger the adult student’s self-concept and put at risk his self-esteem. What is feared is the *performance* the student has to do in front of the class; for this reason it would be preferable to make the student work with peers he already knows or in a couple, so that the affective filter is diminished.

The third technique-category can have a space in the andragagogical model only if the teacher reiterates that the teacher-student relationship is one between peers, where the adult is treated as such. (Balboni 2006).

A broader consideration must be made for the last category of techniques: the game-like techniques and methodologies, belonging to the so-called *didattica ludica* and, in case of language teaching, *glottodidattica ludica* (cf. Caon & Rutka 2012). We may refer to it as “ludic activities” for language learning. For a brief explanation we use Michele Daloiso’s words, as he writes that

La Metodologia Ludica non va confusa con la semplice presentazione di giochi in classe, magari al termine della lezione o nei momenti di stanchezza degli studenti. Al contrario, questa metodologia assegna al gioco un valore strategico per raggiungere obiettivi sia linguistici (sviluppo delle abilità comunicative, delle competenze lessicale e grammaticale) sia formativi (sviluppo cognitivo, culturale, delle competenze sociali e interazionali) (Daloiso 2006).

It is immediately clear how these activities could be rejected by the adult who may consider them to be childish and a possible waste of time (Serragiotto 2004; Balboni 2006; Begotti 2006). This is why these activities “vanno introdotte con una dettagliata spiegazione degli scopi e dei metodi” (Balboni 2006:198). Hence, communication, in the adult student – teacher relationship, is fundamental because adults need to be told the reasons why certain methodologies are chosen and what are the final goals that they aim at.

Once the objectives of a ludic activity have been clarified by the teacher, Begotti states that the *glottodidattica ludica* “ottiene ottimi risultati anche con gli adulti perché sollecita una motivazione basata sul piacere, che quindi influisce sulla memoria a lungo termine e crea in classe un’atmosfera di serenità” (Begotti 2006:31). In chapter 1 we saw that pleasure is considered as the most powerful motivation for learning and as the most durable; it also leads to deep long-term acquisition.

The riskiest of these techniques is probably the *roleplay* (cf. Caon, Rutka 2004), where students are asked to simulate a situation (e.g. “at the supermarket”, “at the airport” etc.) in front of the rest of the class: the adults’ self-concept is, again, at risk. Moreover, instead of

working in groups, at the beginning the teacher may suggest to work in pairs, so that the student does not feel judged by the entire class and has the chance to get to know another person (Begotti 2006; Serragiotto in Caon 2008).

One last problem that may rise when teaching to individuals coming from another country (and, in case of Italian LS, living *in* another country), is a cultural one; the students have grown in a different learning environment, with different institutions and different rules. As a consequence, every choice that the teacher makes must be explained and negotiated with the students (Caon 2008b). Nothing can be taken for granted.

What is central, in adult language teaching, is, once again, the so-called *patto formativo*, an “educational agreement”, that outlines why the teacher does what he does, how he will do it, evaluating what and so on (cf. Caon 2008b, Balboni 2014). This has to be done explicitly between the teacher and the student at the beginning of the language course in order to avoid misunderstandings.

Chapter 4

“Motivation in Adult Foreign Language Learning: a Research in Prague”

In the following chapter the reader will be able to find the results of a survey carried out online concerning how adults are and get motivated to learn and keep learning a foreign language. In this case study, the foreign language is Italian and the students have all studied the language in the Czech Republic.

In the first section we are going to discuss the context and how the survey has been conceived and planned, then the discussion will go on tackling the questionnaire itself and describing it in all of its parts.

4.1 The context

The research was conceived for adults studying Italian as a foreign language within the Czech Republic and, most specifically, in the capital city of Prague. At first, the research had been planned only for the students of Italian belonging to three private language schools based in Prague (Language Atelier, Czech-In and Superb Learning). Then, the survey was shared with a higher number of adult learners of Italian and was spread among students of Italian through private Facebook groups.

Therefore, the target was represented by adults living and studying Italian in the Czech Republic in private language schools. In the research, the *adult* is a person who ended their compulsory education and has chosen to study a foreign language for personal reasons (and not forced by a university curriculum or some other external factors). Being all the

respondents European, we can relate to the European Commission's report *Compulsory Education in Europe – 2015/2016*, where it is reported that compulsory education in Europe varies from a minimum of 9 to a maximum of 13 years of duration (page 4). Being the research carried out in the Czech Republic, it is necessary to highlight that in the country's compulsory education lasts for 9 years, with the possibility of continuing for the *maturita* diploma an extra 3 years.

4.2 Survey Preparation

Now we are going to consider the passages that led to the creation of the survey's questionnaire. We will go through the preparation of the questionnaire and through the choices that were made concerning methodology, distribution and data collection.

4.2.1 Planning

This survey can be positioned in the framework of motivation studies within the language education field (*glottodidattica* in Italian); in particular, it has to do with motivation in foreign language learning and how this changes during the language course itself. Motivation is, more specifically, investigated among individuals who chose to study Italian in a language school, as adults and after their compulsory education. Therefore, the participants are either university students or workers.

The survey is not exclusively quantitative. Some of the questions were purposely designed to let the respondent express their detailed opinions and impressions. However, it was necessary to investigate on personal information such as age, sex, nationality, native language and perceived Italian level, in order to have a wider background of the participants.

A fundamental part of the questionnaire comes immediately after these first introductory questions: the part that deals with the reasons for learning Italian. This is of extreme importance because it shows which type of motivation learners used to have before taking the language course.

The changes in motivation during the studying period of the language have been analysed too, designing questions that would give the chance to the student to express their own preferences concerning learning materials, teachers' behaviour and choices, preferred moments during class, learning styles and so on. In other words, classroom motivation was, of course, an important area of study.

Lastly, the participants were given the chance to acknowledge whether or not they had ever experienced anxiety (which prevents acquisition and blocks motivation) and to express explicitly whether their motivation to learn Italian had increased, stayed the same or diminished during the studying period.

In order to be able to reach the highest possible number of students, our questionnaire was created on *Google Drive* platform, acquiring the shape of a *Google Form* questionnaire. Even though face-to-face interviews would have been interesting, the online questionnaire presents a different number of advantages:

- It is always available and easy to consult;
- It is cheaper and more ecologic, thanks to zero printing costs and paper saving;
- Not only *Google Forms* allows to immediately see the number of answers, it also shows, at any time, collected data through graphs on a calculation sheet;
- It is easy to distribute.

4.2.2 Questionnaire Creation

The first decision that was made was that the questionnaire had to be bilingual, both in Italian and in English, so that it would have also been answered by those people with a beginner or absolute beginner level of Italian.

The questions are, overall, 12, and all of them are compulsory, except for number 11.1.

A short introduction was designed and it had to be informal and quite direct, so that the purpose of the survey would be clear to the respondents:

“Questo è un breve questionario sulla motivazione durante l'apprendimento dell'italiano come lingua straniera. E' stato creato per la mia tesi di ricerca. Per completarlo ci vorranno meno di 10 minuti. Vi ringrazio per il vostro contributo!

This is a short questionnaire about motivation during the learning of Italian as a foreign language. It has been created for my thesis research. Completing it will take you less than 10 minutes. Thank you for your contribution!

Sarah”

The first 4 questions require a short and precise answer; they asked about:

1. Nationality
2. Age
3. First language
4. Gender

The following question referred to the participants' actual level of Italian or their perceived one.

5. Qual è (o come valuti) il tuo livello attuale d'italiano? / Which (or what do you think) is your current level of Italian? *

- *Principiante assoluto / Absolute beginner (A0)*
- *Principiante / Beginner (A1 A2)*
- *Intermedio / Intermediate (B1 B2)*
- *Avanzato / Advanced (C1)*

After that, questions about motivation begin. Number 6 refers to the different motivations that may have led the respondents to the choice of studying Italian. Seven different options were proposed, with the possibility of selecting the 8th one, “Altro”, in case someone could not find a suitable answer. The participants could choose more than one option:

6. Perché hai scelto di studiare italiano? / Why have you chosen to study Italian? *

Puoi scegliere più di un'opzione / You can choose more than one option

- *Ero attratto dalla cultura e dalla lingua italiana / Attraction towards the Italian culture and language*
- *E' la lingua parlata da uno o più famigliari / One or more family members speak this language*
- *Per motivi d'amore o d'amicizia / For love or friendship reasons*
- *Per lavoro / For work*
- *Per viaggiare / For traveling*
- *Perché la considero una lingua più facile di altre / Because I consider it as an easy language compared to others*
- *Per trasferirmi in Italia / For moving to Italy*
- *Altro: _____*

Question number 6 clearly had the goal of defining the main motivations and reasons that lay behind the studying of Italian. These can be considered and called the *upstream* motivations, in that they are the initial ones. Motivation(s), of course, can change.

