Volume 12, Issue 2, November 2025

E-JournAL

EuroAmerican Journal of Applied Linguistics and Languages

E-JournAll
EuroAmerican Journal of Applied Linguistics and Languages

Volume 12, Issue 2, November 2025, pages i-89

 ISSN 2376-905X

http://doi.org/10.21283/2376905X.1.12.2

Editorial Board

Table of Contents

All the articles in this issue underwent double blind peer review processes.

We thank the anonymous reviewers who contributed to the quality of this issue.

EuroAmerican Journal of Applied Linguistics and Languages
E-JournALL, Volume 12, Issue 2, November 2025, 1-14
ISSN 2376-905X
http://doi.org/10.21283/2376905X.1.12.2.3160
www.e-journall.org

Passive voice, first person pronouns, and mental process verbs in biological sciences research articles

DAVID BANKS
Université de Bretagne Occidentale

Received 5 July 2024; accepted 29 September 2025

ABSTRACT

EN This paper sets out to study the use of passive forms, first person pronouns, and process types in the biological research article. Recent studies carried out on a small sample of articles in the physical sciences have suggested that in physical sciences research articles, there are two available models: one using many passive forms and avoiding first person pronoun subjects; and the other using few passives but first person pronoun subjects readily. The object of this study is to consider a similar sample from the biological sciences, and to compare them with the previously studied physical sciences articles. The six biological research articles that have been studied here, show restrained use of passives and a significant use of first person pronoun subjects. Overall, the relational process is the most common type, but the material process is the most frequent in some articles. Relational process is the most common type overall, but material process is the most frequent in some articles. Within mental process, cognitive process is the most common type, followed by processes of a mathematical nature. Most first person pronoun subjects occur with mental process verbs.

Key words: BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES, FIRST PERSON PRONOUN, PASSIVE, PROCESS TYPE, RESEARCH ARTICLE

ES Este artículo tiene por objetivo estudiar el uso de las formas pasivas, los pronombres de primera persona y los tipos de proceso en el artículo de investigación biológica. Estudios recientes realizados sobre una pequeña muestra de artículos en las ciencias físicas sugieren que, en el artículo de investigación de ciencias físicas, existen dos modelos disponibles: uno que utiliza muchas formas pasivas y evita sujetos con pronombres en primera persona; y otro que utiliza pocas pasivas pero emplea con facilidad los sujetos con pronombres en primera persona. El objetivo de este estudio es considerar una muestra similar de las ciencias biológicas y compararla con los artículos de ciencias físicas previamente estudiados. Los seis artículos de investigación biológica analizados muestran un uso moderado de la voz pasiva, y la mayoría utiliza pocos sujetos con pronombres en primera persona. El proceso relacional es el tipo más común, pero el proceso material es el más frecuente en algunos artículos individuales. Dentro de los procesos mentales, el proceso cognitivo es el tipo más común, seguido de los procesos de naturaleza matemática. La mayoría de los sujetos en primera persona aparecen con verbos de proceso mental.

Palabras clave: CIENCIAS BIOLÓGICAS, PRONOMBRE DE PRIMERA PERSONA, VOZ PASIVA, TIPO DE PROCESO, ARTICULO DE INVESTIGACIÓN

IT Questo lavoro si propone di analizzare come le forme passive, i pronomi di prima persona e i tipi di processo sono utilizzati negli articoli scientifici nell'ambito della biologia. Studi recenti, condotti su un piccolo campione di articoli nell'ambito delle scienze fisiche, suggeriscono che i testi di tali pubblicazioni tendono a seguire due modelli: uno che impiega frequentemente la forma passiva ed evita i soggetti con pronomi di prima persona, e un altro che, al contrario, privilegia l'uso dei pronomi di prima persona ma che ricorre a un numero relativamente ridotto di forme passive. Lo scopo del presente studio è esaminare un insieme comparabile di testi pubblicati nell'ambito delle scienze biologiche e confrontarne i modelli linguistici con quelli identificati in precedenza nelle scienze fisiche. L'analisi dei sei articoli appartenenti all'ambito della ricerca biologica rivela un uso moderato della voce passiva, mentre la maggior parte presenta un impiego limitato dei pronomi di prima persona come soggetto. I processi relazionali sono la tipologia più comune, sebbene in alcuni articoli individuali prevalgano i processi materiali. Tra i processi mentali, quelli cognitivi sono i più frequenti, seguiti da quelli di natura matematica. La maggior parte dei pronomi di prima persona compare in combinazione con verbi di cognizione.

Parole chiave: SCIENZE BIOLOGICHE, PRONOME DI PRIMA PERSONA, PASSIVO, TIPI DI PROCESSO, ARTICOLI SCIENTIFICI

✉ **David Banks,** Université de Bretagne Occidentale
David.Banks@univ-brest.fr

1. Introduction

The nature of the passive would appear to be simple, but, in fact, writers do not agree about what actually constitutes a passive verb. I consider that the passive is a verb form made up of the verb *to be* followed by a past participle. A number of writers, over a long period, have considered that the verb *to get* followed by a past participle, the so-called *get*-passive, constitutes an alternative to the passive with *to be* (Chappell, 1980; Hatcher, 1949; Hundt, Dallas, & Nakanish, 2024). However, almost fifty years ago I wrote that "the *get passive* is not a passive in any meaningful sense of the term, but an independent structure with its own semantic properties" (Banks, 1986, p. 74). I still believe this to be the case. Consequently, in this study consideration of the passive is restricted to the "*be*-passive." It is also restricted to the full finite verb. Some commentators include rankshifted non-finite clauses functioning as qualifiers (post-modifiers) in their count of passives. Pullum, (2014, p. 62), who refers to this as a "bare passive" gives the following example:

(1) One of its ads shows a washed-out manager, **arms folded**, sitting in a corner.[1]

This involves considering such phrases as being derived from "full" forms (perhaps a hangover from generative grammar). I feel that one should take a text as it stands, and not add in elements which are not there; thus, I consider such phrases to be reduced relative clauses (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985), (in (1), the reconstructed full form might be *with his arms (which were) folded*), and not passives.

In the early 1960s, Barber initiated contemporary studies of scientific texts. His seminal study (Barber, 1962) considers a number of features of scientific writing including the passive. The rare earlier studies (e.g. Savory, 1953) did not get beyond remarks on technical vocabulary. Until recently, it has been generally believed that use of the passive was an important feature of scientific writing, and numerous studies in the late 20th century suggested a passive rate of about 30% of finite verbs for this genre. Barber's own figure is 33%[2], the tables in Huddleston (1971) suggest a figure of 32%, and in Banks (1994), I found a passive rate of 31%. Some writers (e.g. Seoane, 2010) consider passives as a percentage of those verbs which could have a passive form. This means interest is concentrated on the choice of the scientific writer. My interest, however, is in the impact of passives on the text as a whole, and hence I give passives as a percentage of all finite verbs.

Use of the passive in scientific writing has been variously interpreted, with some claiming that the passive voice is used to maintain what is seen as the "impersonal" nature of scientific text (Cooray, 1967; Ding, 2002; Hundt, Schneider, & Seoane, 2016); others argue that the passive is used for reasons related to thematic structure, whereby the writer places what he is interested in, the object of his study or the ongoing experiment, in thematic, hence in initial position in the clause, thus triggering, in many cases, the use of a passive verb (Arnold et al., 2013; Banks, 2008a, 2008b; Halliday, 1988; Leong Ping, 2014; Rodman, 1981). This use of the passive continued despite the fact that many style manuals and instructions for authors recommended avoiding the passive. Bennett (2009) studied a large number of style manuals and found that in general they argued in favour of using the active form.

More recently however, Seoane and her collaborators (Seoane, 2006; Seoane & Loureiro-Porto, 2005; Seoane & Williams, 2006) have suggested that the use of the passive is in decline in scientific writing. They found that there was a rapid and dramatic change in the late 20th century, which was even more marked in American than in British English. They suggest that this is not necessarily a move to a more colloquial style, but is influenced by "the democratization of society and the pressure to convey scientific knowledge as efficiently and clearly as possible" (Seoane, 2006, p. 206). They also point out differences between differing disciplines and subdisciplines (Hundt et al., 2016; Hundt, Röthlishberger, & Seoane, 2018; Seoane & Hundt, 2018).

If there is indeed a reduction in the use of the passive in scientific writing, then it would be natural to expect an increase in the use of first person pronoun subjects. Rather than expressing a process which has the human author as agent in a passive form, this would be expressed in the active with a first person pronoun subject. The use of first person pronouns in scientific texts has been studied over a fairly long period by Hyland and his collaborators. They point out that there are differences between different disciplines, but suggest that the increase in the use of first person pronouns is more marked in the biological sciences than elsewhere. Hyland and Jiang (2017) claim that, in their corpus, use of first person pronouns in biology rose by 213% between 1965 and 2015. These changes are mainly from 1985 onwards, and indicate a willingness on the part of scientific writers to be more overtly present in their texts (Hyland, 2001, 2002, 2010; Hyland & Jiang, 2016,

[1] Relevant parts of examples are printed in **bold**.

[2] Percentages throughout this paper are rounded to the nearest integer. Any discrepancies are due to rounding.

2017, 2018). An increase in the use of first person pronouns, but with differences between disciplines was also noted by Lafuente Millán (2010). Martínez (2005) noted different rates of first person pronoun use in the various rhetorical sections (introduction, method, results, discussion) of biology research articles.

In Banks (2017), I suggested that there was some evidence for a reduction of the passive, at least in the physical sciences, with a corresponding rise in the use of first person pronoun subjects. I put forward the conjecture that this was due to the fact that mathematical modelling had been introduced in the physical sciences, but not in the biological sciences, from the late 19th century onwards (Banks, 2008a). This in itself leads to the use of verbs of a mathematical nature, that is, involved with mathematical calculation, which can be classed as expressing a type of mental process. Mental process verbs seem to be more conducive to the use of first person pronoun subjects, probably because of the more personal nature of the activity involved. In a recent study (Banks, 2021), attempting to test these hypotheses, I looked at six sample texts; these were all articles in the physical sciences taken from the 2018 *Proceedings of the Royal Society A*. I found that while the overall passive rate was close to the late 20th century norm of 30%, there was considerable variation between individual articles, with two having considerably more, and two considerably less than this figure. Half of the sample texts used first person pronouns to some extent, and where these were used it was almost always with mental or verbal processes, very rarely with material processes. There seemed to be two basic models in operation: a "traditional" model using the passive extensively, and avoiding first person pronouns, and a "progressive" model, with a reduced rate of passives and using first person pronouns readily. Some texts were hybrids of these two basic models.

The present study attempts to show how passives and first person pronouns are used in the biological research article, and to investigate to what extent the claims that use of the passive is declining, and that of first person pronoun subjects increasing are justified. While the results of this study are of interest in their own right, they will also be of interest to those involved in the teaching of academic writing in the biological sciences. Students need to learn not only what the correct forms are, but also when it is appropriate to use them. This is crucial, particularly for non-anglophone students, who will be required to publish in a language which is not their mother tongue (Cooke, 1993). Hinkel notes the difficulty that non-anglophone students have with, for example, the passive, and concludes that "the practically requisite usage of passive voice in constructing formal written discourse also needs to be taught intensively" (Hinkel, 2004, p. 24). In the following sections I will give details of the corpus, and then consider the incidence of passive forms and first person pronoun subjects, and their relationship to different process types.

2. Corpus and method

The present paper is an attempt to look at the situation in the biological sciences, which have received rather less attention from researchers than the discourse of the physical sciences (Banks, 2017). To do this, I have taken six sample texts (see Appendix) from the 2019 *Proceedings of the In the following sections I will give details of the corpus, and then consider the incidence of passive forms and first person pronoun subjects, and their relationship to different process types. Royal Society B*, thus paralleling the physical sciences articles used in Banks (2021). No particular selection criteria were used. These were simply the first that were freely available on the *Royal Society'*s website. The selection is therefore haphazard, if not strictly random in the technical sense. The total number of words in the main texts of these articles is 28838 (Aanen 3937; Benevento 5018; Byrne 4428; Kopperud 4479; Madin 6421; Senior 4555 – see full entries in the Appendix). The papers have between two and seven co-authors, with a total of 27 co-authors for the six papers. It is impossible to know whether the articles were drafted by native speakers of English, but it can be noted that while only 12 of the 27 co-authors have typically anglophone names, the co-authors give a total of 45 affiliations, since some of them give two, or even three institutional addresses, and of these, 40 are in anglophone countries (UK, USA Australia, New Zealand), and only 5 in non-anglophone countries (Netherlands, Sweden, Norway). In addition to the authors themselves, the recommendations of referees, editors and copy-editors may have influenced the final forms of these texts. Without an extensive sociological study, it is impossible to judge the degree of influence that these other actors may have had.

The sample is very small, and is closer to a set of six case studies than even a mini-corpus (Banks, 2005a). On the other hand, there is no reason to think that this selection is not representative, and it is not unreasonable to take the results found here as being of the right order, unless subsequently shown to be otherwise. The random nature of the selection reduces the possibility of bias, and increases its global representativity. The details of the sample texts are given in the Appendix. In the course of this paper, they will each be referred to by the first-named author.

The theoretical background of the paper is Systemic Functional Linguistics (Banks, 2005b, 2019; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), but I trust that any technical terms are sufficiently transparent to be understood by readers who are less familiar with this approach. The study will consider the incidence of passives and first person pronoun subjects, the distribution of process types, and the relationships between these features.

In what follows I shall look at the incidence of passive forms and first person pronoun subjects. I shall then look at the distribution of process types, of all verbs, of passive verbs, and of verbs with first person pronoun subjects.

3. Passives

Table 1 gives the incidence of passives for each article as a percentage of all finite verbs. Non-finite passive verb forms were not included in the count. Finite verbs have particular significance as the fulcrum of the clause, and attract a grammatical subject and, unless they are intransitive, a complement.

Table 1.
Passives

Article	No.	%	No. of finite verbs
Aanen	41	16%	252
Benevento	66	25%	265
Byrne	55	22%	249
Kopperud	36	12%	295
Madin	80	21%	378
Senior	78	28%	274
Overall	356	20%	1713

In the physical sciences articles previously studied the overall passive rate was 29%, but with wide variation between individual articles from 1% to 53%. Two of the six had a high rate, two low, and two were close to the overall rate. In the biological articles studied here, the overall rate of passive use is 20% of finite verbs, notably less than the formerly supposed norm of about 30%. Senior is the closest to this figure with 28%, while Kopperud has the lowest rate with 12%. Hence, these six articles can be thought of as being relatively restrained in their use of the passive, and this would be consistent with the hypothesis that there has been a reduction in passive use. It is also well below the rate of 29% found in the six physical sciences articles studied previously, but where some articles, nevertheless, displayed greater diversity.

4. First person pronoun subjects

Table 2 gives the numbers of first person pronoun subjects of active verbs (there are no first person subjects of passives, and, although theoretically possible, such would be unlikely in any case) and the percentage of finite verbs which have such subjects. Since there are no single-authored articles in the sample, first person pronoun subjects are exclusively *we*.

Table 2.
First person pronoun subjects.

Article	No.	%
Aanen	22	9%
Benevento	12	5%
Byrne	9	4%
Kopperud	69	23%
Madin	23	6%
Senior	25	9%
Overall	160	9%

In the physical sciences articles studied, the overall rate of finite verbs with a first person pronoun subject was 11%, with a range of none at all to 33%. One article uses them extensively, two moderately, but the others use them hardly at all. In these biological articles, the overall rate of finite verbs with a first person pronoun subject is 9%. It should be noted that only overt pronouns were counted. Hence this does not include elided pronouns which occurred as the putative subjects of coordinate verbs. However these are fairly rare;

there are only nine such cases in the whole corpus, seven of them in Kopperud. However, the overall rate masks the fact that while five of the articles have rates of less than 10%, one, Kopperud, stands out, with the much higher rate of 23%. Since Kopperud also has the lowest rate of passive use, this may indicate some degree of correlation between restrained use of passives and a high rate of first person pronoun subjects. This hypothesis is not supported by the figures for the full set of articles. This can be seen in Table 3, where passive use and rates of first person pronouns are compared.

Table 3.
Passives and first person pronouns.

Article	Passives	First person pronouns
Aanen	16%	8%
Benevento	25%	5%
Byrne	22%	3%
Kopperud	12%	26%
Madin	21%	8%
Senior	28%	9%
Overall	20%	10%

Kopperud is paleontological in nature, and there may be sub-disciplinary influences at play (Biber & Gray, 2013), although this is a feature which it shares with Byrne, where the rate is only 3%.

The patterns found here are considerably different to those found in the review of the six physical sciences articles, where the use of passives varied considerably in different articles (from 11% to 53%), and where three of the articles virtually eschewed the use of first person pronouns altogether, and another used them extensively (33%). Hence, the results for this sample would seem to suggest that for the biological sciences, use of the passive is standard but not excessive, and use of first person pronoun subjects is restrained, but in exceptional individual cases, such as Kopperud, may be high. However, the idea that there is a simple correlation between use of passives and that of first person pronouns is not borne out. Moreover, these results do not corroborate earlier studies which claimed that use of the first person pronoun was particularly prominent in the biological field (Hyland & Jiang, 2017).

5. Process types

It is of interest to know whether a specific process type favours the use of either passives, or first person pronouns subjects. I use a set of five process types based on those provided for in Systemic Functional Linguistics (Banks, 2005b, 2019; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The five process types are material, mental, relational, verbal and existential. Even within the Systemic Functional approach there is a fairly wide range of attitudes to the analysis of process types, from a more grammatical to a more conceptual point of view (O'Donnell, Zappavigna, & Whitelaw, 2008). My analyses are to the conceptual pole of this cline. Moreover, I do not use the category of behavioural process which is commonly used in Systemic Functional Linguistics. For example, some commentators (e.g. Matthiessen, 1995) suggest that verbs of communication that project (i.e. can be followed by direct or indirect speech, e.g. *say*) are cases of verbal process, while those that do not (e.g. *talk*) are cases of behavioural process. This does not seem to me to be coherent, and moreover, they do not correspond to the original definition of behavioural process as being between material and mental processes (Halliday, 1985). The reasons why I do not use the category of behavioural process are explained in detail in Banks (2016).