The different options above tried to represent all the different motivation types we have discussed about in Chapter n. 1. Some of them may be related to an integrative need

(*Attraction towards the Italian culture and language; One or more family members speak this language; For love or friendship reasons*) while some others to a more instrumental one (*For work; For Traveling; For moving to Italy*). However, we know how these categories are not to be considered as strict ones. The only real intrinsic kind of motivation that is found in question number 6 is *Attraction towards the Italian culture and language*. This interest comes from within and, therefore, it is deeply connected with pleasure, in that the student wants to learn a language because he or she likes how it sounds, how interesting the culture is to him or her, and so on. We have described the important role played by pleasure above, in Chapter 1 (1.1.3 and 1.1.3).

The purpose of question number 7 was, instead, to find out which kind of course the student took part in:

7. *Che tipo di corso frequenti (o hai frequentato)? / What kind of course are you attending (or have attended) ? **

- *Corso individuale / Individual course*
- *Corso di gruppo / Group course*
- *Entrambe le tipologie / Both kinds*

Question number 7 was designed in order to collect information concerning learning preferences and classroom motivation dynamics from both group and individual courses. Of course, in the second case there is lack of classmates: this may change the student-teacher relationship for better or for worse. Moreover, individual courses give the teacher a chance to shape more personalised classes.

With question number 8 we enter the *classroom motivation* area. The aim of this specific question was discovering the participants' preferences concerning teaching materials. Different options were given and it was possible to select more than one:

8. Quali materiali didattici preferisci usare in classe? / Which teaching materials do you prefer using in class? *

- Libro o schede di grammatica / Grammar book or grammar worksheets
- Materiale autentico (articoli di giornale, pubblicità, canzoni, film ecc.) / Authentic material (newspaper articles, advertisements, songs, movies etc.)
- Materiali ludici ("giochi": puzzle, carte, quiz ecc.) / Ludic materials ("games": puzzles, card games, quizzes etc.)
- Libro delle attività / Activity book

Question number 9 may look similar to question number 8, in that it explored students' preferences concerning different aspects that all have a common denominator: they represents choices made entirely by the teacher on how the class is managed. Respondents' choices could go from a value of 1 (*not important at all*) to a value of 5 (*very important*).

9. In classe, quanto sono importanti i seguenti aspetti? / In class, how important are the following aspects? *

1 = Per niente importanti / Not important at all 5 = Molto importanti / Very important

	1	2	3	4	5
<i>La lavagna / The board</i>	<input type="radio"/>				
<i>I materiali multimediali / The media</i>	<input type="radio"/>				
<i>La diversificazione delle attività / Activity variety</i>	<input type="radio"/>				
<i>L'interazione in classe / Classroom interaction</i>	<input type="radio"/>				
<i>I compiti / Homework</i>	<input type="radio"/>				
<i>I momenti dedicati alla cultura italiana / Dealing with the Italian Culture</i>	<input type="radio"/>				
<i>L'uso dell'italiano da parte dell'insegnante / The teacher's use of Italian</i>	<input type="radio"/>				

*La correzione immediata
degli errori / Immediate
mistake correction*

<input type="radio"/>				
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The goal of question number 10 was to find out which skills the students like to practise the most and, therefore, make them feel more motivated in learning and practising the language. It was possible to select more than one option.

10. Quali sono i momenti che apprezzi di più durante la lezione? / Which are the moments you appreciate the most during lesson? *

Puoi scegliere più di un'opzione / You can choose more than one option

- *Momenti di lettura / Reading moments*
- *Momenti di conversazione / Conversation moments*
- *Momenti d'ascolto / Listening moments*
- *Momenti di scrittura / Writing moments*
- *Other:* _____

Question number 11 addressed the topic of anxiety during language learning. As described above, we know how important it is to avoid anxiety situations in class, which are themselves demotivating and block acquisition. In question 11 the participants are also given the chance to explain what made them anxious in case they did experience anxiety.

11. Hai mai vissuto situazioni d'ansia in classe? / Have you ever experienced anxiety in class? *

- *Sì / Yes*
- *No / No*

Se sì, in che situazione/i? / If so, in which situation/s?

Finally, question number 12 was designed to sum up the students' feelings and perceptions on whether their motivation towards Italian studying had increased, diminished or had not changed. No matter the answer, in question number 9 it was compulsory to give a further explanation on the reasons behind one's choice.

12. Durante o dopo il corso, la tua motivazione verso lo studio dell'italiano è... / During or after the course, your motivation toward Italian studying has... *

- *Cresciuta / Increased*
- *Diminuita / Diminished*
- *Rimasta immutata / Not changed*

*Perché, perché no? / Why, why not? **

Once the questionnaire is completed, the participants have to click on the *submit* button and their answers are registered immediately. A thanks-message instantly appears.

4.3 Distribution

The questionnaire was made available online in the beginning of May 2016 and stayed online until the end of July 2016. Adult students willing to participate could reach it through a link that led to the *Google Doc*. The questionnaire was sent to or shared with students of Italian by email or by posting it on Facebook groups or pages where registered people were brought together by the studying of Italian (inside the Czech Republic). The research target was made clear each and every time the link was sent or shared.

The online version of the questionnaire, namely how it appeared online, is shown below.

Sondaggio sull'italiano come lingua straniera/ Survey about Italian as a foreign language

Questo è un breve questionario sulla motivazione durante l'apprendimento dell'italiano come lingua straniera. E' stato creato per la mia tesi di ricerca. Per completarlo ci vorranno meno di 10 minuti. Vi ringrazio per il vostro contributo!

This is a short questionnaire about motivation during the learning of Italian as a foreign language. It has been created for my thesis research. Completing it will take you less than 10 minutes. Thank you for your contribution!

Sarah

*Campo obbligatorio

1. 1. Nazionalità / Nationality *

.....

2. 2. Età / Age *

.....

3. 3. Lingua madre / First language *

.....

4. 4. Genere / Gender *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.



F



M

5. 5. Qual è (o come valuti) il tuo livello attuale d'italiano? / Which (or what do you think) is your current level of Italian? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.



Principiante assoluto / Absolute beginner (A0)



Principiante / Beginner (A1 - A2)



Intermedio / Intermediate (B1 - B2)



Avanzato / Advanced (C1)

6. 6. Perché hai scelto di studiare italiano? / Why have you chosen to study Italian? *

Puoi scegliere più di un'opzione / You can choose more than one option
Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

- Ero attratto dalla cultura e dalla lingua italiana / Attraction towards the Italian culture and language
- E' la lingua parlata da uno o più famigliari / One or more family members speak this language
- Per motivi d'amore o d'amicizia / For love or friendship reasons
- Per lavoro / For work
- Per viaggiare / For traveling
- Perché la considero una lingua più facile di altre / Because I consider it as an easy language compared to others
- Per trasferirmi in Italia / For moving to Italy
- Altro: _____

7. 7. Che tipo di corso frequenti (o hai frequentato)? / What kind of course are you attending (or have attended) ? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Corso individuale / Individual course
- Corso di gruppo / Group course
- Entrambe le tipologie / Both kinds

8. 8. Quali materiali didattici preferisci usare in classe? / Which teaching materials do you prefer using in class? *

Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

- Libro o schede di grammatica / Grammar book or grammar worksheets
- Materiale autentico (articoli di giornale, pubblicità, canzoni, film ecc.) / Authentic material (newspaper articles, advertisements, songs, movies etc.)
- Materiali ludici ("giochi": puzzle, carte, quiz ecc.) / Ludic materials ("games": puzzles, card games, quizzes etc.)
- Libro delle attività / Activity book