Material process are actions or events of a physical nature.

(2) In the bacterial species *Dinoroseobacter shibae*, at high density, bacteria **switch** from exponential to linear growth and quorum sensing **regulates** this switch. (Aanen)[3]

Mental processes are events of a cerebral nature.

[3]In text references have been omitted from examples.

(3) This **has been interpreted** as a result of the ecological release of mammals following the extinction of many species, including all non-avian dinosaurs, during the Cretaceous/Palaeogene (K/Pg) mass extinction event. (Benevento)

Relational processes link two entities, or an entity and one of its characteristics.

(4) The ectoneural portion **has** a distinct neuroepithalium containing neuronal cell bodies and an underlying neuropile that **contains** axons, analogous to the grey and white matter of the vertebrate spinal cord, respectively, as well as in the presence of radial glia as the supporting framework. (Byrne)

Verbal processes are processes of communication.

(5) We thus **hypothesized** that, through spatially constrained herbivory due to one or both of these indirect mechanisms, marine reserves could affect halo prevalence and/or size by altering herbivore and/or predator populations. (Madin)

Existential processes are statements of existence.

(6) While there **are** substantial advantages to text-mining genus/species age-observation data, we recognize several avenues for improvement in this study. (Kopperud)

Table 4 gives the distribution of process types for the six articles in the sample.

Table 4.
Process Types

Article	Material		Mental		Relational		Verbal		Existential	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Aanen	102	40%	45	18%	94	37%	11	4%	-	-
Benevento	82	31%	57	22%	98	37%	28	11%	-	-
Byrne	85	34%	16	6%	137	55%	11	4%	-	-
Kopperud	92	31%	51	17%	127	43%	17	6%	8	3%
Madin	156	41%	54	14%	141	37%	18	5%	9	2%
Senior	79	29%	70	26%	109	40%	12	4%	4	1%
Overall	596	35%	293	17%	706	41%	97	6%	21	1%

Overall, the commonest process type is relational, accounting for 41% of the finite verbs. Relational process is also the most frequently used type in four of the individual articles (Benevento, Byrne, Kopperud, Senior). However, in Aanen and in Madin the most frequent process type is material. Material process is the second commonest type in the other four articles, where relational process was the most frequent. Mental process is the third commonest process type overall, and in all of the individual articles. This contrasts fairly starkly with the six physical sciences articles I looked at, where, although relational process was the commonest process type overall and in four of the individual articles, mental process was the most frequent in two, second in two, and third in two. Material process was the third commonest type overall, and in four individual articles, being second most frequent in the other two. Hence, mental process seems to have a much less important place in the writing of biological articles than in the writing of articles in the physical sciences.

6. Mathematical processes

At the time when the first scientific research articles were published, in 1665, the physical sciences were largely experimental, and, therefore, used a relatively large number of material processes. The late 19th century saw a vast increase in the use of mathematical techniques, and this is reflected in the scientific writing of the time. In Banks (2008a), I noted "an explosion of mathematical themes in the physical sector from the late nineteenth century on" (p. 175), and concluded "The importance acquired over a short period from the nineteenth century on by the mathematical modelling of physical problems is reflected in the use of mathematical items as thematic choices" (p. 175). In the course of the 20th century, these techniques involved

the use of mathematical modelling, with the gradual use of computers for the purpose, particularly from about 1960 onwards. However, although this was the case for the physical sciences, mathematics did not seem to have made the same impact on the biological sciences, at least up to 1980 (Banks, 2008a). The question arises as to what type of process is encoded by verbs of a mathematical nature. Since events of a mathematical type, at least when they can be attributed to a human, are of a cerebral type, it seems reasonable to consider them a type of mental process. I would claim that this remains the case where an instrument, such as a computer is involved. In fact, it is likely that in modern scientific research all mathematical calculations are carried out using a computer, even where this is not specifically stated. In Systemic Functional Linguistics it is usual to distinguish three types of mental process: cognitive, perception and affective (Banks, 2005b, 2019; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). To this, some would add a separate class of desiderative processes (Thompson, 2004). In these six articles we commonly find cognitive processes:

(7) Little **is known** about how ASM is affected by dietary macronutrient content. (Senior)

There are also a small number of perception processes:

(8) More often, herbivores **have been observed** to be less abundant or not significantly different in GBR no-take reserves relative to fished reefs. (Madin)

There are no examples of the affective or desiderative types in these six articles. I am suggesting that for genres of this type, we should recognize a further mathematical type of mental process. It is true that in many genres these could reasonably be conflated with mental cognitive processes. In genres, such as political journalism, legal documents, or sports reports, one would not expect to find many, if any, verbs of a mathematical nature; therefore, isolating them as a distinct group would not be warranted, but their frequency in scientific genres means that it is useful to distinguish them as a separate group.

(9) The MST **was calculated** based on the distance between occupied grid cells across function space. (Benevento)

(10) We then **model** α and β over the macronutrient space captured by the diets. (Senior)

Since mathematical processes have proved to be an important type in articles in the physical sciences, it is interesting to see to what extent it has made an impact on the biological sciences. Mathematical processes are included in the count of mental processes given above.

Table 5 gives the distribution of cognitive, perception and mathematical types of mental process.

Table 5.
Types of mental process.

Article	Cognitive		Perception		Mathematical	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Aanen	30	67%	1	2%	14	31%
Benevento	34	60%	6	11%	17	30%
Byrne	14	88%	2	13%	-	-
Kopperud	39	76%	5	10%	7	14%
Madin	42	78%	6	11%	6	11%
Senior	29	41%	5	7%	36	51%
Overall	188	64%	25	9%	80	27%

As can be seen, cognitive processes are by far the most common type of mental process overall, accounting for 64% of the mental processes, and this is the case in five of the individual articles, Senior being the single exception. This probably indicates that Senior's use of process types, compared to the other articles in the sample, concentrates more on the calculation of the results, and less on the argumentation, than they do. This contrasts with the situation for the six physical sciences articles studied, where mathematical processes were the most frequent overall, and in five of the individual articles. If the incidence of these types of mental process is calculated as percentages of all finite verbs, the results given in Table 6 emerge.

Table 6.
Mental process types as percentage of finite verbs

Article	Cognitive	Perception	Mathematical
Aanen	12%	*[4]	6%
Benevento	13%	2%	6%
Byrne	6%	1%	-
Kopperud	13%	2%	2%
Madin	11%	2%	2%
Senior	11%	2%	13%
Overall	11%	1%	5%

Cognitive processes account for between 11% and 13% in all articles except Byrne, where the rate is 6%. Perception processes never account for more than 2%. Mathematical processes account for 5% overall, and with the exception of Senior where the rate is 13%, they never account for more than 6%. In contrast, in the physical sciences articles studied, mathematical processes accounted for 18% overall, with a range of 8% to 25%. Cognitive processes accounted for 11% overall, with a range of 10% to 13%. So, while the incidence of cognitive processes is virtually the same in both the physical and biological articles, the incidence of mathematical processes is much less in the biological articles than in the physical. Perception processes are very rare in both the physical and the biological articles, 1% of the mental process in the former, 2% in the latter.

7. Passives and process types

If we now look at the process types of finite verbs in the passive form, the results given in Table 7 emerge.

Table 7.
Process types of passives

Article	Material		Mental		Relational		Verbal	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Aanen	22	54%	14	34%	3	7%	2	5%
Benevento	16	24%	33	50%	8	12%	9	14%
Byrne	38	69%	7	13%	4	7%	6	11%
Kopperud	21	58%	7	19%	4	11%	4	11%
Madin	37	46%	35	44%	5	6%	3	4%
Senior	25	32%	38	49%	10	13%	5	6%
Overall	159	45%	134	38%	34	10%	29	8%

This means that, overall, 45% of the passive verbs encoded material processes, 38% mental processes, 10% relational and 8% verbal. Once again, there is a fairly strong contrast with the articles in the physical sciences where mental processes accounted for the majority of passive forms overall and in each of the individual articles. The overall rate was 62%, and the rate in individual articles ranged from 47% to 82%. Here, overall the majority of passives occur in the material process category, and in four of the individual articles (Aanen, Byrne, Kopperud, Madin). This goes hand in hand with the fact that material processes are more frequent in these biological articles than in the physical sciences sample. In two of these biological articles (Benevento and Senior), mental processes do account for the highest percentage of passive forms. On the other hand, in Kopperud and Byrne the percentage of mental process passives seems particularly low, 19% and 13% respectively. It is important to note that the relatively high percentage of passive relational processes, given that relational processes do not passivize readily. Here, they are more frequent than verbal process passives. Since relational processes do not frequently passivize, it is probably worth giving some examples to show the sort of process that has been included in this category.

(11) Insular dwarfism and gigantism, which are also geologically rapid. macroevolutionary phenomena, **can be accompanied** by little or no change in overall morphology. (Benevento)

[4] An asterisk in a Table indicates that although there were some examples they accounted for less than 0.5%.

(12) Asteroids are particularly amenable to the investigation of CNS regeneration because the RNCs **are located** on the ectodermal surface, rather than being internalized in development as they are in the other echinoderms. (Byrne)

(13) Diets either rich in protein or fat content **were associated** with a great deal of among-individual variation in the age at death. (Senior)

Some might consider these to be adjectival or pseudo-passives, but an active variant is easy to construct for (11) (*little change accompanied* ...), and even for (12) and (13) this is not impossible (*we locate* ..., *we associate* ...).

In the physical sciences articles analyzed, not only were mental processes the commonest type of passive, but within mental process passives the most commonly used type was mathematical, accounting for 60% of the mental process passives. The cognitive type accounted for 36%, and perception 5%. Table 8 shows that this is not the case for the biological articles studied.

Table 8.
Mental process and passives

Article	Cognitive		Perception		Mathematical	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Aanen	11	79%	-	-	3	21%
Benevento	18	55%	1	3%	14	42%
Byrne	6	86%	1	14%	-	-
Kopperud	7	100%	-	-	-	-
Madin	26	74%	3	9%	6	17%
Senior	14	37%	-	-	24	63%
Overall	82	61%	5	4%	47	35%

Here, cognitive processes are by far the commonest type of mental process passive, accounting for 61% of the sample, with mathematical processes accounting for 35%. Cognitive is the most frequent type in five of the individual articles, Senior being the exception.

8. First person pronoun subjects and process type

We will now turn our attention to the process types of verbs with first person pronoun subjects. The numbers of first person pronoun subjects and the percentages of verbs with such subjects are given in Table 9.

Table 9.
Process types and first person pronouns

Article	Material		Mental		Relational		Verbal	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Aanen	2	10%	17	81%	-	-	2	10%
Benevento	-	-	8	62%	-	-	5	38%
Byrne	3	38%	5	63%	-		-	
Kopperud	28	36%	33	43%	6	8%	10	13%
Madin	16	53%	9	30%	-	-	5	17%
Senior	1	4%	22	92%	1	4%	-	-
Overall	50	29%	94	54%	7	4%	22	13%

Although some of the figures are relatively small, it is clear that for these articles the commonest process type with first person pronoun subjects is mental, and this is the case in all individual articles except Madin. The figure 54% is, however, considerably less than that found in the physical sciences articles, which was 76%. Moreover, here 29% of the verbs with first person pronoun subjects occur in material process, with half of the articles (Byrne, Kopperud and Madin, though in Byrne the raw numbers are very small) having a fairly high percentage ranging from 36% to 53%. This contrasts strongly with the situation found in the physical sciences articles where first person pronoun subjects hardly ever occurred with material process verbs, occurring in only one of the articles, and accounting for only 1% overall. The fact that the majority of

first person pronoun subjects occur with mental processes does not seem unreasonable. A person's acts (material processes) can, in principle, be replicated by someone else, but no-one else can have their thoughts or feelings (mental processes). Hence there is something more personal about mental processes which lends them to first person subject use. This tendency, however, seems to be much stronger in the physical than the biological sciences, perhaps because of the greater incidence of mathematical processes in that subgenre.

Since the figures in Table 9 are already fairly small, it is evident that those for individual mental process types will be even smaller. These are given in Table 10.

Table 10.
Mental process and first person pronoun subjects.

Article	Cognitive		Perception		Mathematical	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Aanen	8	47%	-	-	9	53%
Benevento	6	75%	1	13%	1	13%
Byrne	5	100%	-	-	-	-
Kopperud	26	79%	-	-	7	21%
Madin	9	100%	-	-	-	-
Senior	8	36%	3	14%	11	50%
Overall	62	66%	4	4%	28	30%

Despite the paucity of the raw numbers, perhaps it is worth noting that overall the cognitive processes account for two-thirds of the mental process sample with first person pronoun subjects. At the same time, in two individual articles (Aanen and Senior) mathematical processes with first person pronoun subjects are more common than cognitive processes.

9. Final thoughts

In these six articles, we have seen that the rate of passive use is relatively modest, at 20% of finite verbs. It would require a diachronic study to ascertain whether passive use in the biological sciences has reached a peak, and is leveling off as seems to be the case in the physical sciences, or whether passive use is still rising at this point.

There is a relatively low rate of first person pronoun subjects. They appear with only 9% of the finite verbs, but in individual cases the rate may be much higher, which is the case of one of the six articles in the sample studied here.

The most frequent process type in this sample is relational process, though material processes, the second most common overall, may be the most frequent in individual cases. This contrasts with the small sample of physical sciences articles studied (Banks, 2017), where mental processes were more common than material processes.

Within mental process, cognitive processes are the most common type followed by mathematical processes. This contrasts with the physical sciences articles where mathematical processes were the most frequent.

When passive forms are considered, material processes account for more passives than mental processes. This contrasts with the physical sciences articles where mental process passives were more common than material. Within mental process, cognitive mental passives are more frequent than mathematical passives.

The majority of finite verbs with first person pronoun subjects are examples of mental process. This is true also of the physical sciences articles, but where in the physical sciences articles mental processes account for 76% of the verbs with first person pronoun subjects, in the biological articles the rate is only 54%.

These facts are probably interrelated. The relatively low incidence of first person pronoun subjects is probably due to the low rate of mental processes, since first person pronoun subjects tend to occur with this process type. The low rate of mental processes is itself partly due to the relatively low incidence of mathematical processes. The biological field still includes an interest in visible organisms and their description, which do not require the degree of mathematical modelling necessary in many areas of the physical sciences such as particle physics. It is perhaps these facts which account for the lack of direct correlation between the incidence of first person pronoun subject and passives.

While the sample of six articles studied here is far too small to give anything like firm conclusions, the points raised might be considered to provide food for thought, and taken as indicators of possible future fruitful research. Such research might include carrying out similar analyses of a larger sample, and on different subgenres, and carrying out a diachronic study to show the direction and speed of the changes taking place. Moreover, while these results are interesting in themselves, and can act as indicators for future research, they will also be of interest to those involved in the teaching of English for academic purposes. Students need to know, for example that, (to the extent that these results can be taken as representative) use of first person pronoun subjects now seems to be permissible in the scientific research article; nevertheless, this has to be tempered by the knowledge that first person pronoun subjects are more likely to occur with mental process verbs. This is particularly true of the physical sciences, but also the case, if even to a lesser extent, in the biological sciences. Taking such factors into account will enhance the chances of non-English-speaking researchers successfully playing a part in an increasingly competitive international scene.

References

Arnold, Jennifer E., Kaiser, Elsi, Kahn, Jason M., & Kim, Lucy K. (2013). Information structure: Linguistic, cognitive, and processing approaches. *WIREs Cognitive Science*, *4*(3), 403-413. https://doi.org/10.1002/wcs.1234

Banks, David (1986). The semantics of the so-called "*get*-passive." *Travaux (CIEREC), 47,* 67-75.

Banks, David (1994). *Writ in water, aspects of the scientific journal article.* ERLA, Université de Bretagne Occidentale.

Banks, David (2005a). The case of Perrin and Thomson: An example of the use of a mini-corpus. *English for Specific Purposes*, *24*(2), 201-211. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2004.01.001

Banks, David (2005b). *Introduction à la linguistique systémique fonctionnelle de l'anglais.* L'Harmattan.

Banks, David (2008a). *The development of scientific writing. Linguistic features and historical context.* Equinox.

Banks, David (2008b). The significance of thematic structure in the scientific journal article, 1700-1980. In N. Nørgard (Ed.), *Systemic functional linguistics in use* (pp. 1-29). *Odense Working Papers in Language and Communications 29*.

Banks, David (2016). On the (non)necessity of the hybrid category behavioural process. In Donna Rose Miller, & Paul Bayley (Eds.), *Hybridity in systemic functional linguistics. grammar, text and discursive context* (pp. 21-40). Equinox.

Banks, David (2017). The extent to which the passive voice is used in the scientific journal article, 1985-2015. *Functional Linguistics*, *4*(12), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40554-017-0045-5

Banks, David (2019). *A systemic functional grammar of English. A simple introduction*. Routledge.

Banks, David (2021). Passive voice, first person pronouns and mental process verbs in the physical sciences research article. *Revista de Lingüistica y Lenguas Aplicadas, 16*(1), 37-48. https://doi.org/10.4995/rlyla.2021.14434

Barber, Charles L. (1962). Some measurable characteristics of modern scientific prose. In Frank Behre (Ed.), *Contributions to English syntax and philology* (pp. 21-43). Almqvist & Wiksell.

Bennett, Karen (2009). English academic style manuals: A survey. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *8*(1), 43-54. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2008.12.003

Biber, Douglas, & Gray, Bethany (2013). Being specific about historical change: The influence of sub-register. *Journal of English Linguistics*, *41*(2), 104-134. https://doi.org/10.1177/0075424212472509

Chappell, Hilary (1980). Is the get-passive adversative? *Papers in Linguistics*, *13*(3), 411-452. https://doi.org/10.1080/08351818009370504

Cooke, Ray (1993). Learning to publish in English: How can French researchers bridge the gap? *ASp, 1*, 463-475. https://doi.org/10.4000/asp.4394

Cooray, Mahinda (1967). The English passive voice. *English Language Teaching*, *21*(3), 203-210.

Ding, Daniel D. (2002). The passive voice and social values in science. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, *32*(2), 137-154. https://doi.org/10.2190/EFMR-BJF3-CE41-84KK

Halliday, Michael A.K. (1985). *An introduction to functional grammar*, (1st edn,). Edward Arnold.

Halliday, Michael A.K. (1988). On the language of physical science. In M. Ghadessy. (Ed.). *Registers of written English: Situational factors and linguistic features* (pp. 162-178). Pinter.

Halliday, Michael A.K., & Matthiessen, Christian, M.I.M. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar*, (4th edn.) Routledge.

Hatcher, Anna Granville (1949). To get/be invited. *Modern Language Notes*, *64*(7), 433-446. https://doi.org/10.2307/2910009

Hinkel, Eli (2004): Tense, aspect and the passive voice in L1 and L2 academic prose, *Language Teaching Research, 8*(1), 5-29. https://doi.org/110.1191/1362168804Ir132oa

Huddleston, Rodney D. (1971). *The sentence in written English: A syntactic study based on an analysis of scientific texts*. Cambridge University Press.

Hundt, Marianne, Dallas, Bethany, & Nakanish, Shimon (2024). The *be*- versus *get*-passive alternative in world Englishes. *World Englishes*, *43*(1), 86-108. https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12633

Hundt, Marianne, Röthlishberger, Melanie, & Seoane, Elena (2018). Predicting voice alternation across academic Englishes. *Corpus Linguistics and Linguistic Theory*, *17*(1), 189-222. https://doi.org/10.1515/cllt-2017-0050

Hundt, Marianne, Schneider, Gerold, & Seoane, Elena (2016). The use of the *be*-passive in academic Englishes: Local *versus* global usage in an international language. *Corpora*, *11*(1), 29-61. https://doi.org/10.3366/cor.2016.0084

Hyland, Ken (2001). Humble servants of the discipline? Self-mention in research articles. *English for Specific Purposes*, *20*(3), 207-226. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(00)00012-0

Hyland, Ken (2002). Options of identity in academic writing? *ELT Journal*, *56*(4), 351-358. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/56.4.351

Hyland, Ken (2010). Constructing proximity: Relating to readers in popular and professional science. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *9*(2), 116-127. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2010.02.003

Hyland, Kenn & Jiang, Feng (Kevin) (2016). Change of attitude? A diachronic study of stance. *Written Communication*, *33*(3), 251-274. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088316650399

Hyland, Ken, & Jiang, Feng (Kevin) (2017). Is academic writing becoming more informal? *English for Specific Purposes*, *45*, 40-51. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2016.09.001

Hyland, Ken, &, Jiang Feng (Kevin) (2018). "In this paper we suggest": Changing patterns of disciplinary metadiscourse. *English for Specific Purposes*, *51*, 18-30. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2018.02.001

Lafuente Millán, Enrique (2010). '*Extending this claim, we propose...*'. The writer's presence in research articles from different disciplines, *Ibérica*, *20*, 35-56.

Leong Ping, Alvin (2014). The passive voice in scientific writing. The current norm in science journals. *Journal of Science Communication*, *13*(1), 1-16. https://doi.org/10.22323/2.13010203

Martínez, Iliana A. (2005). Native and non-native writers' use of first person pronouns in the different sections of biology research articles in English. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *14*(3), 174-190. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2005.06.001

Matthiessen, Christian (1995). *Lexicogrammatical cartography: English systems*. Tokyo, International Language Sciences.

O'Donnell, Michael, Zappavigna, Michele, & Whitelaw, Casey (2008). A survey of process type classification over difficult cases. In Carys Jones, & Eija Ventola (Eds.). *New Developments in the Study of Ideational Meaning From language to multimodality,* (pp. 47-64). Continuum.

Pullum, Geoffrey K. (2014). Fear and loathing of the English passive. *Language & Communication*, *37*, 60-74. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2013.08.009

Quirk, Randolph, Greenbaum, Sydney, Lech, Geoffrey, & Svartvik, Jan (1985). *A comprehensive grammar of the English language.* Longman.

Rodman, Lilita (1981). The passive in technical and scientific writing. *Journal of Advanced Composition. 2*(1-2), 165-172. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20865498

Savory, Theodore H. (1953). *The language of science.* André Deutsch.

Seoane, Elena (2006). Changing styles: On the recent evolution of scientific British and American English. In Christiane Dalton-Puffer, Dieter Kastovsky, Nikolaus Ritt, & Herbt Schendl (Eds.). *Syntax, style and grammatical norms: English from 1500-200.* (pp. 191-209). Peter Lang.

Seoane, Elena (2010). The effect of prominence hierarchies on modern English long passives: Pragmatic vs. syntactic factors. *Miscelánia*, *41*, 93-106. https://doi.org/10.26754/ojs_misc/mj.20109295

Seoane, Elena, & Hundt, Marianne (2018). Voice alternation and authorial presence: Variation across disciplinary areas in academic English. *Journal of English Linguistics*, *46*(1), 3-22. https://doi.org/10.1177/0075424217740938

Seoane, Elena, & Loureiro-Porto, Lucía (2005). On the colloquialization of scientific British and American English. *ESP Across Cultures*, *2*(1), 106-116.

Seoane, Elena, & Williams, Christopher (2006). Changing the rules: A comparison of recent trends in English in academic scientific discourse and prescriptive legal discourse. In Marina Dossena, & Irma Taavitsainen (Eds.). *Diachronic perspectives on domain-specific English.* (pp. 255-276). Peter Lang.

Thompson, Geoff (2004). *Introducing functional grammar* (2nd edn.). Arnold.

Appendix
Analyzed papers from the Proceedings of the Royal Society B for the year 2019

Aanen, Duur K. & Debets, Alfons J.M. (2019). Mutation-rate plasticity and the germline of unicellular organisms. Proceedings of the Royal Society B, 286 (1902).

Benevento, Gemma Louise, Benson, Roger B.J. & Friedman, Matt (2019). Patterns of mammalian jaw ecomorphological disparity during the Mesozoic/Cenozoic transition. Proceedings of the Royal Society B, 286 (1902).

Byrne, Maria, Mazzone, Franca, Elphick, Maurice R., Thorndyke, Michael C. & Cisternas, Paula (2019). Expression of the neuropeptide SALMFamide-1 during regeneration of the seastar radial nerve cord following arm autotomy. Proceedings of the Royal Society B, 286 (1901).

Madin, Elizabeth M.P., Harborne, Alastair R., Harmer, Aaron M.T., Luiz, Osmar J. Atwood, Trisha B,. Sullivan, Brian J. & Madin, Joshua S. (2019). Marine reserves shape seascapes on scales visible from space. Proceedings of the Royal Society B, 286 (1901).

Kopperud, Bjørn Tore, Lidgard, Scott & Liow, Lee Hsiang (2019). Text-mined fossil biodiversity dynamics using machine learning. Proceedings of the Royal Society B, 286 (1901).

Senior, Alistair M., Solon-Biet, Samantha M., Cogger, Victoria C., Le Couteur, David G., Nakagawa, Shinichi, Raubenheimer, David & Simson, Stephen J. (2019). Dietary macronutrient content, age-specific mortality and lifespan. Proceedings of the Royal Society B, 286 (1902).

David Banks, Université de Bretagne Occidentale
David.Banks@univ-brest.fr

EN **David Banks** is an Emeritus Professor at the Université de Bretagne Occidentale in France. He has an MA in Philosophy from the University of Cambridge (UK), a Doctorate in English Linguistics from the Université de Nantes (France), and an HDR from the Université de Bordeaux 2 (France). He is former Head of the English Department, Director of ERLA (Equipe de Recherche en Linguistique Appliquée) and Chairman of AFLSF (Association Française de la Linguistique Systémique Fonctionnelle). He is author or editor of over 30 books and has published over 140 academic articles and book chapters. His book *The Development of Scientific English, Linguistic features and historical context* (Equinox), won the ESSE Language and Linguistics book award in 2010. His research interests include the diachronic study of scientific text and the application of Systemic Functional Linguistics to English and French. His extra-mural interests include poetry, choral singing, and coastal rowing.

ES **David Banks** es Profesor Emérito en la Université de Bretagne Occidentale, en Francia. Tiene una maestría en Filosofía por la Universidad de Cambridge (Reino Unido), un doctorado en Lingüística Inglesa por la Université de Nantes (Francia), y una HDR (Habilitación para dirigir investigaciones) por la Université de Bordeaux 2 (Francia). Ha sido Jefe del Departamento de Inglés, Director de ERLA (Equipo de Investigación en Lingüística Aplicada) y Presidente de la AFLSF (Asociación Francesa de Lingüística Sistémico-Funcional). Es autor o editor de más de 30 libros, y ha publicado más de 140 artículos académicos y capítulos de libros. Su libro *The Development of Scientific English, LInguistic Features and Historica Context (*Equinox) obtuvo el premio al mejor libro en Lengua y Lingüística de la ESSE en 2010. Sus líneas de investigación incluyen el estudio diacrónico del texto científico y la aplicación de la Lingúística Sistémico-Funcional al inglés y al francés. Entre sus intereses extracurriculares se encuentran la poesía, el canto coral y el remo costero.

IT **David Banks** è Professore Emerito presso l'Université de Bretagne Occidentale in Francia. Ha conseguito un Master in Filosofia presso l'Università di Cambridge (Regno Unito), un Dottorato in Linguistica Inglese presso l'Université de Nantes (Francia) e un HDR (Higher Degree by Research) presso l'Université de Bordeaux 2 (Francia). È stato Direttore del Dipartimento di Inglese, Direttore dell'ERLA (Équipe de Recherche en Linguistique Appliquée) e Presidente dell'AFLSF (Association Française de la Linguistique Systémique Fonctionnelle). È autore o curatore di oltre 30 volumi e ha pubblicato più di 140 articoli accademici e capitoli di libri. Il suo volume *The Development of Scientific English: Linguistic Features and Historical Context* (Equinox) ha vinto nel 2010 l'ESSE Language and Linguistics Book Award. Le sue aree di ricerca comprendono lo studio diacronico dei testi scientifici e l'applicazione della Linguistica Sistemico-Funzionale all'inglese e al francese. Tra i suoi interessi extra-accademici figurano la poesia, il canto corale e il canottaggio costiero.

EuroAmerican Journal of Applied Linguistics and Languages
E-JournALL, Volume 12, Issue 2, November 2025, pages 15-36
ISSN 2376-905X
http://doi.org/10.21283/2376905X.1.12.2.3371
www.e-journall.org

The impact of immersive educational environments on productive and receptive vocabulary in dyslexic university students of EFL: A case study

GIULIA STAGGINI
Università di Siena

Received 25 March 2025; accepted 24 September 2025

ABSTRACT

EN This study investigates the impact of Immersive Educational Environments (IEEs) on English vocabulary acquisition among university students with Specific Learning Disorders, particularly dyslexia. Grounded in Universal Design for Learning and the Italian Framework for Inclusive Language Education, the research combines inclusive pedagogical theory with innovative technological tools. A mixed-method case study was conducted at the University of Genoa, involving 92 students in an experimental online English course. Results revealed that IEEs enhanced learners' motivation, engagement, and lexical performance—particularly in vocabulary retention and contextual usage. Compared to traditional methods, immersive and multisensory environments provided higher accessibility and supported both receptive and productive vocabulary development. The study also highlights dyslexic students' specific needs, including preferences for visual, interactive content and structured, transparent instruction. While limitations exist, findings support IEEs as promising tools for inclusive language education, offering new pathways to address diverse learner profiles in higher education.

Key words: INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING, EFL, IMMERSIVE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS, VOCABULARY

ES Este estudio analiza el impacto de los Entornos de Aprendizaje Inmersivos (EAIs) en la adquisición de vocabulario en inglés por parte de estudiantes universitarios con Trastornos Específicos del Aprendizaje, en particular dislexia. Basada en el Universal Design for Learning y en el Marco Italiano para la Educación Lingüística Inclusiva, la investigación combina teoría pedagógica inclusiva con herramientas tecnológicas innovadoras. El estudio de caso, realizado en la Universidad de Génova con la participación de 92 estudiantes en un curso experimental de inglés en línea, mostró que los EAIs incrementaron la motivación, la participación y el rendimiento léxico, especialmente en la retención y el uso contextual del vocabulario. En comparación con los métodos tradicionales, los entornos inmersivos ofrecieron mayor accesibilidad y favorecieron tanto el desarrollo receptivo como el productivo del léxico. Asimismo, se identificaron las preferencias de los estudiantes con dislexia por contenidos visuales e interactivos y por una instrucción clara y estructurada. Aunque se reconocen algunas limitaciones, los resultados confirman a los EAIs como herramientas prometedoras para una educación lingüística inclusiva.

Palabras clave: APRENDIZAJE LINGÜÍSTICO INCLUSIVO, INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA (EFL), ENTORNOS DE APRENDIZAJE INMERSIVOS, LÉXICO

IT Il presente contributo esplora l'impatto degli ambienti educativi immersivi sull'acquisizione del lessico inglese da parte di studenti universitari con disturbi specifici dell'apprendimento (DSA), in particolare con dislessia. A partire dalla teoria dello Universal Design for Learning e in base ai principi del Quadro Italiano per l'Educazione Linguistica Inclusiva, lo studio integra approcci pedagogici inclusivi con strumenti tecnologici innovativi. La ricerca si basa su uno studio di caso con 92 studenti, coinvolti in un corso online sperimentale di lingua inglese presso l'Università di Genova. I risultati mostrano come gli ambienti immersivi abbiano incrementato motivazione, partecipazione e competenze lessicali, soprattutto nella memorizzazione e nell'uso contestuale del lessico. Rispetto ai metodi tradizionali, l'approccio immersivo e multisensoriale ha garantito maggiore accessibilità e favorito lo sviluppo sia ricettivo sia produttivo del lessico. Lo studio evidenzia, inoltre, le preferenze degli studenti con DSA per contenuti visivi, multimediali e interattivi e per un'organizzazione didattica chiara e strutturata, confermando il potenziale degli ambienti immersivi per un'educazione linguistica inclusiva.

Parole chiave: APPRENDIMENTO LINGUISTICO INCLUSIVO, INGLESE COME LINGUA STRANIERA, AMBIENTI EDUCATIVI IMMERSIVI, LESSICO

✉ **Giulia Staggini,** Università di Siena
giulia.staggini2@unisi.it

1. Introduction

Language acquisition poses significant challenges for individuals with dyslexia, largely due to socio-biopsychological factors commonly associated with this learning disorder. These factors include limited working memory, heightened anxiety, difficulty concentrating, and struggles with recognizing and distinguishing phonemes—and consequently, graphemes (Daloiso & Melero Rodríguez, 2016; Kormos & Kontra, 2018)—especially in opaque languages such as English. As a result, second language learning for dyslexic individuals requires targeted instructional strategies that support vocabulary retention, sound discrimination, and sustain motivation throughout the language acquisition process. Most scientific literature on these strategies primarily focuses on children and learners in compulsory education, with relatively little research on adult learners. However, higher education (HE) plays a pivotal role in both the social and personal development of students with dyslexia, whose learning is addressed within the broader framework of Special Educational Needs (SEN)—a label referring to educational support needs rather than students' personal traits. As Hartley (2015, p. 416) observes, HE provides a transformative experience, "enabling them to flourish and derive the benefits of participating in higher education." Moreover, the transition from high school to university represents a critical period for identity formation, requiring students to develop self-regulation and self-determination skills (Bellacicco, 2018). Higher education also significantly impacts career prospects. Although individuals with SEN experience a higher unemployment rate (46.2%) compared to those without SEN (25.9%), research from the Academic Network of European Disability indicates that completing an academic career improves their chances of securing employment and reduces the likelihood of experiencing discrimination (Bellacicco, 2018).

Over the past three decades, several international initiatives, including UNESCO's 1994 Salamanca Statement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, have promoted inclusive and sustainable HE. These efforts have also encouraged research into the educational needs of individuals with dyslexia. Among the instructional approaches identified as effective, technology-related methods have gained increasing attention, particularly multisensory approaches that provide diverse input, stimulating multiple semiotic channels simultaneously (Ohene-Djan & Begum, 2008). One of the most innovative tools capable of effectively implementing the multisensory approach is Extended Reality (XR), specifically immersive educational environments (IEEs). These tools have demonstrated significant efficacy in language learning by providing contextual learning and promoting cross-cultural competence (Peixoto, 2021), enhancing intrinsic motivation (Kontra, 2019), facilitating the retention of new words and expressions (Chen, 2016; Cheng, Yang, Andersen, 2017), and improving overall vocabulary accuracy (Legault et al., 2019).

This paper explores the potentialities of IEEs for learners with dyslexia and presents the results of a case study investigating the impact of IEEs on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) vocabulary acquisition for university students with dyslexia. It first outlines the theoretical framework underpinning inclusive language learning theories, emphasizing the crucial role of technology in supporting vocabulary acquisition for this profile. It then presents findings from a case study involving Italian university students, demonstrating how IEEs can positively impact their vocabulary acquisition and overall language learning experience.

2. Vocabulary acquisition processes in dyslexic learners

Vocabulary has long been recognized as a fundamental component of language proficiency in foreign language or second language (L2) learning, as extensively documented in the literature (Read, 1988; Laufer, 1998; Schmitt, 2000; Meara, 2002). It plays a crucial role in both comprehension and production, serving as the basis for communication. However, studying vocabulary acquisition presents several challenges, including defining what constitutes a "word," addressing both denotative and connotative meanings, and fostering not only memorization but also the ability to use and master vocabulary across different dimensions—formal, structural, semantic, and metaphorical (Fontecha & Gallego, 2012).