9. In classe, quanto sono importanti i seguenti aspetti? / In class, how important are the following aspects? *

1 = Per niente importanti / Not important at all 5 = Molto importanti / Very important
Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	1	2	3	4	5
La lavagna / The board	<input type="radio"/>				
I materiali multimediali / Multimedia	<input type="radio"/>				
La diversificazione delle attività / Activity variety	<input type="radio"/>				
L'interazione in classe / Classroom interaction	<input type="radio"/>				
I compiti / Homework	<input type="radio"/>				
I momenti dedicati alla cultura italiana / Dealing with the Italian Culture	<input type="radio"/>				
L'uso dell'italiano da parte dell'insegnante / The teacher's use of Italian	<input type="radio"/>				
La correzione immediata degli errori / Immediate mistake correction	<input type="radio"/>				

10. Quali sono i momenti che apprezzi di più durante la lezione? / Which are the moments you appreciate the most during lesson? *

Puoi scegliere più di un'opzione / You can choose more than one option
Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

- Momenti di lettura / Reading moments
- Momenti di conversazione / Conversation moments
- Momenti d'ascolto / Listening moments
- Momenti di scrittura / Writing moments
- Altro: _____

11. Hai mai vissuto situazioni d'ansia in classe? / Have you ever experienced anxiety in class? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Si / Yes
- No / No

12. Se sì, in che situazione/i? / If so, in which situation/s?

.....
.....
.....
.....

13. 12. Durante o dopo il corso, la tua motivazione verso lo studio dell'italiano è... / During or after the course, your motivation toward Italian studying has... *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Cresciuta / Increased
- Diminuita / Diminished
- Rimasta immutata / Not changed

14. Perché, perché no? / Why, why not? *

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4.4 Analysis and Results Discussion

In the following section the collected data will be shown, analysed and, subsequently, discussed.

60 adult students of Italian who are studying it in the Czech Republic took part into the research, during a period of three months (May, June and July 2016).

4.4.1 Data Analysis

The results of the survey will be displayed, when possible, with graphs and diagrams designed with the use of *Microsoft Excel*. For more qualitative data, thematic tables will try to reorganize the answers to open ended questions.

1) Nationality

This first question was open ended. Unsurprisingly, the majority of the respondents are Czech citizens (48), but there is still space for a number of different European nationalities. Because of the geographic position of the country, Eastern European countries and neighbour countries' nationals are present in the sample.

<i>Czech</i>	48	<i>Russian</i>	1
<i>Slovakian</i>	3	<i>Serbian</i>	1
<i>Hungarian</i>	2	<i>French</i>	1
<i>Spanish</i>	1	<i>Albanian</i>	1
<i>Polish</i>	1	<i>German</i>	1

2) Età / Age

As already remarked multiple times, the focus of this research is adult foreign language learning (in this case, within the Czech Republic and learning Italian as a foreign language). The age of the participants ranges from 25 years old to 74 years old, with a predominance of students in their late twenties and early thirties. In fact, the average age of the participants is 35,01.

<i>Age</i>	<i>Mentions</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
25 - 34	33	55%
35 - 44	15	25%
45 - 54	10	16,60%
55 - 64	1	1,66%
65 - 74	1	1,66%

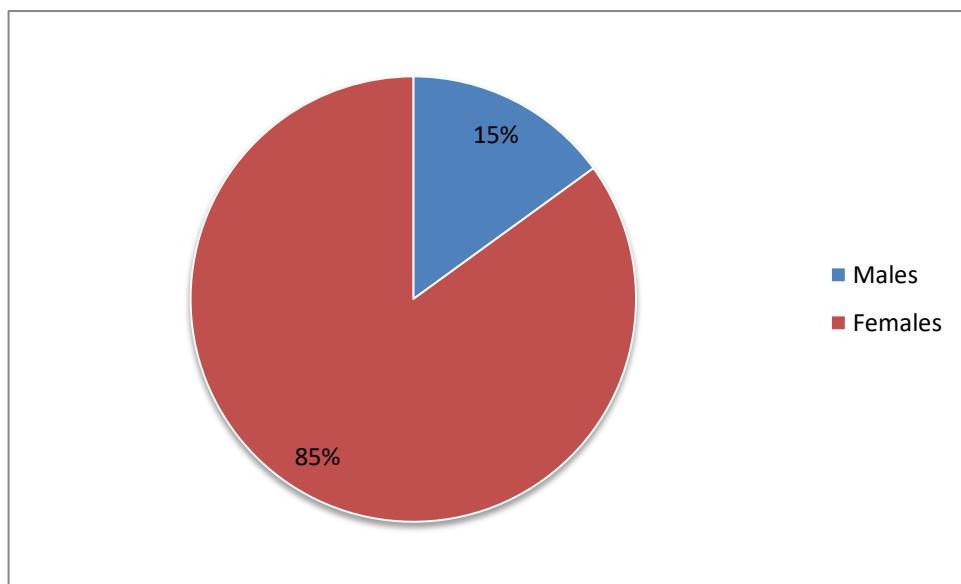
3) Lingua madre / First Language

Unsurprisingly, 80 % of the respondents speak Czech as their first language. Nevertheless, we underline once more the presence of internationals living in the Czech Republic (mainly in the capital city of Prague) and the presence, among the participants, of two bilingual individuals who recognize, as their first language, Czech and Slovakian and Czech and German.

<i>Czech</i>	46	<i>Polish</i>	1
<i>Czech, Slovakian</i>	1	<i>Russian</i>	1
<i>Czech, German</i>	1	<i>Serbian</i>	1
<i>Slovakian</i>	3	<i>French</i>	1
<i>Hungarian</i>	2	<i>Albanian</i>	1
<i>Spanish</i>	1	<i>German</i>	1

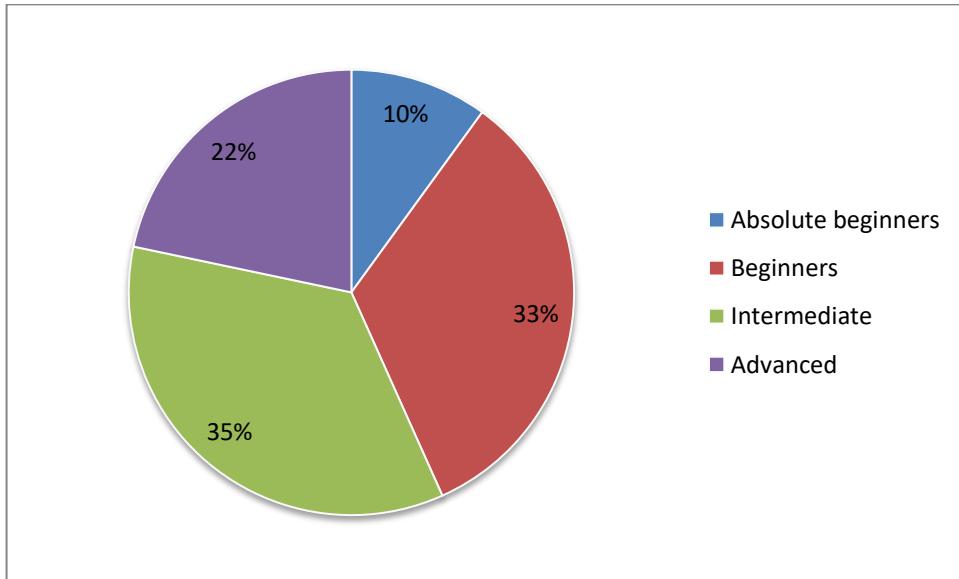
4) *Genere / Gender*

A visible majority of female students took part into the research, namely 85% of all the respondents. Only 15% of males participated. This might not be a total surprise as usually, as Serragiotto states, “tale dato non sorprende gli addetti ai lavori che sono abituati a vedere una maggiore frequenza femminile ai corsi di lingue” (2012: 105). Here we find a similar trend in the Czech Republic too.