Since the 1980s, L2 vocabulary research has distinguished two main types: receptive and productive vocabulary. Receptive vocabulary includes words that learners understand in written or spoken form, while productive vocabulary refers to words that they can actively use in speaking or writing. Typically, receptive vocabulary develops earlier and is larger in size (Nation & Meara, 2013). However, both are essential for language acquisition. As Nation and Meara highlight, vocabulary focus should be based on learner needs and the utility of words, often assessed through frequency and range. Schmitt (2008) identifies two primary goals: 1) vocabulary size, i.e., the number of words needed for comprehension, and 2) vocabulary depth, referring to

accurate and appropriate use of lexical items. This includes understanding meanings, recognizing collocations, and forming lexical associations.

While researchers largely agree on what learners should acquire in terms of vocabulary, approaches to teaching and learning vocabulary vary. A widely used method is *Meaning-Focused Input*, which promotes incidental learning through exposure to language. As Nation and Meara (2013) emphasize, such learning is cumulative and requires repeated encounters for deeper word knowledge. While effective for native speakers, L2 learners often benefit more from deliberate strategies like glossing, repeated exposure, and contextual practice (Nation & Meara, 2013; Schmitt, 2008). Alternatively, the *Meaning-Focused Output* approach centers on productive use through speaking and writing. Though more demanding, strategies like writing tasks, storytelling, role-play, and group work can support vocabulary development by fostering communication and contextual learning (Newton, 1995; Schmitt, 2008). Despite its challenges, this approach often leads to greater engagement, encouraging learners to practice outside the classroom and supporting informal learning (Pavesi & Ghia, 2020; Schmitt, 2008; Wang et al., 2015).

Regardless of type or approach, acquiring, storing, and using new vocabulary requires several cognitive functions such as memorization, word recognition and retrieval, and abstractness. For learners with dyslexia, thus, developing both receptive and productive vocabulary is particularly challenging due to multiple interrelated factors.

Firstly, difficulties in their first language can affect L2 vocabulary acquisition processes. Research indicates that dyslexic learners' challenges with L1 word decoding, phonological awareness, and dictation often hinder L2 acquisition. Additionally, accuracy and speed in L1 reading are strong predictors of L2 reading difficulties (Kirby et al., 2010; Kormos et al., 2019). Moreover, while L1 status is only an indicator and not a direct correlation, several studies have demonstrated that underdeveloped L1 word decoding negatively impacts L2 reading comprehension (Daloiso & Melero Rodríguez, 2016; Kormos & Kontra, 2018).

Biological and psychological factors also significantly impact the cognitive processes underlying L2 vocabulary acquisition. Dyslexic learners often have weak phonological awareness, making it difficult for them to recognize different phonemes and reproduce sounds. This challenge hampers the conversion of receptive vocabulary into productive vocabulary. Dyslexic individuals also struggle with discerning sounds and associating them with corresponding graphemes, particularly in opaque languages such as English and French (Lovegrove, 1991; Kirby, 2018). Additionally, dyslexic learners often have limited orthographic processing skills, which are essential for recognizing and using different orthographic units crucial for lexical development (Rakhlin, Cardoso-Martins, Grigorenko, 2013).

These linguistic challenges are often linked to bio-psychological factors such as underdeveloped working memory, limited executive functioning skills, and high levels of anxiety (Daloiso & Melero Rodríguez, 2016; Irshad et al., 2022). Studies (Kirby, 2018; Kormos & Kontra, 2018) have shown that dyslexic individuals often have underdeveloped working memory, making it difficult to store, retain, and retrieve information. Consequently, learners with dyslexia, particularly dyslexia, struggle to memorize new words and build receptive vocabulary, often resulting in a smaller L2 vocabulary compared to non-dyslexic individuals. Even when information is retained, individuals with dyslexia often have difficulties organizing and using it effectively due to, difficulties in abstract thinking, organization, and planning. Also, vocabulary acquisition is particularly affected by emotions; for this reason, learners with dyslexia's high levels of anxiety cause them to have an emotional barrier. In educational settings, anxiety is especially evident during reading tasks, such as timed assessments (Bellacicco, 2018; Cardinaletti, 2018). Although anxiety levels tend to decrease after compulsory schooling, university students with learning difficulties often exhibit higher vulnerability compared to their neurotypical peers (Carroll & Iles, 2006; Irshad et al., 2022; Staggini, 2024). This increased vulnerability leads to heightened social anxiety, lower self-esteem, and reduced language motivation, ultimately negatively impacting language performance.

While these key elements negatively impact L2 acquisition in dyslexic individuals, it is also essential to acknowledge positive influences such as creativity and visual thinking that are fundamental in developing productive vocabulary. Although defining creativity remains complex and recent studies (Erbeli, Peng & Rice, 2022; Gutiérrez-Ortega, 2023) indicate no significant differences in overall creativity between dyslexic and non-dyslexic individuals, it has been demonstrated that they often excel in specific categories of the construct of creativity, such as visuality, fluency, originality, and elaboration, particularly in adulthood. Studies using the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking and other models (Bigozzi et al., 2016; Chakravarty, 2009; Cockcroft & Harthill, 2004; Kapoula et al., 2016) have demonstrated that individuals with dyslexia generate numerous

original ideas, rely on visual memory and multimodal strategies as coping mechanisms, and exhibit original information processing.

Considering these key elements, researchers in inclusive language education and second language acquisition have developed various approaches that apply multimodal strategies, visual memory, motivation enhancement, and transparent, linear instructional designs to support learners with dyslexia, and learners with SEN in general. The following section will describe the inclusive teaching theories and approaches that have been used in the case study.

3. Inclusive language teaching theories and approaches

The concept of Inclusive Language Teaching refers to teaching strategies that make language learning accessible to all types of learners, regardless of their biological, socio-economic or cultural condition, thus including learners with dyslexia (Daloiso, 2012). Regarding this concept, various L2 acquisitional theories have been systematized, among them: Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and the Italian framework for Inclusive Language Teaching, both emphasizing a shift from product to process, attention to individual learners, multidimensional accessibility, and elimination of language barriers (Daloiso, 2012; Daloiso & Melero Rodríguez, 2016; Rose et al., 2006).

The Italian framework for Inclusive Teaching originates from 1990s psycholinguistics and teaching theory, which prioritized communicative competence over formal language aspects. Inductive methods, allowing learners to infer rules from examples, proved more effective as they engaged with the language process (Balboni, 2011). By the 2000s, research shifted focus from considering learners' need universal to acknowledging learner diversity across three macro areas: learning styles, cultural differences, and language differences. Although learning styles are debated (Panzavolta & Mori, 2019), their functional use remains crucial in inclusive teaching as they relate to different memorization processes and emphasize the importance of learners developing personalized strategies for language acquisition. Therefore, when teaching foreign languages from an inclusive and accessible perspective, educators should take into account the predominant learning styles of their students, especially those with dyslexia who often rely on non-verbal learning styles not commonly use in both compulsory schooling and Higher Education (Daloiso, 2012). As for cultural differences, this framework not only encourages respect for different cultures but also fosters curiosity and engagement with them, emphasizing multiculturalism and cultural competence, aspects that are often overlooked in language education (Caon et al., 2019; Daloiso, 2012). Since culture is deeply intertwined with language, effective strategies for inclusive learning in mixed-ability classrooms—where students have varying language proficiency levels—include simplified written tests (beneficial for foreign students as well), alternative evaluation methods (often used for students with dyslexia), and progressively challenging activities that gradually increase in complexity, enabling students to develop skills in a structured manner (Kormos & Kontra, 2018).

Regarding multidimensional accessibility, the Italian Framework for Inclusive Language Teaching asserts that learners with specific language needs should be provided with resources that ensure physical, psychological, and methodological access to language learning. Physical accessibility involves removing barriers such as architectural obstacles that hinder school entry or materials like books and handouts that contain visual barriers (e.g., fonts unsuitable for dyslexic learners). Psychological and cognitive accessibility addresses the cognitive overload experienced by students with special needs, whether due to limited L2 comprehension (as seen in foreign students) or distinct brain functioning (as in students with dyslexia). Teachers should implement accessible strategies to alleviate this cognitive burden and foster motivation (Kontra, 2019). From a methodological perspective, educators should prioritize accessible and inclusive teaching strategies such as formative communicative approach, which has proven effective, as it emphasizes communication, pragmatics, and learners' bio-psycho education over grammar and rigid structural aspects (Kormos & Kontra, 2018; Kontra, 2019). This method assumes that language acquisition is best achieved in authentic communicative settings, where learners can apply their skills contextually, adapting to different speakers, registers, and situations. Accordingly, teachers should use authentic materials and prioritize contextualized input. Additionally, since language learning enhances relational abilities by exposing learners to diverse cultures and communication styles, educators should also focus on soft skills and metacognitive competence (Daloiso, 2012). Another crucial component is phonological competence, particularly for students with dyslexia, who often have underdeveloped phonological awareness and difficulty processing phonemes, and consequently graphemes. Teaching L2 sounds explicitly helps these learners recognize and use them

accurately. However, as with grammar, phonological instruction should not rely on repetitive listening and memorization, but should instead incorporate authentic materials like recorded conversations, debates, speeches, and audiovisual content (films, TV series) or immersive scenarios that provide phonetic examples in real-life contexts (Daloiso, 2012; Staggini & Cersosimo, 2021).

The Universal Design for Learning Theory is grounded on similar assumptions. The UDL model originated from Universal Design, a discipline initially studied and developed in architecture to create accessible environments, particularly for individuals with sensory disabilities. By applying this concept of "accessibility" to education, in the late 1990s, Rose and Meyer at the Center of Applied Special Technology (CAST), in the USA, established a theoretical framework to enhance educational inclusivity through technology (Rose et al., 2006; Cumming & Rose, 2022). Grounded in cognitive science and neuroscience, UDL examines how the brain learns by recognizing, processing, and valuing patterns and abstract concepts (Cytowic, 1996). For example, reading requires pattern recognition in words and structures, but individuals with dyslexia may have atypical recognition systems, impacting their ability to process information (Rose, 2006). Additionally, the affective networks, which regulate emotions and motivation, also influence learning, and impairments in these networks can hinder a student's ability to engage, prioritize, and focus (Balboni, 2011; Cumming & Rose, 2022). CAST's framework is structured around three core principles: multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement. The first principle emphasizes providing information through varied modalities to accommodate diverse learning needs, including students with disabilities such as blindness or deafness. The second principle focuses on multiple means of expression, recognizing that students differ in their capacity to navigate learning environments and demonstrate knowledge, necessitating flexible assessment and instructional approaches. Lastly, the engagement principle highlights the need for diverse motivational strategies, considering that students have varying preferences in learning environments—some thrive on novelty, while others require stability (Kontra, 2019; Rose, 2006).

These principles have been operationalized through 31 checkpoints (See Fig. 1) published by CAST in 2018, offering guidelines to enhance accessibility in teaching (Nave, 2021). Moreover, CAST's recommendations extend to comprehension strategies, emphasizing the role of context, multimodal aids, and alternative forms of expression to accommodate students with diverse linguistic and cognitive profiles. Ultimately, UDL promotes technological integration to ensure equitable access to learning for all students. Among the teaching strategies and tools promoted and suggested by CAST, Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) and other technological tools are indeed described as very effective and productive in enhancing both educators' lesson planning and teaching, by optimizing their time and resources, and students' learning processes, by providing them with assistive technology that compensates their impairments, and by offering diverse multimodal learning input.

To summarize, while the Italian framework for Inclusive Language Education stems from psycholinguistic and communicative language teaching, prioritizing pragmatic and communicative competences, UDL originated from architecture and design and is based on cognitive sciences, focusing on how the brain processes and organizes knowledge. Moreover, while UDL is a general educational framework applicable across disciplines, the Italian one was specifically developed to address dyslexic students' dyslexia language needs. Despite these slight differences, both the theories align in their commitment to inclusive and adaptive education, promoting learner diversity, accessibility, and multimodal approaches to teaching. Their complementary nature suggests that integrating both perspectives can enhance inclusive language education by combining neurological insights with practical, language-specific pedagogical strategies. For this reason, the case study presented in this paper adopts both the theories, combining the technological-driven nature of UDL, and the practical pedagogical approach to grammar and vocabulary acquisition of the Italian Framework.

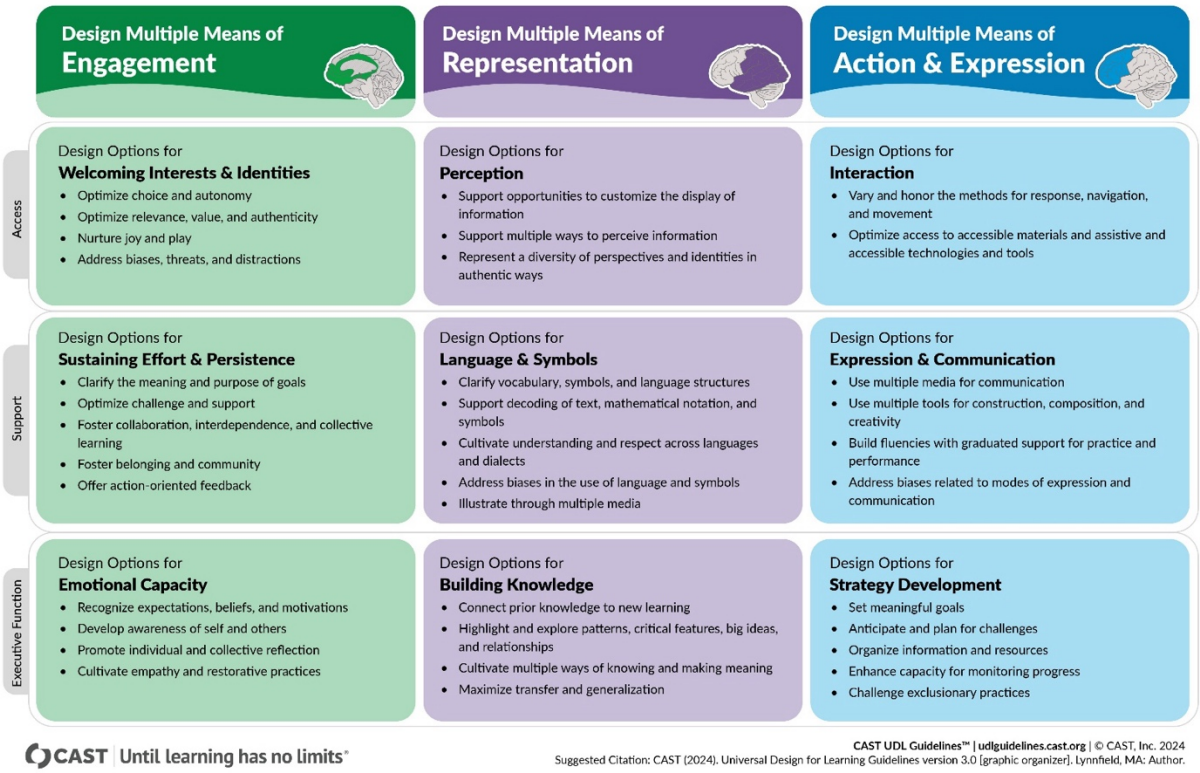


Figure 1. CAST's guidelines for inclusive and accessible teaching.

3.1. Technology enhanced learning as a supporting teaching approach

As previously mentioned, technology plays a pivotal role in Inclusive Language Education, especially within UDL. Technology may serve as an assistive instrument, compensating for several types of impairments: text-to-speech software for blind or visual-impaired individuals, more readable and accessible fonts for dyslexics, or automatic captioning for deaf or hard of hearing individuals. However, according to CAST, general technological tools—those not specifically designed to support individuals with disabilities or other conditions—can also significantly contribute to learning (Cumming & Rose, 2022). While assistive technology (AT) primarily compensates for students' underdeveloped abilities or lack of competencies due to special educational needs, more conventional technological tools can serve as learning aids or as educational platforms for technology-enhanced learning. TEL is a pedagogical approach that relies primarily on digital tools to support learning (Bayne, 2015). The term TEL is frequently used interchangeably with e-learning or computer-based learning and refers to the intersection between education and digital technology with the aim of improving students' learning experiences (Bayne, 2015). Specifically, TEL encompasses a range of approaches that use technology to support learning, particularly within HE, where it was initially developed. In 2009, the Higher Education Funding Council for England identified three key benefits of TEL: efficiency, enhancement, and transformation. TEL has been shown to improve the effectiveness of UDL, as technology-rich environments offer flexibility, adaptability, and multimodality. In this regard, Burgstahler (2008, p. 29) highlights that:

> Flexible components are built into digital materials to benefit students with learning disabilities; with attention issues; with behavioral problems; or with physical or sensory disabilities. They also benefit those who are learning a new language; who have attention deficits; or who have other characteristics that make taking notes, reading, understanding auditory information, paying attention, handwriting, or spelling difficult.

Conversely, traditional paper-based materials, such as textbooks and worksheets, struggle to align with the three principles of UDL (Dinmore, 2014; Edyburn, 2010). Notably, integrating TEL with UDL has

proven beneficial for all students, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. "Embedding these principles at the initial stage of the design process is a crucial element in mainstreaming inclusive teaching and learning principles for all students" (Dinmore, 2014, p. 34).

Furthermore, TEL has demonstrated effectiveness in language learning. In the early 2000s, researchers began exploring the impact of the Internet on language acquisition, identifying numerous advantages. One major benefit is that digital technologies provide access to diverse learning materials, including both traditional and multimedia resources—such as articles, books, websites, and social media, alongside videos, podcasts, films, and TV series (Chapelle, 2007). Additionally, TEL positively affects the affective filter in language learning, as it creates a low-anxiety environment where students can practice at their own pace (Pino, 2008). Moreover, learners requiring repeated input or reinforcement activities can benefit from computer-based learning, which allows unlimited practice opportunities. Therefore, flexibility and adaptability stand out as two of TEL's most valuable features (McDonough, 2001; Pino, 2008). Another crucial advantage of TEL is its role in fostering intercultural competence—an often-overlooked yet essential component of language learning. Digital tools, particularly the Internet, have significantly expanded opportunities for students to engage with speakers from diverse cultural backgrounds, facilitating natural and spontaneous exposure to the target language both in formal and informal educational settings. Studies have demonstrated that TEL effectively enhances intercultural competence by enabling learners to interact with native speakers or other language learners across different cultural contexts, both through synchronous and asynchronous communication (Trepule et al., 2015). Digital learning, finally, is particularly beneficial for students facing physical, economic, or logistical barriers to education, including those unable to commute, students with chronic illnesses requiring hospitalization, and individuals from disadvantaged economic backgrounds. Thus, TEL, together with other innovative approaches, is effective as an inclusive educational model (Benigno et al., 2018; Rahman & Dar, 2022).

3.2. The multi-sensory approach for inclusive language education

As previously discussed, students with dyslexia often experience challenges in visual and auditory perception, and have different brain functioning, which affect their language processing. While compensatory tools are valuable aids, and technology in general provides them with different types of media and input, it is also essential to adopt teaching approaches that actively stimulate their cognitive processing. One of the most effective methods for enhancing perception and language processing is the multi-sensory approach which aligns with the principles of UDL and the guidelines of the Italian Framework for Inclusive Language Education (Ahmad et al., 2012; Moustafa, 1999).

The multi-sensory approach, also known as the Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, and Tactile (VAKT) approach, originated in the 1950s and was systematically developed in the 1980s (Murphy, 1997). It involves the use of multiple sensory modalities—such as seeing, hearing, touching, and moving—to reinforce learning. Research has demonstrated that engaging learners through various sensory channels enhances memory retention, text-decoding, and comprehension, aspects that are often underdeveloped in students with dyslexia. For example, Graham and Freeman (1986) developed a spelling strategy that required students to say, write, trace, and recall words, primarily relying on visual and tactile memory. Similarly, Sparks and Miller (2000) suggested integrating tactile and kinesthetic techniques into foreign language learning, advocating for practices such as pronouncing syllables while writing them to strengthen spelling and pronunciation. Crombie (2000) further emphasized that multi-sensory learning supports students with dyslexia by ensuring that no single learning channel is excluded. The author highlighted the importance of differentiation—offering varied input to maximize the potential of all learners—and recommended strategies such as using pictures, word cards, videos, and audio materials to improve vocabulary, reading, and pronunciation skills.

Since the 2000s, researchers have increasingly recognized the potential of integrating technology with the multi-sensory approach to support learners with SEN, with dyslexia specifically (Ahmad et al., 2012; Ohene-Djan & Begum, 2008). Digital tools can easily provide multi-sensory input, combining auditory, visual, and tactile activities in a single platform. For instance, Crombie (2000) highlighted the effectiveness of text-to-speech and voice-to-text software for spelling and pronunciation practice.

Moreover, interactive multimedia resources—such as videos, animations, and graphics—have been shown to enhance reading comprehension and language acquisition by engaging multiple senses simultaneously. Gamification has also emerged as a powerful tool within the multi-sensory approach. The Dyslexia Activity System (DAS) in the UK, for example, provides interactive learning environments for children

with dyslexia through activities like word-image associations, drag-and-drop exercises, and short videos, all of which have been shown to enhance memory and motivation (Ohene-Djan & Begum, 2008).

More recently, Virtual Reality (VR) has been recognized as an effective medium for language learning, as it immerses students in a simulated environment where they can interact with objects and use multimodal and kinesthetic strategies aligned with multi-sensory principles (Kurniawati et al., 2020; Peixoto et al., 2021). The next section will explore the role of Immersive Reality Resources in Inclusive Language Learning, examining their application in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language for dyslexic students.

In conclusion, the multi-sensory approach provides effective strategies for supporting students with dyslexia by engaging multiple sensory modalities to enhance language processing and comprehension. Its integration with technology further amplifies its benefits, offering interactive and adaptive learning experiences that cater to diverse needs. As advancements in digital tools and immersive environments continue to evolve, they hold great potential for fostering inclusive language education.

4. Immersive Educational Environments

Immersive environments are computer-generated 3D simulations that vary in their degree of virtuality. The modern concept of virtuality is directly connected to the concept of *Virtual Reality* (VR), which was introduced by Lanier in the 1980s to describe simulated three-dimensional environments that users perceive as real. Until recently, VR has often been used as a broad term encompassing various forms of immersive realities (LaValle, 2023). However, scholars argue that this usage is inaccurate and instead advocate for the term *Extended Reality* (XR) as a more appropriate umbrella term (Doolani et al., 2020). XR encompasses all real and virtual environments combined and consists of VR, AR, and Mixed Reality (MR) as well. While AR retains a stronger connection to reality, VR is highly immersive, creating experiences that feel distant from the physical world. Any immersive environment, either AR or VR-based, should provide a certain degree of *immersion* and *presence*. Recently, scholars have made a clear distinction between these two concepts. Immersion refers to the level of sensory engagement provided by an immersive system—essentially, the degree of sensory fidelity. In contrast, presence is a subjective experience, where users perceive themselves as being inside the virtual environment. This perception is reinforced by the way the human sensory system responds to virtual elements and interacts with them (Berkman & Akan, 2018)

These environments have broad applications, spanning industries such as marketing, advertising, medicine, and space engineering. One of the most rapidly growing fields is education, where immersive technologies are leveraged to create Immersive Educational Environments (IEEs). IEEs provide fully interactive, multisensory learning experiences that foster engagement and active participation. These environments align with principles of inclusive language theories, which emphasize the cognitive benefits of stimulating multiple senses simultaneously—especially for learners with dyslexia (Mulders et al., 2020; Peixoto et al., 2021). Research suggests that IEEs improve knowledge retention, comprehension, and engagement (Clarke et al., 2008; Mulders et al., 2020). IEEs provide multimodal input, multisensory stimulation- fundamental for the application of the multisensory approach; foster engagement and motivation together with lifelong learning (Mulders et al., 2020); and support active learning and task-based learning (Peixoto et al., 2021). When referring to language learning in particular, IEEs have been studied to be very beneficial (Chen, 2016; Cheng et al., 2017; Legault et al., 2019; Staggini & Cersosimo, 2021). IEEs provide situated learning (Dawley & Dede, 2014) aligning with constructivist teaching theories by immersing learners in realistic language scenarios. Instead of rote memorization, students acquire language skills through practical application, fostering communicative and pragmatic competencies. Consequently, cultural competence is enhanced, as IEEs allow learners to experience cultural environments virtually. As Peixoto and colleagues (2021, p. 48958) state, IEEs "[...] allow the freedom and opportunity to recreate real world circumstances and places of cultural importance for the user to be immersed without the expense needed for an educational trip."

By simulating multilingual and multicultural contexts, IEEs promote multilingualism and improve L2 vocabulary competence through exposure to both oral and written language, leading to better retention and accuracy (Cheng et al., 2017; Legault et al., 2019). These aspects also support inclusivity, as students from diverse backgrounds can access culturally enriched learning experiences. Furthermore, IEEs captivate learners by immersing them in interactive language environments, significantly boosting engagement and motivation (Dawley & Dede, 2014). Peixoto and colleagues (2021, p. 48960) emphasize: "The high levels of motivation and satisfaction shown by users when using iVR certainly contribute to a significant increase in the very levels of learning efficacy and success."

For students with dyslexia, motivation and engagement are critical, as they often struggle with low self-esteem and learning anxiety. Research indicates that VR and AR technologies can provide significant benefits: "Some forms of virtual reality, for example, augmented reality, keep the students busy [...] they get interaction with the content; they amuse during learning and make the learning process easy" (Bjekić, Obradović, & Bojović, 2020, p. 40).

IEEs help learners with dyslexia by presenting content in an engaging, interactive format. Studies show that AR and VR-based learning enhances attention and improve working memory, making learning more efficient (Rodríguez-Cano et al., 2021). Additionally, IEEs have potential in improving dyslexic learners' ability to decode and reproduce letters as well, supporting them in both reading and speaking tasks (Bhatti et al., 2020). In summary, while research on IEEs is still emerging and mainly focuses on children as learners, studies have shown that these environments boost motivation and engagement, support memory retention, and enhance vocabulary acquisition through interactivity, multimodality, and multisensory input, promoting inclusive language learning practices.

5. The case-study

This study stems from the need to apply existing research on the benefits of VR and immersive environments for language learners to adult learners with dyslexia—an often-overlooked profile. By doing so, it aims to bridge a gap in recent studies. The case study explores two key research questions: (1) What are the educational needs of university students with dyslexia learning English? (2) Do IEEs positively impact vocabulary acquisition in these learners, as they do for dyslexic children? The main reasons why university students were targeted are because English proficiency at the B1 level for BA's degree students and B2 level for MA's degree students is a requirement in the Italian Higher Education System and research (Bellacicco, 2018; Cardinaletti, 2018) shows that dyslexic students face significant difficulties in passing these exams and in improving their language performance due to previous difficulties, high levels of anxiety, difficulties in decoding academic texts, and different learning styles that are often ignored by lecturers.

In order to answer these questions, mixed-method research strategies—explorative surveys, performance tests, and satisfaction questionnaires—were used to collect data. The research consisted of two main phases: gathering data about university students with dyslexia's needs, expectations, former school backgrounds, bias, and language difficulties; and administering an experimental online immersive course specifically designed on the data previously gathered. The experimentation occurred between 2022 and 2024 and involved the students at the University of Genoa: 720 students (666 students without dyslexia and 54 students with dyslexia) participated in the first phase; and 92 dyslexic students took part in the second phase. In the next sections, both phases' methods and data will be described in detail, with a special focus on the performance tests assessing vocabulary acquisition. Finally, the results will be discussed, highlighting the pedagogical role of IEEs.

5.1. Preliminary study: Students with dyslexia's profiling data

During the experiment's first phase, participants' educational needs were analyzed through a questionnaire administered to both students with dyslexia (N=54) and neurotypical students (N=666) to explore potential differences. All participants had failed the B1-level English exam at least once, as the survey assessed the students' feedback, needs and opinion about the university's mandatory recovery course.

The questionnaire was available in both Italian and English, though all students chose the Italian version. It included 21 items in five sections: (i) personal data (e.g., L1, degree program, language background); (ii) course organization (clarity, transparency, duration); (iii) exercises and usability (effectiveness, clarity, platform accessibility); (iv) graphic design and readability; and (v) content and engagement (interest, usefulness, motivation). The structure was based on the Italian accessibility framework (Caon et al., 2019; Daloiso, 2012) and UDL principles, assessing transparency, multimedia integration, and engagement. Data was analyzed through descriptive and statistical methods (Levène, T-tests, and Cohen's d where applicable). Regarding personal data, most participants were women (65.8%), aged 21–25. The majority spoke Italian as their first language (94.3%), followed by Spanish (2.1%), French (1.1%), Arabic (0.8%), Chinese (0.7%), Portuguese (0.4%), and others (0.1% each).

Item 2, focusing on past language-learning difficulties, is a particularly revealing data. It showed that 68.61% (494 students) had experienced challenges, while 31.39% (226 students) had not. Among students with dyslexia, 85.2% reported difficulties, compared to 67.3% of neurotypical peers. A chi-square test

confirmed a significant association (χ^2 = 7.446, p = 0.006), with Cramér's V (V = 0.102, p = 0.006) indicating a mild but meaningful link between dyslexia and language learning struggles.

For course organization (ii), 30% of students with dyslexia had trouble with complex instructions and were three times more likely to report difficulties in decoding texts. While 76% of all students approved of the course length, 43% of dyslexic students preferred shorter, more digestible lessons. On exercises (iii), 82% found them useful overall, but 33% of dyslexic students disagreed. Text-heavy exercises were problematic for 60% of students with dyslexia, versus only 15% of neurotypical students.

Significant differences emerged in layout and readability (iv), especially in items 7 (Cohen's d = 0.316), 8 (d = 0.383), and 10 (d = 0.297), reflecting dyslexic students' greater need for structured, transparent teaching. Item 15 (d = 0.417) underscored challenges with Moodle layout, spacing, and fonts. Item 17 confirmed specific issues: 31.48% of dyslexic students struggled with formatting and font size, versus 13.23% of neurotypical students who reported no issues.

In terms of content and engagement (v), while not statistically significant, descriptive data indicated the importance of images and videos for dyslexic students' comprehension (items 6, 16). Additionally, 64% of dyslexic students favored gamified and interactive content to support focus, compared to 28% of students without dyslexia.

In conclusion, the educational needs analysis confirms that students with dyslexia face more difficulties in understanding content, maintaining focus, and engaging with tasks than their peers. There is a notable association between dyslexia and language learning struggles. Moreover, visual design and digital readability are key factors, though multimedia aids help dyslexic students contextualize L2 content, poor layout and formatting can act as barriers.

5.2. The online experimental course: participants and design phase

Based on the above-described analysis of needs and with the aim to explore the potentialities of IEEs for vocabulary acquisition in students with dyslexia, an experimental online intensive B1 English course was designed for University of Genoa students who had not passed the mandatory proficiency exam. Open to all enrolled students with a dyslexia certification, the course was developed in collaboration with the university's Disability and Learning Disorders Office and the language centre, which provided data on students needing support. Eligible students were invited via email and posters, and participation was voluntary. A total of 92 students enrolled, split into an experimental group (52 students) and a control group (40 students). Due to high dropout rates, only 24 students completed the experimental course and 15 the control course. The only variable between the two groups was the use of IEEs (via *ThingLink*) for the experimental group, while the control group engaged with traditional non-immersive materials.

A three-unit online recovery course was structured around the theme of travel, a highly engaging topic (Diadori et al., 2009). The theoretical framework followed Online Education Design principles, ensuring accessibility and effectiveness. The course focused on:

- Unit 1 (London): Functional, grammatical, and lexical skills, including present simple vs. present continuous, expressions of courtesy, and British English.
- Unit 2 (Dublin): Descriptive skills, past tense distinctions, and vocabulary related to memory and personal experiences.
- Unit 3 (New York): Future tenses, conditional forms, vocabulary related to plans, expectations and desires, and American English exposure.

Each unit emphasized written and oral comprehension, integrating multisensory learning in line with UDL principles. The course incorporated authentic materials, and flexible and customizable resources, ensuring accessibility for students. The total duration of the course was about 25 hours over four weeks, divided into: 6 hours of instructional delivery; 11 hours of structured activities; 8 hours of individual study. Each module included: an introductory video and descriptive text; grammar and vocabulary lessons; interactive activities (immersive for the experimental group, traditional for the control group); writing tasks in discussion forums; self-reflection questionnaires on study strategies and progress; and finally, satisfaction surveys and performance tests. The experimental group engaged with *ThingLink*-based immersive environments, enhancing engagement through interactive 360° visuals and gamified learning, while the control group followed a more traditional approach. However, both courses presented clear and systematic layouts, readable

fonts, and a clear module structure to accommodate dyslexic students' need for structured, redundant, and transparent learning.

5.2.1 Instruments: Immersive Educational Environments

The immersive scenarios in the experimental course were created using *ThingLink*, a platform that supports interactive experiences across PC, tablets, and mobile devices, offering medium-low immersion. When used with headsets, it enables a medium-high level of immersion, simulating a Virtual Reality experience. *ThingLink* allows the integration of diverse resources, such as 360° images, infographics, guided tours, and VR content, with additional features introduced in 2023.

For the experimental group, explorable 360° images were used, sourced from Street View Download 360, ensuring high-definition representations of real-world locations. These images were uploaded to *ThingLink* and paired with on-site audio recordings from YouTube, featuring 3D sound effects to enhance immersion and multisensory input. Since continuous background audio can sometimes hinder learning (Dhimolea et al., 2022), students could pause playback as needed. *ThingLink* also supports interactive tags, enabling text and multimedia integration (audio, video, images); embedded web content (e.g., British Council, Cambridge resources); scenario-based activities; and guided tours. The experimental online course was organized into a structured sequence that combined entry-level assessment, instructional delivery, and reflective practice. It begins with an introductory phase, where participants first complete a survey designed to profile their expectations, needs, and difficulties, followed by an entry-level test made up of progressively challenging questions to assess their starting competence. Once these initial steps are completed, learners can access the three learning modules, each of which follows the same progression. After an introductory video accompanied by a short descriptive text, so to mix multimodal and multisensory input, students engage with communicative and grammatical content whose main aim was to practice vocabulary. Each module also includes two sets of digital activities, consisting of reading comprehension and use of English exercises specifically designed to test both receptive and productive vocabulary. In the experimental course these activities are embedded in immersive scenarios, while in the control group they are delivered in a list format on Moodle. Learners then complete a writing task in a dedicated forum to test their productive vocabulary competence. Each module concludes with a short satisfaction survey and a performance test aligned with the objectives of the unit. The course ends with a final satisfaction survey and a comprehensive test assessing the knowledge acquired throughout the program, with a specific focus on both receptive and productive vocabulary. Learners who successfully complete all stages receive a statement of attendance, formally recognizing their participation (See Appendix A).

In the experimental course, scenarios functioned as gamified virtual escape rooms, where students unlocked progress by answering quiz questions based on completed activities (See Figure 2). The interface used color-coded symbols for navigation:

- Red → Scenario introduction and cultural video
- White → Additional textual and cultural insights
- Numbered icons → Sequential learning activities
- Green key → Final quiz unlocking the next scenario. If it was incorrect, *ThingLink* provided hints, or students could seek support from a tutor.

Each immersive scenario was explorable, which in itself guaranteed multisensory learning by combining spatial navigation with multimodal content. IEEs were built around authentic materials, where every video or audio resource was accompanied by corresponding images and written text. To further guide learners' comprehension, visual hierarchy was created through the use of color-coded text, italics, and boldface. In addition, the *ThingLink* platform provided integrated assistive technologies—such as speech-to-text software, automatic translation, Pictionary, and other accessibility tools—that reinforced the multisensory design. This combination of immersive, multimodal exploration and assistive features not only fostered inclusivity but also proved particularly beneficial for students with dyslexia, who could process, connect, and retain information more effectively when supported by multiple input channels.