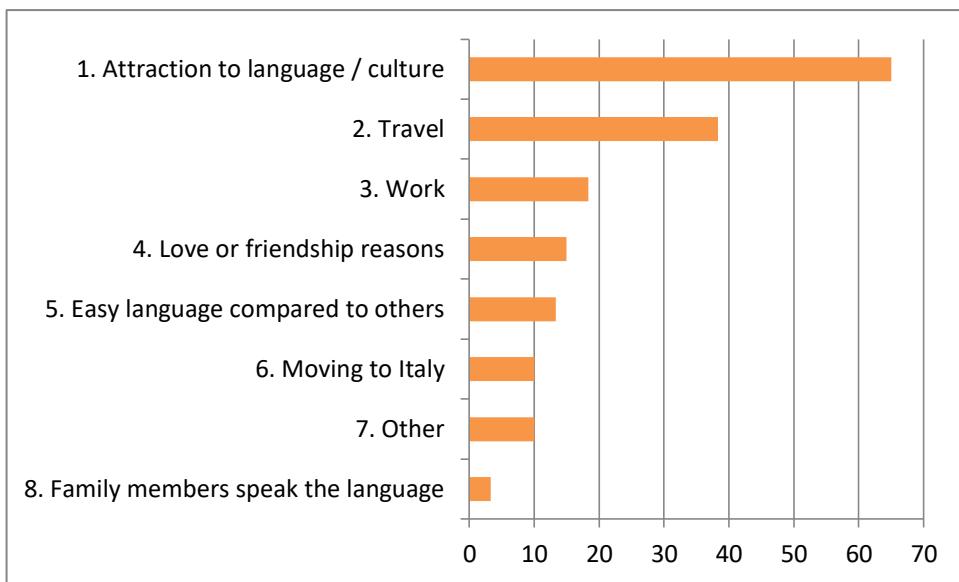
5) *Qual è (o come valuti) il tuo livello attuale d'italiano? Which (or what do you think) is your current level of Italian?*

The majority of the respondents (35%) who took part in the survey claimed to have reached an intermediate level of Italian, corresponding to a B1 and B2 of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. Subsequently, there was a significant participation of beginners (A1 – A2 level): 30% of the participating students stated to belong to this category. Finally, we find advanced students (C1 – 22%) and absolute beginners (A0 – 10%).



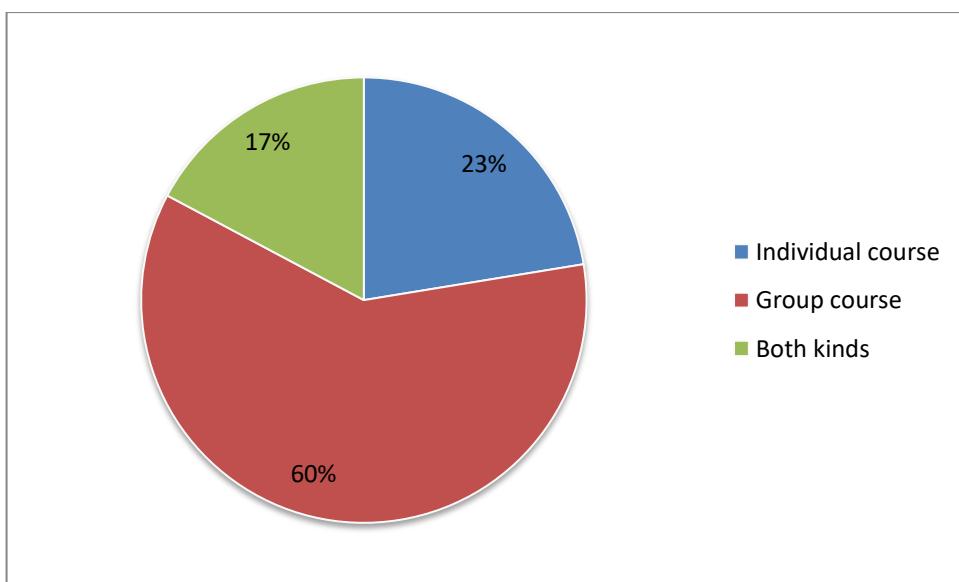
6) *Perché hai scelto di studiare italiano? / Why have you chosen to study Italian?*

As written above, question number 6 had to test the respondents' motivations for choosing to study Italian as a foreign language. As a result, a significant 65% of the learners indicated that the main reason behind their choice of Italian studying was their attraction towards the Italian language and / or culture. This option visibly outnumbers the other ones. After that, the second most selected option is *traveling*, which reaches 38,3%, and the third is *work*, with 18,3%. Only 3,3% of the participants chose to study Italian because of their family members' language community. If we exclude option number 1, options number 2 and 3 are certainly more instrumental and extrinsic as motivations for studying a language.



7) *Che tipo di corso frequenti (o hai frequentato)? / What kind of course are you attending (or have attended) ?*

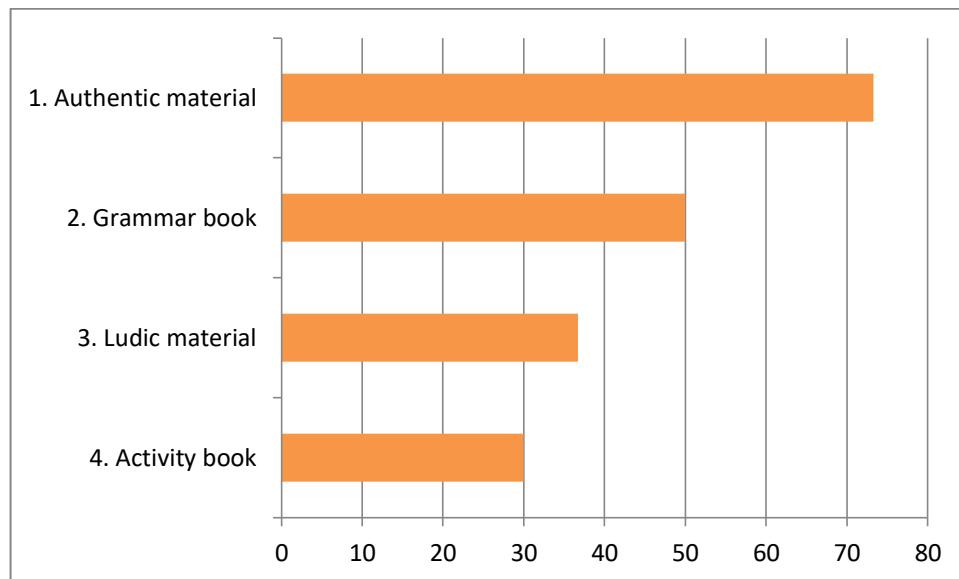
Usually, in language schools, students are given the possibility of choosing between group courses and individual courses which, of course, are tailored in order to satisfy the clients' need as much as possible. Among the participants, the majority took part in group courses (60%) versus 23% who took part in individual ones. However, 17% attended both kinds of courses.



8) *Quali materiali didattici preferisci usare in classe? / Which teaching materials do you prefer using in class?*

Question number 8 had the objective of discovering what kind of teaching materials would motivate an adult the most. As clearly indicated in the table below, the option *authentic materials* (*newspaper articles, advertisements, songs, movies etc.*), was selected by the highest number of participants, representing a 73,3% of the total responses. It must be remarked that the participants could select more than one option. The *grammar book* is among the preferred teaching materials for 50% of the respondents, while *ludic materials* ("*games*": *puzzles, card games, quizzes etc.*) were selected by 36,7% of the students. The preferences concerning the *activity book* only represent 30% of the total.

What is interesting, in terms of research, is that unsurprisingly, as to confirm what has been previously said about teaching techniques and methodologies for adults (see 3.4), only 2 people between 41 and 74 years old prefer ludic materials.



9) *In classe, quanto sono importanti i seguenti aspetti? / In class, how important are the following aspects?*

In question number 9 different classroom aspects were investigated. The aim of this question was measuring how a variety of factors influence learning in a classroom environment. Some of these refer to teaching support devices (*the board, multimedia*), some others to the content of the lessons (*dealing with Italian culture, classroom interaction*) and some others to the teacher's choices or attitudes (*activity variety, homework, the teacher's use of Italian, immediate mistake correction*).

Respondents had to answer based upon a scale of values, where 1 equalled "not important at all" and 5 "very important". After a first look, the most striking result is that 80% of the involved students think that the teacher's use of Italian in class is very important, especially among participants who own a A1-A2 level (90% of them – 18 out of 20 – selected 5 in the value scale). Two other options that were considered to be "very important" by the majority of participants were the immediate mistake correction (43,3%) and the level of classroom interaction (41,7%). In the table below we find out that there are other components that are thought to be "important" (and not very important) by the majority of the interviewees, such as the variety of activities (43,3%), the use of multimedia (36,7%) and the dealing with the Italian culture (35%). This last aspect was marked as "not important at all" by none of the participants, along with immediate mistake correction.

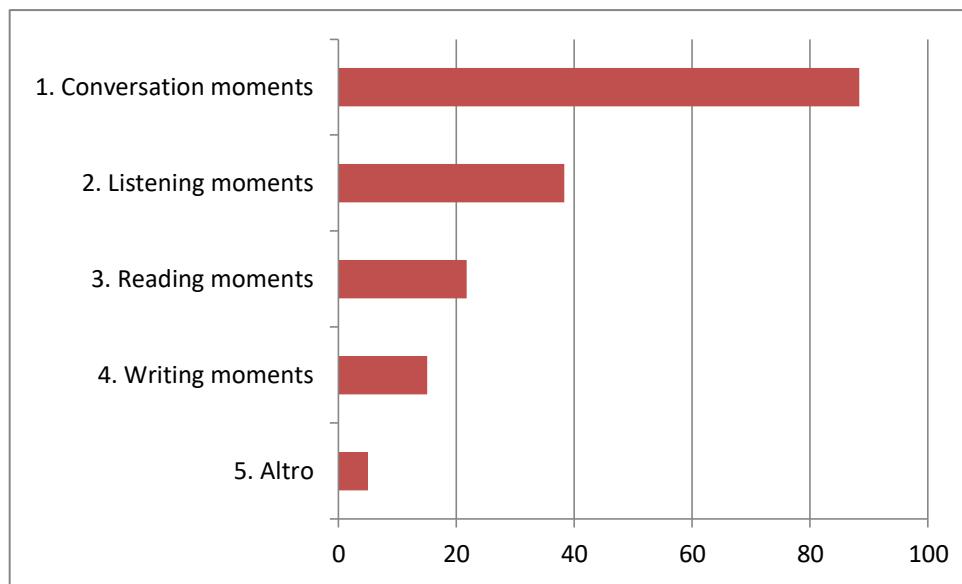
Furthermore, the majority of people who took part only in individual courses prefer learning with authentic materials (69,2%).

	1	2	3	4	5
<i>The board</i>	8,3	16,7	31,7	16,7	26,7
<i>Multimedia</i>	6,7	16,7	20	36,7	20
<i>Activity variety</i>	1,7	0	15	43,3	40
<i>Classroom interaction</i>	3,3	5	20	30	41,7
<i>Homework</i>	5	20	30	31,7	13,3
<i>Italian culture</i>	0	8,3	35	35	21,7
<i>The teacher's use of Italian</i>	1,7	0	6,7	11,7	80
<i>Immediate mistake correction</i>	0	6,7	26,7	23,3	43,3

10) *Quali sono i momenti che apprezzi di più durante la lezione? / Which are the moments you appreciate the most during lesson?*

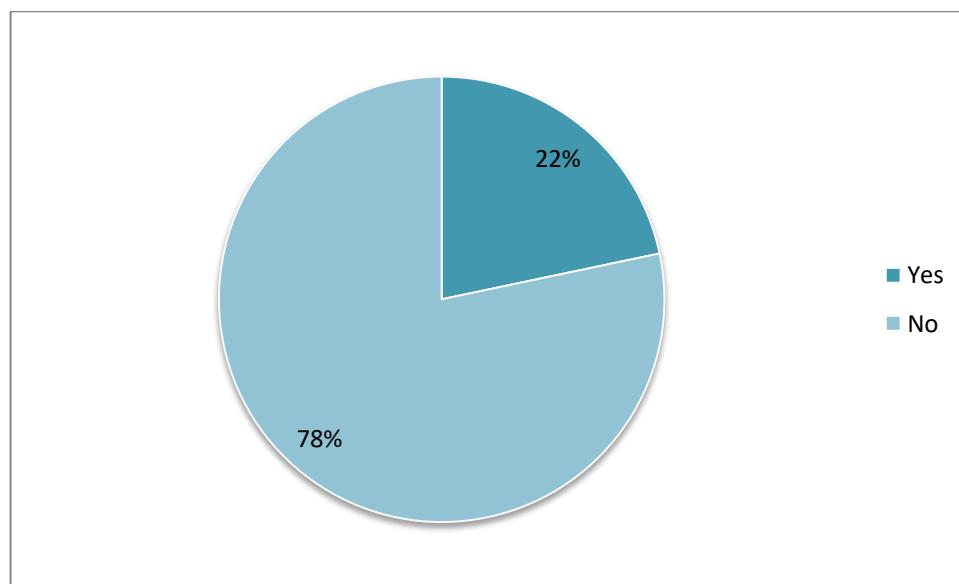
From question number 10 it is clear that the overwhelming majority of the respondents prefer to have conversation moments in the classroom (88,3%), with a good 38,3% who also, or instead, enjoy listening moments. Writing moments, on the other hand, were rarely chosen, representing only 15% of the responses.

In this question more options were selectable.



11) *Hai mai vissuto situazioni d'ansia in classe? / Have you ever experienced anxiety in class?*

Question number 11 is a yes/no question, which refers to the degree of anxiety experienced in class during language learning. The majority of respondents answered negatively (78%).



The minority (22%) who gave a positive answer was asked to provide a further explanation and required to answer one more question: *Se sì, in che situazione/i? / If so, in which situation/s?*

This was an open question: the participants were given the chance of answering by writing few lines. 13 people in total stated they have experienced anxiety within the learning environment. The different causes behind anxiety have been outlined in the following table.

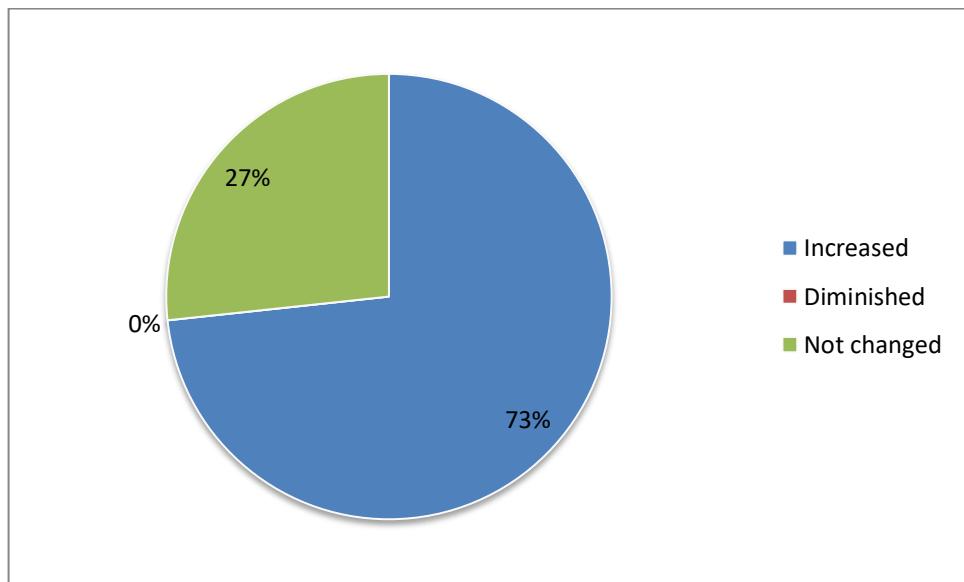
Classmates (2)	- negative atmosphere (1) - advanced classmates (1)
Test (6)	- being tested at the blackboard (1) - oral tests (4) - final tests (1)
Teacher (2)	- not Czech-speaking teacher (1) - always late teacher (1)
Classroom Interaction (3)	- excessively long conversations (2) - difficulty in expressing one's needs orally (1)

We see that being orally tested has the highest number of mentions (4 out of 13), followed by the anxiety experienced when conversations in class get excessively long (2 out of 13). The recurring four “fields” of anxiety have to do with the relationship between the classmates, their relationship with the teacher, test-related anxiety and classroom-interaction related anxiety.