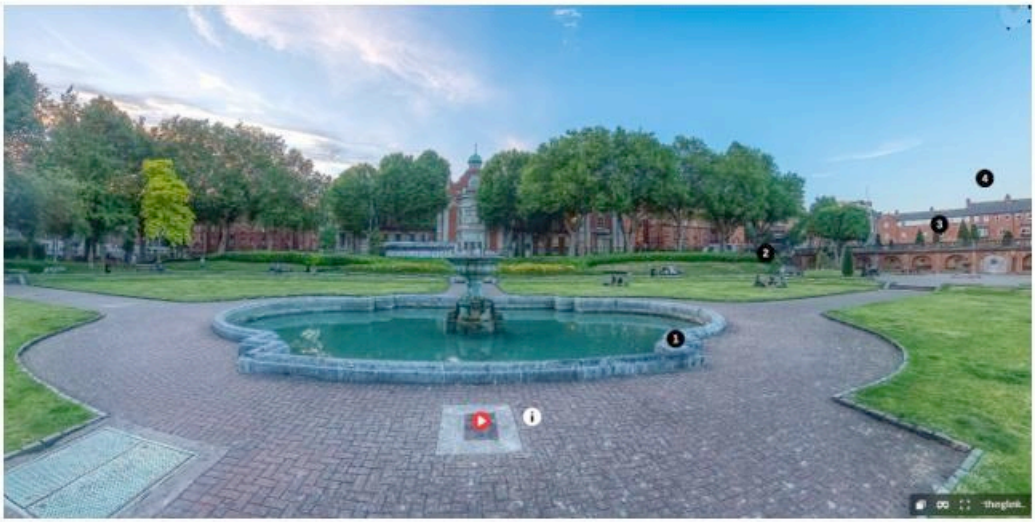


Figure 2. One of the immersive scenarios specifically designed for the online inclusive EFL course of the experimentation.

6. Assessing vocabulary learning: a mixed-methods data analysis

At the end of each module, students were requested to complete a writing task and take a performance test to assess productive and receptive vocabulary. Writing tasks were based on simple prompts concerning personal experiences in the present, in the past, and in the future, so as to explore learners' productive vocabulary. In order to do that, an assessment rubric was designed. It was based on several parameters: clarity, topic coherence, complexity, register, use of linkers, grammar correctness, detailed descriptions, and logic coherence. For the first four parameters, a maximum of 1 point was given. For the rest, a maximum of 2 points was given. For each task, the maximum total score could be 12. Receptive vocabulary, on the other hand, was tested by use-of-English exercises and reading tasks with cloze tests, included in the final performance test. This included 25 items testing reading comprehension, grammar, listening, and use of English. To analyze all the items, qualitative and quantitative methods were used, including descriptive and statistical analysis—Wilcoxon tests and the Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples, mainly.

Let us start by analyzing the overall performance of both groups. To assess whether immersive environments positively impacted learning outcomes, we compared the experimental and control groups (Table 1). The lowest initial test score was recorded by a participant in the experimental group (4.40/30), whereas in the control group, the minimum score was 6.00/30. However, in the final test, the lowest score was from the control group (14.60/30), while the minimum in the experimental group was slightly higher (15.93/30). This suggests that the average progress between the two tests was greater in the experimental group. Regarding the highest scores, both groups achieved a maximum of 29.75/30 in the initial test. However, in the final test, the highest score in the control group decreased to 28.60/30, while the experimental group reached a perfect 30/30. The most notable difference is in the mean scores. The control group had a lower starting average (17.07/30) compared to the experimental group (18.76/30). This trend continued in the final test, with average scores of 20.73/30 in the control group and 23.26/30 in the experimental group, indicating a greater improvement in the experimental group.

Table 1
Descriptive analysis of the final performance test scores

Group	Minimum	Mean	Std. Dev	25th perc	Median	Max
Control Group (T0)	6.00	17.07	5.22	14.35	17.02	29.75
Control Group (T4)	14.60	20.79	4.72	17.60	19.60	28.60
Experimental Group (T0)	4.40	18.76	6.50	14.83	18.23	29.75
Experimental Group (T4)	15.93	23.26	4.32	18.90	23.17	30

To further verify these findings, non-parametric Wilcoxon tests were conducted on both groups. Statistical analysis confirmed that the experimental group showed greater improvement.

6.1. Receptive vocabulary data analysis

Beyond overall performance, we examined the specific test items assessing lexical competence and receptive vocabulary in the final test. Specifically:

- Items 1, 2, 3 → A2-level reading comprehension exercise with multiple-choice questions;
- item 7 → B1-level matching exercise (definitions-words);
- Item 11 → B1plus-level "Use of English" exercise with selection of the correct word;
- Item 15 → B2-level matching exercise (words-context);
- items 20, 21, 22 → B2 plus-level reading comprehension exercise with multiple-choice questions.

Statistical analysis did not identify any significant differences. However, descriptive analysis highlighted interesting data. Table 2 shows the mean scores per Item:

Table 2
Descriptive analysis of the final performance test items regarding receptive vocabulary

Item	Max points	Experimental group's mean	Control group's mean
1	1	1	1
2	1	0.63	0.60
3	1	1	1
7	2	1.72	1.39
11	3	2.67	2.27
15	1	1.95	1.87
20	1	0.67	0.60
21	1	0.71	0.47
22	1	0.54	0.53

With the exception of items 1 and 3, where all participants answered correctly—likely due to these items being at an A2 level and therefore manageable for all students—the experimental group achieved higher average scores across all other lexical competence items. This suggests that immersive environments contribute positively to lexical acquisition. In particular, the experimental group outperformed the control group in items 7, 11, and 15, which were English exercises specifically designed to assess students' ability to infer meaning and use vocabulary in context. These exercises were better performed by the experimental group, confirming that visual contextualization and engaging, interactive educational environments significantly support students with dyslexia in decoding texts and understanding nuanced meanings. The results also indicate that the immersive and visually enriched environment helped these students not only grasp new vocabulary more effectively but also apply it accurately within appropriate contexts. This aligns with

existing research underscoring the benefits of multi-sensory learning for dyslexic students, particularly in the realm of receptive language skills.

Moreover, in the final reading comprehension assessment, which featured texts at a B2 level of proficiency, the experimental group demonstrated superior reading skills despite the increased difficulty. They performed better in decoding unfamiliar words, matching definitions and contexts to appropriate vocabulary, and in understanding the general meaning of complex texts. These findings reinforce the research hypothesis, as the quantitative analysis confirms that the use of IEEs not only boosts lexical competence but also enhances overall reading comprehension.

6.2. Productive vocabulary data analysis

To assess productive vocabulary, Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted on the three writing tasks scores of both groups. Additionally, a qualitative analysis was conducted.

To begin, descriptive analysis shows that the overall average scores are higher in the experimental group (except for writing task n.3 as one participant of the experimental group decided to write song lyrics instead of coherently answering the prompt). To determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in the distribution of each numerical variable (evaluation criteria) between the two groups, Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples was conducted. If the p-value is below 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected (the distributions of evaluation criteria scores are equal in both groups) concluding that the distributions are significantly different. We are going to focus on task 1, as the majority of participants completed it, so it is more reliable.

The analysis identified significant differences in the four evaluation criteria (see Appendix B): vocabulary complexity; use of textual linkers; accuracy of descriptions; and textual coherence. The final results indicate a statistically significant advantage for the experimental group, further supporting the research hypothesis that IEEs positively influence student performance.

To further explore these findings, we conducted a qualitative content analysis within our mixed-method research framework. Writing Task 1, which involved self-presentation, hobbies, and abilities, was completed by the majority of students in both groups. However, 20 out of 24 students in the experimental group completed the task, compared to only 8 out of 15 in the control group, indicating higher engagement from the experimental group. Notable differences emerged between the two groups' writing performances: students in the experimental group produced longer and more complex texts, incorporating intricate grammatical structures such as hypothetical sentences, superlatives, and comparatives. They also included more personal details, showing higher levels of descriptive accuracy and vocabulary complexity—further confirming the results of the quantitative analysis.

Writing Task 2, which required describing a meaningful memory, was stimulating for both groups. However, only 33.3% of the control group completed the task, compared to 66.7% of the experimental group. While control group students demonstrated a relatively good level of grammatical accuracy, the experimental group once again stood out for producing more elaborate texts and for their willingness to experiment with new vocabulary.

Writing Task 3, which focused on future plans, expectations, and desires, proved challenging for both groups. Nevertheless, 16 out of 24 students in the experimental group completed the task, while only 3 out of 15 students in the control group did so. This suggests a significant difference in motivation levels and highlights the greater difficulty experienced by the control group when dealing with abstract or future-oriented writing tasks.

It is important to note that higher levels of motivation—particularly intrinsic motivation—emerged among the students in the experimental group. Many of them expressed a strong willingness to learn English and other languages as a means of broadening their knowledge and fulfilling aspirations such as traveling abroad [e.g., S.15, experimental group: *"I like studying English. My dream is to travel around the world, I would like to know all of the planet"*; S.16, experimental group: *"One of my goals is to travel around the world and maybe, one day, move to England or the U.S.A., in Atlanta"*; S.3, experimental group: *"I chose to study languages because I love helping people to communicate and understand each other"*; S.17, experimental group: *"I would like to see the world in order to find my way"*].

By contrast, students in the control group did not express any language-learning motivation in any of the three tasks, with the exception of Student 3. However, this case reflected an instrumental rather than an intrinsic orientation [S.3, control group: *"I'm studying it (English) because I need a university degree in order to work in Italian public schools"*].

Overall, the writing tasks revealed consistently higher levels of engagement, linguistic experimentation, and expressive ability among students in the experimental group. Their increased task completion rates, more complex language use, and greater willingness to elaborate on personal experiences suggest that immersive and visually rich learning environments foster not only improved lexical and grammatical skills but also enhance students' confidence and motivation to express themselves in writing. These qualitative observations support and reinforce the findings from the quantitative analysis, confirming the positive impact of immersive educational environments on the written performance of students, particularly those with learning differences.

7. Results and discussion

This study examines how immersive educational environments influence motivation and vocabulary acquisition in university students with Specific Learning Disorders. The main key findings are about: specific language needs, and the impact of IEEs on motivation, and consequently, on word retention and lexicon acquisition. About language needs, the study reaffirmed the persistent challenges that students with dyslexia face in L2 learning, including difficulties with comprehension, independent study, and text readability. Compared to their neurotypical peers, these students struggled more with processing instructional content, highlighting the need for greater structure and clarity in teaching materials. A lack of systematic instructional design was identified as a key factor contributing to these challenges in both native and foreign language acquisition. Additionally, among these learners' needs, the preference for multimedia materials relying on visuality stands out clearly. Also, readable content and flexible learning environments are identified as relevant. About the L2 learning process, the case-study shows that the experimental group showed higher motivation, engagement, and completion rates compared to the control group. The immersive course was perceived as more transparent, structured, and accessible, enhancing student participation. About vocabulary, students in the experimental group produced more complex and diverse lexical structures, demonstrating enhanced vocabulary retention. Motivation played a crucial role in lexical acquisition, reinforcing findings in previous studies (Fontecha & Gallego, 2012).

It is important to highlight that, while this study provides valuable insights into the impact of immersive educational environments on university students with dyslexia, certain limitations should be acknowledged, and areas for improvement identified. A key limitation is the small sample size, with only 39 out of 92 participants completing the study, restricting the generalizability of findings. Another challenge is the lack of standardized profiling tools for dyslexic students, making cross-context comparisons difficult. Existing diagnostic categories often overlook comorbidities like ADHD or anxiety, which significantly affect learning. Refining classification methods would improve data accuracy and deepen our understanding of individual learning needs.

Building on these insights, future research should involve larger samples and examine additional language competencies, including listening comprehension, grammar accuracy, and intercultural competence. Given the interconnected nature of language skills, a holistic approach would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how IEEs influence overall proficiency. Another area of exploration is whether IEEs have the same impact in different languages. Since English is an opaque language with complex spelling and pronunciation rules, it would be valuable to study whether immersive environments yield similar benefits in transparent languages like Italian or Spanish. Early findings suggest comparable advantages, but further research is needed.

Lastly, the study raises questions about applying inclusive course design strategies beyond dyslexic students. Learners with visual impairments, for example, face similar challenges in digital learning environments. Investigating cross-disability accessibility strategies could contribute to more universally inclusive online learning models.

In conclusion, this study represents an early effort to explore how to enhance language performance—particularly vocabulary acquisition—through a holistic approach. By addressing the specific needs of university students with dyslexia and designing a flexible, accessible online environment, this research demonstrates how IEEs can cognitively stimulate learners, increase motivation, and ultimately improve the language learning process.

References

Ahmad, Siti Zulaiha, Ludin, Nik Noor Amalina Amirah Nik, Ekhsan, Hawa Mohd, Rosmani, Arifah Fasha, & Ismail, Mohammad Hafiz (2012, December). Bijak Membaca—Applying Phonic Reading Technique and Multisensory Approach with interactive multimedia for dyslexia children. In *2012 IEEE Colloquium on Humanities, Science and Engineering* (CHUSER) (pp. 554-559). IEEE. https://doi.org/10.1109/CHUSER.2012.6504375

Balboni, Paolo (2011). *Conoscenza, verità, etica nell'educazione linguistica*. Guerra.

Bayne, Sian (2015). What's the matter with 'technology-enhanced learning'?. *Learning, media and technology, 40*(1), 5-20. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2014.915851

Bellacicco, Rosa (2018). *Verso una università inclusiva: la voce degli studenti con disabilità*. FrancoAngeli.

Benigno, Vincenza, Caruso, Giovanni, Fante, Chiara, Ravicchio, Fabrizio, & Trentin, Guglielmo (2018). *Classi ibride e inclusione socioeducativa: il progetto TRIS*. FrancoAngeli.

Bhatti, Zeeshan, Bibi, Maymoona, & Shabbir, Naila (2020, January). Augmented reality based multimedia learning for dyslexic children. In *2020 3rd International Conference on Computing, Mathematics and Engineering Technologies (iCoMET)* (pp. 1-7). IEEE. https://doi.org/10.1109/ICOMET48670.2020.9073981

Bigozzi, Lucia, Tarchi, Christian, Pinto, Giuliana, & Donfrancesco, Renato (2016). Divergent thinking in Italian students with and without reading impairments. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, *63*(4), 450-466. https://doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2015.1127335

Bjekić, Dragana, Obradović, Svetlana, & Bojović, Milevica (2020). The challenges for teachers: Augmented reality as educational technology for students with dyslexia. In *8th International Scientific Conference Technics and Informatics in Education, 43*(5), 40-49.

Burgstahler, Sheryl E. (2008). Universal Design of technological environments: From principles to practice. In Sheryl. E. Burgstahler & Rebecca. C. Cory (Eds.), *Universal Design in Higher Education: From Principles to Practice.* Harvard University Press

Caon, Fabio., Melero, Carlos Alberto, & Brichese, Annalisa (2019). Educazione linguistica accessibile e inclusiva: Promuovere apprendimento linguistico efficace per studenti stranieri e studenti con DSA. *Educazione Linguistica Language Education*, *7*, 341-366.

Cardinaletti, Anna (2018). *Test linguistici accessibili per studenti sordi e con DSA: pari opportunità per l'accesso all'università. Test linguistici accessibili per studenti sordi e con DSA*, 1-327. Torrossa

Carroll, Julia M., & Iles, Jane E. (2006). An assessment of anxiety levels in dyslexic students in higher education. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *76*(3), 651-662. https://doi.org/10.1348/000709905X66233

Chakravarty, Ambar (2009). Artistic talent in dyslexia—A hypothesis. *Medical Hypotheses*, *73*(4), 569-571. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mehy.2009.05.034

Chapelle, Carol A. (2007). Technology and second language acquisition. *Annual review of applied linguistics, 27*, 98-114. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190508070050

Chen, Yu-Li (2016). The effects of virtual reality learning environment on student cognitive and linguistic development. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher, 25*, 637-646. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-016-0293-2

Cheng, Alan, Yang, Lei, & Andersen, Erik (2017, May). Teaching language and culture with a virtual reality game. In *Proceedings of the 2017 CHI conference on human factors in computing systems* (pp. 541-549). https://doi.org/10.1145/3025453.3025857

Clarke, Jodie, Dede, Chris, & Dieterle, Ed (2008). Emerging technologies for collaborative, mediated, immersive learning. I*nternational handbook of information technology in primary and secondary education*, 901909. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-73315-9_55

Cockcroft, Kate, & Hartgill, Melanie (2004). Focusing on the abilities in learning disabilities: Dyslexia and creativity. *Education as Change*, *8*(1), 61-79. https://doi.org/10.1080/16823200409487081

Crombie, Margaret A. (2000). Dyslexia and the learning of a foreign language in school: where are we going?. *Dyslexia*, *6*(2), 112-123.

Cumming, Therese M., & Rose, Megan C. (2022). Exploring universal design for learning as an accessibility tool in higher education: A review of the current literature. *The Australian Educational Researcher, 49*(5), 1025-1043.

Cytowic, Richard E. (1996). *The neurological side of neuropsychology*. MIT Press.

Daloiso, Michele (2012). *Lingue straniere e dislessia evolutiva. Teoria e Meotodologia per una glottodidattica accessibile*. UTET Università.

Daloiso, Michele, & Melero Rodríguez, Carlos Alberto (2016). Lingue straniere e bisogni educativi speciali. Melero Rodríguez, C.A. (a cura di), *Le lingue in Italia, le lingue in Europa: dove siamo, dove andiamo.* (pp. 119-36). Edizioni Ca' Foscari,.

Dawley, Lisa, & Dede, Chris (2014). Situated learning in virtual worlds and immersive simulations. *Handbook of research on educational communications and technology*, 723-734. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-3185-5_58

Diadori, Pierangela, Palermo, Massimo, & Troncarelli, Donatella (2009). *Maunuale di didattica dell'italiano L2* (pp. 1-295). Guerra Edizioni.