12) *Durante o dopo il corso, la tua motivazione verso lo studio dell'italiano è... / During or after the course, your motivation toward Italian studying has...*

This last question had the objective of discovering whether the students' motivation toward Italian has increased or not during or after the language course. The respondents could select *increased, diminished or not changed*. Subsequently, they were asked to give further explanation in an open question (*Perché, perché no? / Why, why not?*).

None of the participants stated that their motivation diminished and the overwhelming majority of them found that their motivation increased (73%). The rest, instead, thinks that their motivation has not changed (27%).



The open question which invited respondents to explain the reasons why their motivation increased, diminished or did not vary are particularly interesting for the purposes of this research.

Pleasure (15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Love for the Italian language and culture (10) - Love for language learning (2) - Pleasure of learning new things (2) - Pleasure of learning (1)
Progress (9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seen tangible progress (5) - Reached a higher language level (3) - Feeling challenged (1)
Communication (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being able to better explain my mind (3) - Better understanding of Italian (2) - Being able to have conversations in Italian (1)
Teacher (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inspiring teacher (2) - My private teacher made me practise what I like (1) - Positive teacher's support (1)

Classroom Environment(2)	- Positive classroom atmosphere (2)
Other (9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Traveling (1) - Work (1) - Italian speaking friends (1) - I am not sure / unclear (6)

Among the 45 people who answered that their motivation towards Italian learning increased, 33,3% (15 people) mentioned that their motivation did so because of pleasure: pleasure of learning languages, new things or simply learning, but most of all love for the Italian language and culture. 9 people (20%) replied that the more they saw some kind of progress in their language learning path, the more their motivation would grow. The third factor that made the participants' motivation grow is the improved ability of communicating in Italian and with Italians (13,3%).

We have seen that, on the other hand, the students who stated that their motivation remained unvaried represent 27% of the total of participants. The reasons given by the students vary, and some of them did not write anything further in the open question (e.g. dots). All the relevant and meaningful answers are listed below and they are both in Italian and English.

- “Non ho avuto tempo di studiare e so che questo non cambierà”
- “Studio anche da solo (leggo i libri, guardo i film, faccio gli esercizi)”
- “Perché sono pigra”
- “Perché la lingua italiana mi piace”
- “Perché non l’ho usato nel corso degli anni”
- “I was motivated before and remained motivated”
- “Vedo che non capisco abbastanza”

- “Sento di essere sempre allo stesso livello”
- “Amo l’Italia e lavoro ogni giorno con le ditte italiane quindi la motivazione è rimasta immutata”
- “Il motivo era rimasto amore/compagno però non mi interessa di studiare bene, mi basta l’italiano che so già per i miei bisogni quotidiani”

The people who stated that their motivation remained the same pointed out, as main causes,

- the lack of time for studying;
- the rare use of the language itself during the years;
- the feeling of always being “stuck” at the same level;
- their individual studying;
- the feeling of being satisfied with their current level of Italian.

Some respondents also consider their unchanged motivation as positive, as it was strong already before the language course and remained unvaried.

Chapter 5

Adults and Motivation in the Language Classroom: Two Learning Units

Having discussed about adults and language learning, and keeping in mind our survey's results, the goal of this chapter is to give two practical examples of *learning units* carried out in a language school context in Prague. The students who attended these lessons participated to the survey presented in chapter number 4. The description of the two lesson plans will come after a first section where they will be commented and explained, with references to the literature.

5.1 Course types and levels

The two learning units that will be presented ahead have already been carried out in different classes of Italian LS for adult students. The first one was conceived for a A2+ level, while the second one for a B1+ level.

5.1.1 Teaching coordinates

Language Atelier, a private language school in Prague (which offers a variety of courses of other languages, too) has three main core values when it comes to language teaching: communication, game-like activities and authentic materials.

Without neglecting all of the other skills or aspects of a language course, oral every day communication is the focus around which the lesson is usually developed, as often it is asked by the students themselves. This, of course, is consistent with a *communicative*

approach to language teaching, which has as its ultimate goal interaction between language speakers (cf. Mitchell 1994; Richards & Rodgers 2001). Furthermore, game-like activities (see above 3.4) are encouraged and used once or twice during lesson so that the students can challenge themselves and the others or simply be involved in a fun activity that makes them use a variety of skills. Finally, authentic material is a fundamental resource for students of Italian as a foreign language in that it is a type of material that is not prepared exclusively for teaching (see above 2.2.1). What we mean when we speak about authentic material is “una tipologia di materiale creato per i madrelingua, quindi non a scopo didattico. [...] divenuta il punto nodale su cui verte l’approccio comunicativo” (Begotti 2006).

5.1.2 The video as authentic material

First of all, it is necessary to mention once more that authentic materials are often found to be exceptionally motivating by the students. Begotti supports this thesis and reiterates that

I vantaggi della didattizzazione di materiale autentico per insegnare la lingua straniera sono visibili in primo luogo nell’alta motivazione da parte degli studenti: [...] quando il docente propone del materiale autentico in classe, in particolar modo se recente o vicino ai bisogni e interessi degli studenti, viene recepito positivamente e con grande entusiasmo (Begotti 2006: 15).

The three aspects we have just mentioned above (communication, game-like activities and authentic materials) have often been developed during class with the use of videos. All the activities that will be presented here revolve around a video, put at the core

of the lesson. In these cases, the video typology appears in the form of a recipe from a cooking tv-show and of a music video.

Videos are part of the bigger family of multimedia, which, during the past 20 years, have become a fundamental resource for language teaching and acquisition. At first, the use of multimedia in class had been seen as a groundbreaking innovation and as a meaningful change from an approach based only on repetitive and “standard” writing, speaking, reading and listening exercises. Multimedia tools stimulate different types of intelligences, following Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences (cf. Gardner 1993) and learning styles: in a video, for instance, the audio and visual inputs are blended and offer more support to students for words they do not immediately understand, thanks to video frames.

As seen in chapter 4, the results of the survey clearly show that the adult learners involved in the research prefer authentic materials (newspaper articles, advertisement, songs, movies etc.) over other teaching materials usually used in class. A percentage corresponding to 73,3%. 36,7% of the participants consider multimedia an important feature of the language lesson.

In the following activities we will see how multimedia and authentic material have been combined and used with a communicative approach in the teaching of Italian as a foreign language.

5.2 Activity 1: *Bruschette di melanzane*

The first activity will deal with a videoclip from a famous Italian cooking show, *I menu di Benedetta*.

“Bruschette di melanzane”

Student level: A2+

Materials: original worksheets, blackboard, Youtube video

Duration: 30 minutes

Learning goals:

- Vocabulary: getting to know a variety of nouns and verbs related to food, cooking and cuisine;
- Grammar: revising *passato prossimo* and practising irregular past participles;
- Communication: informing about one's favourite foods, telling a recipe, describing typical food.

5.2.2 Structure

The lesson plan follows the *globality-analysis-synthesis* Balboni applied to language teaching, creating the *learning unit*,

a sequence of acquisition or learning units, of phases of presentation, practice, production, of macrophases of globality, analysis, synthesis: in recent decades this is the methodological form used almost universally in didactic materials (Balboni 2010).

More learning units form a *teaching unit*.

Before getting the learning unit's part dedicated to globality, in the unit there has to be a first activity that triggers motivation (Balboni 2014), during which the students' knowledge is activated and they are encouraged to make hypotheses on what will come next.

Balboni's theory of *motivation + globality-analysis-synthesis* is intertwined with the notions of *bimodality* and *directionality* (Danesi 1988), according to which both cerebral hemispheres are activated by language, but information is first processed by the

right hemisphere (the more global one) and then by the left hemisphere (which analyses details).

All the different tasks belonging to one learning unit will be displayed in boxes.

5.2.3 Development

Motivation:

The first exercise has the objective of motivating the students to take part in the activity by beginning with what they know. The teacher makes the following questions to the class and students are free to speak and intervene.

- La bruschetta è un piatto italiano molto famoso nel mondo. Lo conosci?
- Quali sono gli ingredienti?
- Hai già provato una bruschetta? Ti è piaciuta?