Dinmore, Stuart P. (2014). The case for universal design for learning in technology enhanced environments. *International Journal of Cyber Ethics in Education (IJCEE), 3*(2), 29-38. https://doi.org/10.4018/ijcee.2014040103

Doolani, Sanika, Wessels, Callen, Kanal, Varun, Sevastopoulos, Christos, Jaiswal, Ashish, Nambiappan, Harish, & Makedon, Fillia (2020). A review of extended reality (XR) technologies for manufacturing training. *Technologies*, *8*(4), 77. https://doi.org/10.3390/technologies8040077

Edyburn, Dave L. (2010). Would you recognize universal design for learning if you saw it? Ten propositions for new directions for the second decade of UDL. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 33*(1), 33-41.

Erbeli, Florina, Peng, Peng, & Rice, Marianne (2022). No evidence of creative benefit accompanying dyslexia: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, *55*(3), 242-253. https://doi.org/10.1177/07319487100330010 3

Fontecha, Almudena Fernández, & Gallego, Melanía Terrazas (2012). The role of motivation and age in vocabulary knowledge. *Vigo International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, (9), 39-62.

Graham, Steve, & Freeman, Sally (1986). Strategy training and teacher-vs. student-controlled study conditions: Effects on LD students' spelling performance. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, *9*(1), 15-22.

Gutiérrez-Ortega, Mónica, Torres-Quesada, Maryem, Crespo, Patricia, López-Fernández, Verónica, Fariña, Noemi, & Barbón, Analìa (2023). Are dyslexic people more creative? myth or reality: a meta-analysis. *Psicología Educativa. Revista de los Psicólogos de la Educación*, *29*(1), 55-64. https://doi.org/10.5093/psed2023a1

Irshad, Rimsha, Kausar, Asia & Qayyum, Muhummad (2022). Dyslexic Tendency in Relation to Self-Esteem and Social Anxiety among Higher Learning Adults. *Advanced Research in Social Sciences*, *2*(2), 1-17.

Kapoula, Zoï, Ruiz, Sarah, Spector, Lisa, Mocorovi, Marion, Gaertner, Chrystal, Quilici, Catherine, & Vernet, Marine (2016). Education influences creativity in dyslexic and non-dyslexic children and teenagers. *PloS one*, *11*(3), e0150421.

Kirby, Philip (2018). A brief history of dyslexia. *Psychologist, 31*(3).

Kirby, Jhon R., Georgiou, George K., Martinussen, Rhonda, & Parrila, Rauno (2010). Naming speed and reading: From prediction to instruction. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *45*(3), 341-362. https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.45.3.4

Kontra, Edit H. (2019). *The L2 motivation of learners with special educational needs. The Palgrave Handbook of Motivation for Language Learning*, 495-513. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28380-3_23

Kormos, Judit, & Kontra, Edit. H. (2018*). Language Learners with Special Needs: An International Perspective.* Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Kurniawati, Arik, Abdullah, Fachrizal Farhan, Agustiono, Wahyudi, Warninda, Sheila Sisilia, & Kusumaningsih, Ari (2020). Introduction to Virtual Reality for Learning Media in Schools in Indonesia. In *Journal of Physics: Conference Series, 1569*(2), p. 022065. IOP Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1569/2/022065

LaValle, Steven M. (2023). *Virtual reality*. Cambridge University Press.

Legault, Jennifer, Zhao, Jiayan, Chi, Ying-An., Chen, Weitao, Klippel, Alexander, & Li, Ping (2019). Immersive virtual reality as an effective tool for second language vocabulary learning. *Languages, 4*(1), 13. https://doi.org/10.3390/languages4010013

Lovegrove, William (1991). Spatial frequency processing in dyslexic and normal readers. *Vision and visual dysfunction: vision and visual dyslexia, 13*, 148-154.

McDonough, Sharon K. (2001). Way beyond drill and practice: foreign language lab activities in support of constructivist learning. *International Journal of Instructional Media, 28*(1), 7581.

Moustafa, Brenda Martin (1999). Multisensory Approaches and Learning Styles Theory in the Elementary School: Summary of Reference Papers.

Mulders, Miriam, Buchner, Josef, & Kerres, Michael (2020). A framework for the use of immersive virtual reality in learning environments. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (iJET), 15*(24), 208-224. https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v15i24.16615

Murphy, Nancy (1997). *A Multisensory vs. Conventional Approach to Teaching Spelling*. Unpublished master thesis. Kean College of New Jersey, USA.

Nation, Paul, & Meara, Paul (2013). 3 Vocabulary. In *An introduction to applied linguistics* (pp. 44-62). Routledge.

Newton, Jonathan (1995). Task-based interaction and incidental vocabulary learning: A case study. *Second language research, 11*(2), 159-176.

Ohene-Djan, James, & Begum, Rahima (2008). Multisensory games for dyslexic children. In Paloma Diaz, Kinshuk Ignacio Aedo and Edoardo Mora (Eds.) *2008 Eighth IEEE International Conference on Advanced Learning Technologies (*pp. 1040-1041). IEEE. https://doi.org/0.1109/ICALT.2008.98

Panzavolta, Silvia, & Mori, Sara (2019). Stili di memoria e strategie di studio: come le nuove tecnologie cambiano l'apprendimento?. *Ricerche di psicologia: 4, 2019*, 599-618. https://doi.org/10.3280/RIP2019-004003

Pavesi, Maria, & Ghia, Elisa (2020). *Informal contact with English. A case study of Italian postgraduate students* (Vol. 8, pp. 1-175). Edizioni ETS.

Peixoto, Bruno, Pinto, Rafaael Darque, Melo, Miguel, Cabral, Luciana, & Bessa, Maximino (2021). Immersive virtual reality for foreign language education: A PRISMA systematic review. *IEEE Access, 9*, 48952-48962. https://doi.org/10.1109/ACCESS.2021.3068858

Piechurska-Kuciel, Ewa (2008). Input, processing and output anxiety in students with symptoms of developmental dyslexia. In Judit Kormos and Edit H. Kontra (Eds.), Language learners with special needs. An international perspective (pp. 86–109). Multilingual Matters.

Pino, Daisy (2008). Web-based English as a second language instruction and learning: Strengths and limitations. *Distance Learning, 5*(2), 65.

Rahman, Rukia, & Dar, Bilal Ahmad (2022). Information technology in education: An Educational offshoot and a monumental add-on in return. *Journal of Trends in Computer Science and Smart Technology*, *4*(3), 185-200. https://doi.org/10.36548/jtcsst.2022.3.007

Rakhlin, Natalia, Cardoso-Martins, Clàudia, Kornilov, Sergey A., & Grigorenko, Elena L. (2013). Spelling well despite developmental language disorder: what makes it possible?. *Annals of dyslexia*, *63*, 253-273. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11881-013-0084-x

Rodríguez-Cano, Sonia, Delgado-Benito, Vanesa, Ausín-Villaverde, Vanesa, & Muñoz-Martín, Lucìa. (2021). Design of a virtual reality software to promote the learning of students with dyslexia. *Sustainability*, *13*(15), 8425. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13158425

Rose, David H., Harbour, Wendy S., Johnston, Catherine Sam, Daley, Samantha G., & Abarbanell, Linda (2006). Universal design for learning in postsecondary education: Reflections on principles and their application. *Journal of postsecondary education and disability, 19*(2), 135-151.

Schmitt, Norbert (2008). Instructed second language vocabulary learning. *Language teaching research, 12*(3), 329-363.

Schweighofer, Patrick, & Ebner, Martin (2015). Aspects to be considered when implementing technology-enhanced learning approaches: A literature review. *Future Internet*, *7*(1), 26-49. https://doi.org/10.3390/fi7010026

Sparks, Richard L., & Miller, Karen S. (2000). Teaching a foreign language using multisensory structured language techniques to at-risk learners: a review. *Dyslexia*, *6*(2), 124-132. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-0909(200004/06)6:2<124::AID-DYS152>3.0.CO;2-3

Staggini, Giulia (2025). How Virtual Learning Environments Can Boost Language Learning Inclusivity in Higher Education. In *EDULEARN25 Proceedings* (pp. 7203-7209). IATED. 10.21125/edulearn.2025.1782

Staggini, Giulia (2024). *Immersive Educational Environments to enhance L2 motivation and vocabulary in EFL students with dyslexia*. Unpublished PhD. Thesis, Università degli Studi di Genova.

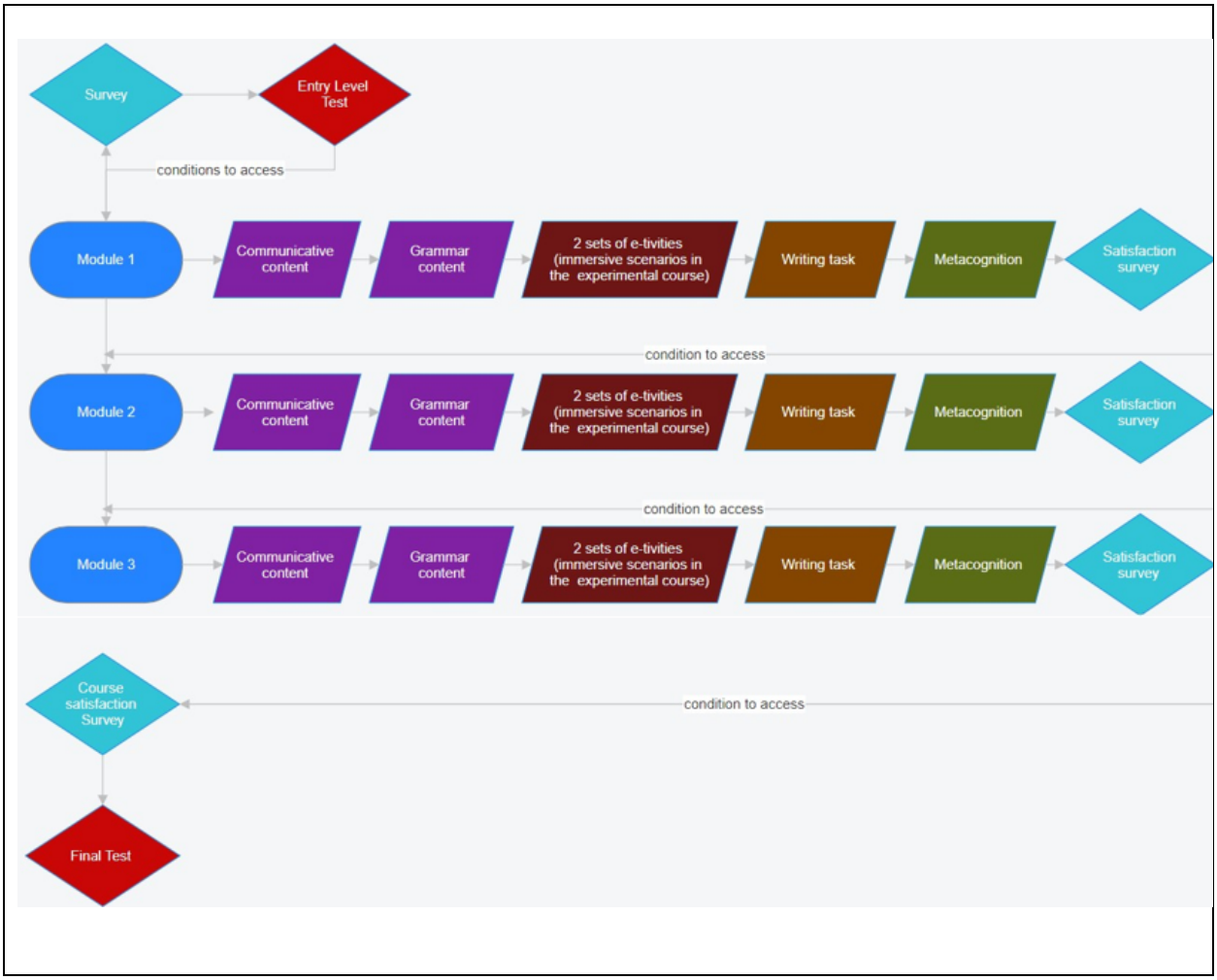
Staggini, Giulia, & Cersosimo, Rita (2021, July). VR-ISLAND: Virtual Reality, Inclusion and Special Language Needs. In *Proceedings of the 14th Biannual Conference of the Italian SIGCHI Chapter* (pp. 1-2). https://doi.org/10.1145/3464385.346747

Trepule, Elena, Tereseviciene, Margarita, & Rutkiene, Ausra (2015). Didactic approach of introducing technology enhanced learning (TEL) curriculum in higher education. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *191*, 848-852. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.04.340

Wang, Han-Chung, Huang, Hung-Tzu., & Hsu, Chun-Chieh (2015). The Impact of Choice on EFL Students' Motivation and Engagement with L2 Vocabulary Learning. *Taiwan Journal of TESOL, 12*(2), 1-40.

Appendix

Appendix A



Appendix B

Control Group

[a]	Minimum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percentile 25	Median	Percentile 75	Maximum
clarity: 1 pt	,50	,75	,27	,50	,75	1,00	1,00
topic: 1 pt	1,00	1,00	,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00
complex vocabulary: 1 pt	,25	,53	,21	,50	,50	,50	1,00
register: 1 pt	,50	,94	,18	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00
linkers: 2 pts	,50	1,06	,42	1,00	1,00	1,00	2,00
grammar correctness: 2 pts	,50	1,38	,44	1,25	1,50	1,50	2,00
detailed descriptions of events/feelings/memories : 2 pts	1,00	1,31	,37	1,00	1,25	1,50	2,00
logic coherence : 2 pts	,50	1,31	,37	1,25	1,50	1,50	1,50
total / 12	6,75	8,28	1,40	7,25	8,00	9,00	11,00

a. Group = Controllo

Experimental Group

[a]	Minimum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percentile 25	Median	Percentile 75	Maximum
clarity: 1 pt	,50	,95	,13	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00
topic: 1 pt	,50	1,00	,10	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00
complex vocabulary: 1 pt	,50	,79	,23	,50	,88	1,00	1,00
register: 1 pt	,75	,99	,06	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00
linkers: 2 pts	,75	1,46	,33	1,50	1,50	1,50	2,00
grammar correctness: 2 pts	,75	1,45	,41	1,00	1,50	1,88	2,00
detailed descriptions of events/feelings/memories : 2 pts	1,00	1,78	,34	1,50	2,00	2,00	2,00
logic coherence : 2 pts	,00	1,73	,53	1,50	2,00	2,00	2,00
total / 12	8,50	10,11	,99	9,38	10,00	10,88	12,00

a. Group = Sperimentale

Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.[a,b]	Decision
1	The distribution of clarity: 1 pt is the same across categories of Group.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,110[c]	Retain the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of topic: 1 pt is the same across categories of Group.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,862[c]	Retain the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of complex vocabulary: 1 pt is the same across categories of Group.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,025[c]	Reject the null hypothesis.
4	The distribution of register: 1 pt is the same across categories of Group.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,746[c]	Retain the null hypothesis.
5	The distribution of linkers: 2 pts is the same across categories of Group.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,016[c]	Reject the null hypothesis.
6	The distribution of grammar correctness: 2 pts is the same across categories of Group.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,862[c]	Retain the null hypothesis.
7	The distribution of detailed descriptions of events/feelings/memories: 2 pts is the same across categories of Group.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,011[c]	Reject the null hypothesis.
8	The distribution of logic coherence : 2 pts is the same across categories of Group.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,010[c]	Reject the null hypothesis.
9	The distribution of total / 12 is the same across categories of Group.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,002[c]	Reject the null hypothesis.

Giulia Staggini, Università di Siena
Giulia.staggini2@unisi.it

EN **Giulia Staggini** is a research fellow in English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics at the University of Siena. She holds a PhD in Digital Humanities from the University of Genoa, with research focused on enhancing L2 motivation and vocabulary acquisition in dyslexic learners. She is currently adjunct professor in English Language at the Universities of Pavia and Milan. Her work explores language learning accessibility, and innovative digital tools in education. She is also actively engaged in studies on audiovisual translation and the role of audiovisual input in L2 teaching.

ES **Giulia Staggini è** assegnista di ricerca in Didattica della Lingua Inglese e Linguistica Applicata presso l'Università di Siena. Ha conseguito il dottorato in Digital Humanities presso l'Università di Genova, con una ricerca incentrata sui processi di acquisizione lessicale in studenti universitari con dislessia. Attualmente è docente a contratto di Lingua Inglese presso le Università di Pavia e Milano. Le sue attività di ricerca riguardano l'accessibilità nell'apprendimento linguistico e l'uso di strumenti digitali innovativi. Si occupa inoltre di traduzione audiovisiva e di input audiovisivo nella didattica della lingua inglese.

IT **Giulia Staggini** è assegnista di ricerca in Didattica della Lingua Inglese e Linguistica Applicata presso l'Università di Siena. Ha conseguito il dottorato in Digital Humanities presso l'Università di Genova, con una ricerca incentrata sui processi di acquisizione lessicale in studenti universitari con dislessia. Attualmente è docente a contratto di Lingua Inglese presso le Università di Pavia e Milano. Le sue attività di ricerca riguardano l'accessibilità nell'apprendimento linguistico e l'uso di strumenti digitali innovativi. Si occupa inoltre di traduzione audiovisiva e di input audiovisivo nella didattica della lingua inglese.

EuroAmerican Journal of Applied Linguistics and Languages
E-JournALL, Volume 12, Issue 2, November 2025, pages 37-57
ISSN 2376-905X
http://doi.org/10.21283/2376905X.1.12.2.3289
www.e-journall.org

Chiusure conversazionali nei colloqui accademici in italiano L1/L2

FRANCESCA PAGLIARA
Università degli Studi "Roma Tre"

Received 6 November 2024; accepted 14 October 2025

ABSTRACT

IT Lo studio analizza le chiusure conversazionali nei colloqui tra studenti universitari italofoni e internazionali, e docenti. La fase di chiusura di una conversazione è cruciale per la gestione dell'immagine sociale e delle relazioni interpersonali. Sebbene studi precedenti abbiano esplorato questo tema in diverse lingue, l'italiano formale, in particolare nel contesto accademico, è stato meno indagato. L'obiettivo è identificare le strategie utilizzate dagli studenti per concludere le conversazioni e confrontare le modalità di chiusura tra madrelingua e non madrelingua. Lo studio si basa su un corpus di interazioni orali tra studenti universitari italofoni e internazionali e i loro docenti. I risultati indicano che gli studenti universitari, italofoni e internazionali, tendono a organizzare le chiusure con una struttura comune, comprendente una fase di pre-chiusura, una fase di transizione e uno scambio finale. Tuttavia, si rileva una variabilità nell'uso delle espressioni e delle strategie, influenzata dalla conoscenza delle norme sociopragmatiche specifiche del contesto accademico.