The teacher writes all the relevant words and expressions that come out on the board. These will be useful for the students to understand the text better.

Globality:

Here there is a first contact with the video itself: a frame of the video is shown and the students are asked to make hypotheses about what type of video they are going to watch.



The teacher, now, shows the whole video just once, so that the students' suppositions can be confirmed or not.

So far, the video-recipe has been listened to just once, and now the students are invited to reflect on the verbs that are found in it, dwelling upon those ones they already know. Their meanings should be clearer after the viewing of the video.

Conosci questi verbi? Collegali con le definizioni giuste.

1. Sbucciare
 2. Affettare
 3. Passare
 4. Friggere
 5. Ricoprire
 6. Gratinare
 7. Completare
-
- a) Mettere insieme, unire
 - b) Fare a fette
 - c) Coprire totalmente
 - d) Togliere la buccia
 - e) Cuocere un cibo al gratin
 - f) Mettere in olio e sale
 - g) Cuocere in olio, burro o grasso bollente
 - h) Muoversi attraverso qualcosa

Obviously, the teacher's help will be fundamental in this exercise; nevertheless, the students are encouraged to make hypothesis and try to complete the task by themselves.

Analysis:

Now the students get in touch with the actual written text. The learners now own a few tools thanks to which they can get the global meaning of the text. Still, it is highly unlikely that they can remember all the right past participles after just one listening.

Leggiamo ora il testo della ricetta "Bruschette di melanzane" e scegli il passato remoto corretto:

Abbiamo **sbucciato/sbuccio** la melanzana, l'abbiamo **affetta/affettata**, abbiamo **passato/passate** le fette nell'uovo e nel pan grattato e le abbiamo **fritte/friggiute** poi le abbiamo **ricoprite/ricoperte** con salsa di pomodoro, sale, pepe, fettine di mozzarella, le abbiamo **passate/paste** in forno a gratinare e abbiamo **completato/complesso** con l'origano.

Ora guardiamo e ascoltiamo la ricetta. Controlla le tue risposte.

As showed in the box above, after the reading of the text comes the second viewing of it, and it is time for the learners to confront themselves with the tv host's way of speaking, which might be very challenging, in order to correct their exercise. Before that, the students had to choose the right past participle form from the recipe text.

The reflection on grammar (and its revision) goes on with a second grammar-related exercise:

Quali partecipi passati irregolari hai trovato nel testo?

Coniughiamoli insieme:

Quali altri partecipi passati irregolari conosci? Scrivine almeno cinque.

The students will then be able to watch the video-recipe once more and this time focus on words they do not recognize.

- Ascoltiamo e guardiamo un'altra volta la video-ricetta. Scrivi le parole che non conosci.
- Riesci ad indovinare cosa vogliono dire?

Once more, the word meaning is not given to the students immediately; it is, instead, first guessed and then supposed by them. What helps, in this situation, is the image support: if, for instance, the word *pan grattato* has not come up yet, the teacher can stop the video and make the learners try and explain what that means.

Synthesis:

During the part of the lesson dedicated to synthesis, the students “fix and secure” what they have learnt and put it into practice. In this case that will be done through a short debate in class and through homework to do back home.

To do in class:

Il video che abbiamo visto fa parte di un famoso programma televisivo di cucina italiano.

Nel tuo paese ce ne sono di simili? Li guardi? Cosa ne pensi?

To do home:

- Riscrivi la ricetta delle bruschette di melanzane al futuro semplice.
- Scrivi una ricetta tipica del tuo paese d'origine. Aiutati con le espressioni, i verbi e il lessico visto in classe.

5.3 Activity 2: “La vasca”

This second learning unit deals with a music video. It is the re-designed and edited version of an original work found on Adgblog.it, “*Italiano con le canzoni: “La vasca” di Alex Britti*”. This one has been re-imagined and modified by the teacher, in order to better exploit the video tool.

“La vasca”

Student level: B1+

Materials: original worksheets, blackboard, Youtube video

Duration: 1 hour

Learning goals:

- Vocabulary: revising and getting to know vocabulary about the bathroom, the house, the beach etc.;
- Grammar: revising *futuro semplice*;
- Communication: being able to talk about vacations and music preferences.

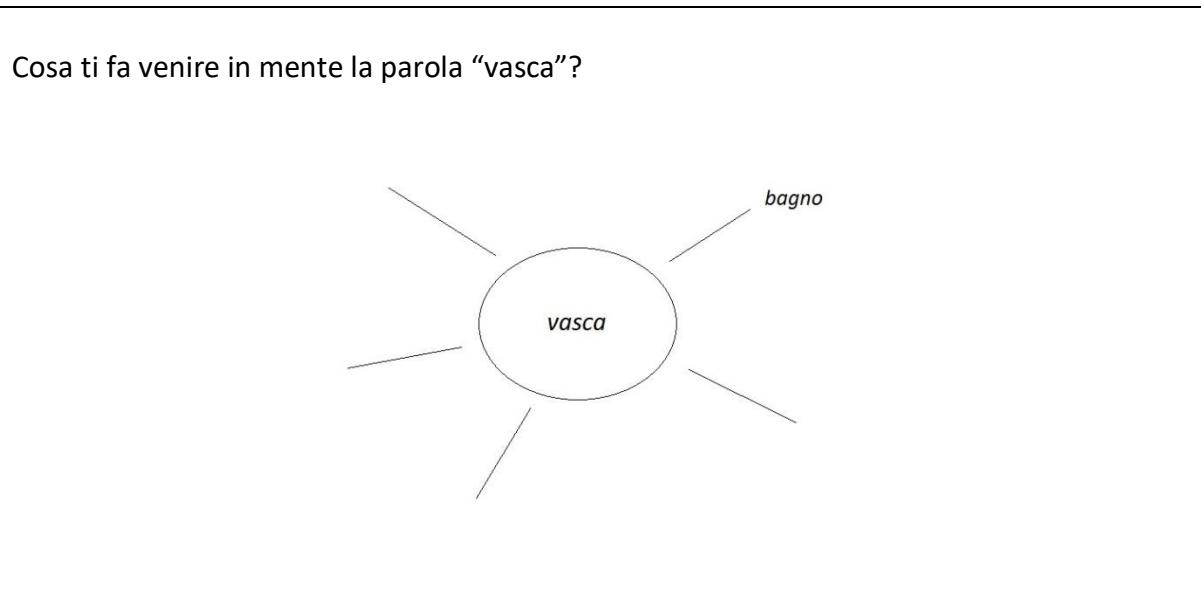
5.3.1 Structure

This learning unit follows the *motivation + globality/analysis/synthesis* model that is explained in 5.2.1 in order to facilitate directionality.

5.3.2 Development

Motivation:

During this first phase, as we saw in the previous unit, students are invited to formulate hypotheses, guesses and previsions. They will only be given the title of the music video that they are going to watch later on. The teacher will call out for a *brainstorming* by drawing a *spider diagram* on the board.



Learners are free to complete the diagram with any related word that comes to their mind. The title, just like images, colours, layout etc., is part of the *paratext* of a text which can be used to give interpretations of the text itself.

Therefore, in the next activity the class is going to see three frames taken from the video. The students will have to name the three places shown, saying what they think they have in common.



Questi tre luoghi sono presenti nel video che guarderemo. Cos'hanno in comune?

Globality:

Now the students are going to have a first direct contact with the written version of the text. Being this the global phase, they won't be asked to understand the whole text but only to fill the gaps with verbs and nouns by helping themselves, for instance, with elements like the rhyming scheme or the subject of the close.

Proviamo a completare il testo con le parti mancanti. Attenzione! Le strofe della canzone sono state mescolate.

Inserisci questi verbi usando il futuro
accendere, attaccare, esserci, fare, stare, stare

1. Non ci (*loro*) _____ ripetenti punto e basta
(*noi*) _____ tutti insieme nella stessa vasca
così grande che ormai è una piscina
(*noi*) _____ a mollo dalla sera alla mattina
così che adesso è troppo piena e non si può più stare
è meglio trasferirci tutti quanti al mare
quando fa buio (*noi*) _____ un grande fuoco
(*noi*) _____ un maxi schermo e un maxi gioco
e dopo inseguimenti vari e varie lotte
(*noi*) _____ tutti un grande bagno a mezzanotte

Inserisci nella strofa le seguenti parole:
bandiera, fantasia, medicina, mare: fai attenzione alle rime!

2. voglio restare tutto il giorno in una vasca
con le mie cose più tranquille nella testa
un piede fuori come fosse una _____
uscire solo quando fuori è primavera
ma spero solo questa mia _____
non sia soltanto un altro attacco d'utopia
perché per questo non c'è ancora _____
che mi trasformi la mia vasca in piscina
e tantomeno trasformare tutto in _____
però qualcuno lo dovrebbe inventare

Nel ritornello c'è un prefisso davanti ad alcuni verbi: "ri". Osserviamo...

3. mi bagno, mi tuffo, mi giro e mi rilasso
mi bagno, m'asciugo e inizia qui lo spasso
e mi ribagno, mi rituffo, mi rigiro e mi rilasso
e mi ribagno, mi riasciugo e ricomincia qui lo spasso

Inserisci questi verbi usando il futuro
dormire, dormire, essere, aspettare, festeggiare

4. (noi) _____ più di 100, quasi 120
 amici, conoscenti e anche i parenti
 con il cocomero e la coca cola fresca
 con le chitarre a dirci che non è Francesca
 (noi) _____ le prime luci del mattino
 (noi) _____ con cornetti e cappuccino
 e quando stanchi (noi) _____ sulla sabbia
 le nostre camere scolpite nella nebbia
 ma (noi) _____ poche ore quanto basta
 per poi svegliarci e rituffarci nella vasca

Sai cosa significano i verbi con il prefisso “ri”?

5. mi bagno, mi tuffo, mi giro e mi rilasso
 mi bagno, m'asciugo e inizia qui lo spasso
 e mi ribagno, mi rituffo, mi rigiro e mi rilasso
 e mi ribagno, mi riasciugo e ricomincia qui lo spasso

Qui mancano alcune parole, prova ad inserirle:
buco, cena, coccola, fuori, silenzio

6. Voglio restare tutto il giorno in una vasca
 con l'acqua calda che mi _____ la testa
 un piede fuori che s'infreddolisce appena
 uscire solo quando è pronta già la _____
 mangiare e bere sempre e solo a dismisura
 senza dover cambiare _____ alla cintura
 e poi domani non andrò neanche al lavoro
 neanche avvertirò perché il _____ è d'oro
 tornerò con gli amici davanti scuola
 ma senza entrare, solo _____ a far la ola

7. mi bagno, mi tuffo, mi giro e mi rilasso
 mi bagno, m'asciugo e inizia qui lo spasso
 e mi ribagno, mi rituffo, mi rigiro e mi rilasso
 e mi ribagno, mi riasciugo e ricomincia qui lo spasso

This long activity requires the *skimming* of the text. The focus should be on the global meaning of one verse at a time. During the analysis part below there will be a more detailed comprehension of the whole song.

Analysis:

Now the students will listen to the whole song and will have to reorganize its parts in the correct order:

- Ascoltiamo la canzone e mettiamo le parti nell'ordine giusto e, dopo, guardiamo il video musicale:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Asuw3J4-tJo>

Reorganizing the parts of the song is an effective listening exercise. Now it is time for the class to try and understand the meaning of the song, which they will hypothesise in couples. In this way students feel more confident in making suppositions with a peer and then exhibit them to the class and the teacher: in couples, responsibility is shared and the affective filter is lowered (see above 3.4).

“La vasca” ha un testo molto lungo e ci sono tante parole nuove. Secondo te, di cosa parla? Scrivi le tue idee con un compagno. Ti puoi aiutare con queste parole:

pigrizia vacanza estate

The following exercise deals directly with the visual input given by the video. In fact, the class is asked to focus on the objects that surround the singer during the first minute of the music video. They will have to exclude some of the options given and then name as many objects as possible seen during the first 60 seconds of the song. This

activity's focus is purely on vocabulary with a game element: the learners are challenged to recall the highest number of words associated with the objects in the video and, most likely, they want to find more than their classmates.

Riguardiamo con attenzione il primo minuto del video. Quali tra questi oggetti NON vedi?

Papera Chitarra Specchio Bicchiere Tappeto Finestra Cestino Lampada
Pallone Lavandino Sgabello Porta

Quanti altri oggetti riesci a nominare?

Synthesis:

At the end of this learning unit, it is time for an open class discussion. The class is told what a *tormentone* is (or can easily guess it) and is asked to give its opinions about it. Moreover, students have the chance to speak about a song that played or plays a similar role in their country of origin. In this way, the end of the class becomes a moment where learners can abstract from the music video and discuss about the larger topic of music, expressing their preferences, points of view, tastes in music genres etc.

“La vasca” di Alex Britti è stata un vero tormentone durante l'estate del 2000: si poteva sentire in tutte le radio. A te piace questa canzone? Qual è una canzone-tormentone nel tuo paese?

Conclusions

The survey described in this paper had the aim of discovering what motivates adult students of Italian as a foreign language before, during and after their language courses. Different factors were investigated and, overall, the participants' attitude towards Italian studying has been found to be positive.

The attraction towards the Italian language and culture was recognized as the main reason for students to start and learn the language; this was identified as the root cause behind their approach to the study of Italian. Thus, the type of motivation that prevailed is both integrative and intrinsic. It is integrative in that the people who chose to study Italian did it in order to get closer to that language community and to its culture; it is intrinsic because the interest for learning Italian, in these cases, comes from within and it is deeply connected to pleasure.

Classroom motivation was another central factor examined by this study. Motivation may be strong before actually getting in touch with the language course, but it has to be sustained in class. This is why aspects such as teaching materials, classroom environment, the teacher, learning strategies and teaching devices were taken into consideration.

It emerged that authentic materials are the teaching materials that motivate students the most, above all those students who took part in individual courses: this might be because individual lessons can be custom-tailored for the student's needs and the teacher is free to design a more personalised course based upon the learner's interests. The study showed that the adult learners involved do not mind ludic activities and materials in general, but only 2 people between 41 and 74 years old appreciate them. This would partially confirm the belief that adults (and in this case, adults above 40) are generally sceptical about new teaching and learning approaches or that they consider game-like activities to be a waste of time.

In the adult students' opinion, another factor that was considered to be fundamental in the language class is the teacher's use of Italian. Some learners often express the need of having a language teacher who is able to speak their native language; this does not seem to represent a problem in our survey. Additionally, immediate mistake correction seemed to be preferred over an approach where mistakes are only corrected when they block communication. This is probably a sign of positive classroom environment where there is no space for affective filter.

Classroom interaction plays a crucial role in the adult students' motivation as well. What emerged from the study about this area of research is that students need a good level of interaction with peers and that they want interaction to actually happen. This seems to show that interaction teaching techniques, which involve activities done with peers inside the class (see 3.4) are not always rejected by adult students and that, when the classroom environment is a positive one, they do not put their self-esteem at risk.

As long as language skills are concerned, adult students deliberately prefer conversation moments. Moments dedicated to listening activities are still appreciated, while writing and reading seem to be falling behind. While it is obvious that none of these skills should be neglected, this tendency seem to demonstrate that a communicative approach and a focus on everyday communication was effective and was enjoyed by the students.

Anxiety inside the foreign language class, which is known to block motivation and acquisition, was dealt with in this paper too. The small percentage of students who experienced anxiety associated it with being tested, and above all through oral exams. We could connect this to what was previously said about the adult student's self-concept and self-esteem: although these aspects do not seem to represent a problem during everyday activities in class, maybe they could indeed represent one if the adult had to speak in front of the peers while being tested.

As previously described, this research also aimed at discovering whether motivation changed or not after the language course experience (for those who finished the course) or during it. The learners involved in the study were asked if their motivation increased, diminished or stayed the same and, most importantly, why. An important figure is that no one thought that their motivation decreased: it either grew or remained unaltered. When it grew, students recognized that it did so because of pleasure, in different ways: pure pleasure of learning new things, love for language learning, love for the Italian language and culture. In each case, pleasure was the real driving force behind the motivation to learn.

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