Parole chiave: ANALISI DELLA CONVERSAZIONE, CHIUSURE CONVERSAZIONALI, ITALIANO ACCADEMICO, ITALIANO L2, DISCORSO ISTITUZIONALE

EN The study investigates conversational closings in conversations between Italian international university students, and lecturers. To close a conversation is crucial for the handling of social image and interpersonal relations. Although previous studies have explored this issue in different languages, formal Italian, particularly in the academic context, has been less investigated. The aim of this study is to identify the strategies used by learners to end conversations and to compare the closing patterns between native and non-native Italian speakers. The study is based on a corpus of oral interactions between Italian-speaking and international university students and their teachers. The results indicate that both university students tend to organize closings with a similar structure, including a pre-closing phase, a transition phase and a final exchange. However, there is variability in the use of expressions and strategies, influenced by linguistic competence and knowledge of sociopragmatic norms specific to the academic context.

Key words: CONVERSATIONAL ANALYSIS, CLOSINGS, ACADEMIC ITALIAN, ITALIAN L2, INSTITUTIONAL TALK

ES El estudio investiga los cierres conversacionales en interacciones entre estudiantes universitarios italófonos e internacionales, y profesores. La fase de cierre de una conversación es crucial para la gestión de la imagen social y las relaciones interpersonales. Aunque estudios anteriores han explorado esta cuestión en distintas lenguas, el italiano formal, en particular en el contexto académico, ha sido menos investigado. El objetivo de este estudio es identificar las estrategias utilizadas por los estudiantes para poner fin a las conversaciones y comparar las modalidades de cierre entre hablantes nativos y no nativos de italiano. El estudio se basa en un corpus de interacciones orales entre estudiantes universitarios italohablantes e internacionales y sus profesores. Los resultados indican que los estudiantes universitarios italohablantes e internacionales tienden a organizar los cierres con una estructura común, que incluye una fase de pre-cierre, una fase de transición y un intercambio final. Sin embargo, se observa variabilidad en el uso de expresiones y estrategias, influida por la competencia lingüística y el conocimiento de las normas sociopragmáticas propias del contexto académico.

Palabras clave: ANÁLISIS DE CONVERSACIÓN, CIERRES CONVERSACIONALES, ITALIANO ACADÉMICO, ITALIANO L2, DISCURSO INSTITUCIONAL

✉ **Francesca Pagliara,** Università degli Studi "Roma Tre"
francesca.pagliara@uniroma3.it

1. Introduzione

Il presente studio si focalizza sull'analisi delle sequenze di chiusura nelle conversazioni formali faccia a faccia tra studenti e docenti universitari, nel contesto del ricevimento.

La fase conclusiva di un'interazione comunicativa rappresenta un punto cruciale della conversazione, dove si intrecciano fattori di cortesia, norme sociolinguistiche e strategie di tutela della "faccia sociale" (Brown e Levinson, 1987). Nella fase di chiusura di uno scambio comunicativo, i partecipanti negoziano il termine della conversazione, bilanciando il desiderio di concludere l'interazione con la necessità di mantenere relazioni positive. Le chiusure, pertanto, sono il risultato di un delicato equilibrio tra efficienza comunicativa e rispetto delle convenzioni sociali, come evidenziano diversi studi (Cameron, 2001; Coppock, 2005; Zhang, 2024). Del resto, già Sacks e Schlegoff (1973, p. 289) sottolineano che le conversazioni non si "finiscono solamente", ma devono essere chiuse, attraverso un elaborato rituale, nel quale i partecipanti mettono in atto diverse strategie volte a preservare la faccia reciproca e rafforzare lo *status* relazionale.

Nonostante l'importanza delle sequenze di chiusura nell'economia generale della conversazione, la ricerca su di esse è stata meno approfondita rispetto a quella sulle aperture, principalmente a causa della difficoltà nell'individuare con precisione l'inizio della chiusura e della complessità della sua struttura. Inoltre, la chiusura è influenzata da numerosi fattori contestuali, quali il tipo di interazione e la relazione tra i partecipanti. Precedenti studi condotti su lingue come l'inglese (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973; Clark & French, 1981), il greco e il tedesco (Pavlidou, 1997, 1998), il giapponese (Okamoto, 1990; Takami, 2002) e il tedesco (Harren & Raitaniemi, 2008) hanno evidenziato sia tratti comuni che differenze nelle modalità di chiusura e nelle espressioni rituali impiegate: da una parte, questi studi evidenziano che le chiusure conversazionali (CC) sono "universali" e tendono a includere tre sotto-sequenze, la pre-chiusura, i turni di transizione e lo scambio terminale; dall'altra, mostrano che tra le varie lingue e culture prese in esame emerge una differenza nell'uso degli *item* lessicali utilizzati come segnali di pre-chiusura, che risultano sensibili a una molteplicità di parametri sociali (tipo di relazione tra gli interlocutori, genere di appartenenza ecc.). Infine, gli studi registrano la variabilità interculturale da cui le chiusure sono caratterizzate: se in alcune lingue la chiusura viene gestita attraverso meccanismi di ridondanza, come ad esempio in greco (Pavlidu, 1999), in altre, come il tedesco o il portoghese, è norma non dilungarsi (Pavlidu, 1999; Sieberg, 2003); questa variabilità interculturale, inoltre, al livello intralinguistico è soggetta a ulteriori variabili sociali, come ad esempio la distanza sociale (Schwitalla, 2003).

La letteratura esistente sulle CC presenta una lacuna significativa riguardo all'italiano formale, e in particolare all'italiano accademico, lasciando aperta la questione dell'organizzazione sequenziale della chiusura in questo specifico contesto. Il presente studio mira a colmare tale *gap*, analizzando in dettaglio le componenti delle sequenze di chiusura per identificare le strategie adottate dai partecipanti, attraverso l'analisi di registrazioni audio di colloqui con docenti universitari. In particolare, lo studio si propone di confrontare le modalità di chiusura utilizzate da studenti universitari parlanti nativi di italiano (PN) con quelle di studenti parlanti non nativi (PNN), al fine di evidenziare eventuali convergenze e differenze significative.

2. Quadro teorico: l'analisi della conversazione

L'analisi della conversazione (AC) è un approccio di ricerca interdisciplinare, radicato nell'etnometodologia[1], che si dedica allo studio empirico delle interazioni sociali umane attraverso l'analisi di conversazioni naturali. Si tratta di un'indagine "induttiva, microanalitica e qualitativa" (Hoey & Kendrick, 2018, p. 152), che mira a svelare le strutture e i metodi con cui i partecipanti organizzano e danno senso alle loro interazioni verbali (*talk-in-interaction,* Psathas, 1995).

L'AC considera la conversazione come un processo dinamico e collaborativo, attraverso il quale i partecipanti costruiscono e mantengono un ordine sociale significativo (Flick, 2009, p. 34). A partire dai principi fondanti stabiliti da Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff e Gail Jefferson nel loro articolo del 1974, *A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation*, l'AC si concentra sull'analisi di registrazioni audio o video di interazioni reali, trascritte minuziosamente per rivelare le sequenze di azioni sociali che compongono la conversazione. Le unità fondamentali dell'analisi conversazionale includono: il turno, l'unità di base della partecipazione alla conversazione; l'azione comunicativa, l'atto linguistico compiuto

[1] L'etnometodologia è un approccio sociologico che studia i metodi e le pratiche attraverso cui gli individui organizzano e danno senso alla loro vita quotidiana. Si concentra sull'analisi dei "metodi" che le persone usano per rendere conto delle loro azioni e interazioni e per costruire e mantenere l'ordine sociale (Garfinkel, 1967).

all'interno di un turno; la coppia adiacente, la sequenza di due turni correlati, come domanda e risposta (Sacks *et al*., 1974).

La gestione dei turni di parola è il meccanismo cruciale per l'organizzazione della conversazione, in quanto ha lo scopo principale di assicurare l'alternanza ordinata tra chi partecipa alla conversazione; al contempo le sovrapposizioni, le interruzioni e le pause sono fenomeni altamente significativi, che possono rivelare dinamiche di potere, e strategie comunicative, atteggiamenti interpersonali (Sacks *et al.,* 1974) e financo dinamiche di potere (Bazzanella, 1994; Orletti, 2000). Alla nozione formale di turno, gli analisti della conversazione aggiungono quella funzionale di azione comunicativa, con cui si indica un'azione linguistica che un parlante compie all'interno di uno scambio conversazionale attraverso il proferimento di un enunciato[2]. Le azioni comunicative tendono a essere organizzate in sequenze complementari, dette coppie "adiacenti" (Sacks & Schegloff, 1973). Esempi di coppie adiacenti sono i saluti in apertura e chiusura di conversazione, la domanda e la risposta, l'accettazione/il rifiuto di un invito o di un'offerta, la giustificazione/le scuse per un rimprovero. Quando la azione della seconda parte della coppia adiacente soddisfa le aspettative che la azione contenuta nella prima parte attiva, viene detta preferenza o azione preferita. Quando le aspettative sono disattese si parla di dispreferenza o azione dispreferita (Schegloff *et. al*., 1977). Azioni preferite e dispreferite sono strutturalmente diverse: le prime tendono ad essere generalmente più brevi e semplici, e quindi meno marcate sul piano formale (Levinson, 1983), mentre le seconde si caratterizzano per una maggiore lunghezza e complessità, da ricondursi al lavoro rimediale che il parlante fa per riparare la dispreferenza, affinché l'interazione possa concludersi con successo.

2.1. La conversazione istituzionale

La conversazione istituzionale caratterizza gli scambi in cui "gli interlocutori hanno obiettivi conversazionali orientati al raggiungimento di uno scopo (*goal*) o alla realizzazione di un compito (*task*) convenzionalmente associato ad una istituzione" (Drew & Heritage, 1992, p. 22). Un dialogo in un ufficio amministrativo, in un tribunale, in ospedale, in una segreteria, gli incontri di servizio ecc. sono esempi di conversazioni istituzionali (Boxer, 2012). Tipicamente la conversazione istituzionale si caratterizza per essere formale ed asimmetrica ed è sensibile al ruolo sociale: tra i partecipanti allo scambio vi è un agente (*agent*) che rappresenta l'autorità in grado di fornire soluzioni, servizi ecc. a un utente (*client*) che presenta un bisogno di informazioni, di ricevere un servizio ecc. (Heritage, 2004). In una tale situazione comunicativa si realizza un modello di comunicazione asimmetrica, risultato della disuguaglianza nei ruoli sociali e della diversa distribuzione delle conoscenze tra i partecipanti (Boxer, 2012). Questo ambito di studio dell'AC comporta anche una ridefinizione dell'oggetto di interesse: dall'analisi dei turni e delle coppie adiacenti, gli analisti della conversazione passano a studiare i modi in cui chi partecipa alla conversazione interagisce; l'analisi dettagliata di come chi parla interagisce porta alla luce le norme che regolano l'interazione.

Il progetto PIXI (Pragmatics of Italian/English Cross-Cultural Interaction) di Gavioli and Mansfield (1990) è il primo che sposta l'analisi dalla conversazione ordinaria (*everyday talk*) a quella istituzionale (*institutional talk*): mettendo a confronto conversazioni di servizio in italiano e inglese, rileva che la gestione delle dispreferenze varia da cultura a cultura. In italiano, infatti, un'eventuale risposta dispreferita è seguita da un lavoro rimediale post-riparatorio; in inglese la azione dispreferita è preceduta da una spiegazione, ovvero la gestione della dispreferenza avviene con un lavoro rimediale pre-riparatorio.

Sempre in riferimento a conversazioni formali, lo studio di Bazzanella (1994) rileva che interruzioni e sovrapposizioni sono rare in contesti formali: esse sono tipiche piuttosto nei contesti informali, in cui hanno prevalentemente la funzione di conferma, piuttosto che di vera e propria sottrazione del turno di parola al locutore. Secondo la studiosa, la frequenza delle interruzioni e delle sovrapposizioni sarebbe quindi un indicatore dell'alto grado di interazione tra interlocutori che, attraverso questo meccanismo conversazionale, partecipano attivamente alla costruzione del discorso.

Il lavoro di Orletti (2000), infine, mostra che anche in situazioni di evidente asimmetria comunicativa, come le interazioni in classe o tra parlanti nativi e non nativi[3], i partecipanti negoziano attivamente i loro ruoli,

[2] La nozione di azione comunicativa richiama quella di atto linguistico, rispetto a cui, tuttavia, implica una dimensione interattiva e per questo "interpreta meglio l'ordinamento sequenziale e l'avvicendamento con cui gli atti vengono compiuti dagli interlocutori nel corso della "conversazione" (Coulthard, 1977, pp. 101-102).

[3] Questo tipo di interazioni sono considerate "prototipicamente asimmetriche" (Orletti, 2000, p. 111), in quanto il PN detiene conoscenze e competenze linguistiche e culturali ampiamente sviluppate per poter agire attivamente nella comunità di appartenenza, mentre il non nativo no; spesso, l'asimmetria è accentuata dal ruolo che PN e PNN rivestono

sfumando i confini del potere interazionale. Ciò avviene attraverso strategie comunicative che permettono di adattare l'interazione al contesto specifico (come, ad esempio, la scelta di ridurre il proprio spazio discorsivo[4]).

2.2. Le chiusure conversazionali

Tra le fasi in cui è organizzata la conversazione, per il presente studio sono rilevanti le CC. L'uscita da una conversazione è un'attività strutturata tipicamente in due fasi: la pre-chiusura e lo scambio terminale. La pre-chiusura ha la funzione di rendere manifesto che la conversazione si appresta ad essere terminata, attraverso particolari elementi lessicali detti "segnali di pre- chiusura" (Sacks & Schegloff, 1973, p. 303), come ad es. *bene, allora, ok* ecc*.* Una volta ratificato l'accordo di terminare la conversazione si può procedere alla vera e propria fase di chiusura, tipicamente realizzata con la formulazione dei saluti, in coppie adiacenti (1):

(1) 1 A: *Okay*
2 B: *Okay*
3 A: *Bye, bye*
4 B: *Bye*.
(Schegloff & Sacks, 1973: 317)

Spesso i segnali di pre-chiusura sono organizzati in maniera ridondante in più di una coppia adiacente mediante la ripetizione di azioni comunicative (2):

(2) A: *… and, uh, uh, we're gonna see if we can'uh tie in our plans a little better.*
B: *ok// fine*
A: *Alright?*
B: *Right*
A: *Okay, boy*
B: *okay*
A: *bye// bye*
B: *g'night*
(Sacks & Schegloff, 1973: 307)

Questo fenomeno di ridondanza trova ragione nel fatto che la sequenza conclusiva della conversazione può avere luogo solo quando gli interlocutori si siano mutualmente mostrati d'accordo sul non introdurre ulteriori argomenti (Sacks & Schegloff, 1973). Infatti, proprio dopo la fase di pre-chiusura, conversazionalmente si apre uno "spazio di opportunità" (Button, 1987, p. 133), in cui il parlante, tramite un segnale di contrasto, può introdurre un argomento non menzionato prima, ma comunque pertinente allo scambio (*unmentioned mentionable*, Sacks & Schegloff, 1973, p. 303):

(3) A: *ok, thanks*
B: *ok, dear*
A: *OH, BY THE WAY, I would just like to tell you that I LIKE the new program I have been listening to for a while, that's UH//*
B: *good girl*
(Sacks & Schegloff, 1973: 327)

Per chiudere adeguatamente una conversazione, dunque, è necessario sia saper utilizzare gli adeguati

nell'interazione: di dominanza istituzionale il nativo (nei vari ruoli amministrativi, solidali, assistenziali, educativi, ecc.), di subordinazione il non nativo (spesso, nella condizione di bisogno linguistico, assistenziale, sanitario, ecc.).

[4] Allo studio della negoziazione dello spazio conversazionale e in particolare al fenomeno delle interruzioni si è dedicato Bilmes (1997), analizzando le strategie attraverso cui i parlanti segnalano l'interruzione e rivendicano i propri diritti di parola. L'autore si concentra sui segnali verbali, come ad esempio "un minuto" oppure "lasciami finire" e non verbali (ad es. aumento del volume), impiegati per indicare un'interruzione subita. Al contempo, Blimes evidenzia come i parlanti che intervengono possano segnalare la propria interruzione come azione intenzionale, rivelando così che l'interruzione è un'azione negoziata tra i parlanti.

segnali per comunicare le proprie intenzioni, sia saper riconoscere il valore di un determinato segnale per adeguare il proprio comportamento allo scambio e, in ultimo, ma non per importanza, sapere quali luoghi della sequenza sono eventualmente deputati al rilancio della conversazione.

La mancata conoscenza delle norme pragmatiche delle CC espone facilmente chi parla a un fallimento pragmatico[5] (Aston, 1995; Bardovi-Harlig, 1991). Questo aspetto è tanto più sensibile quando si parla in una lingua straniera. Se infatti gli studi sulle CC da una parte hanno dimostrato che esse sono universali, dall'altra la struttura della sequenza varia da lingua a lingua e da cultura a cultura: ad esempio, basti pensare che, mentre in molte delle lingue occidentali è necessario realizzare foneticamente i segnali di chiusura[6], in lingue come il nepalese, al contrario, è adeguato concludere un incontro di servizio solo con il ringraziamento seguito dal silenzio, senza lo scambio terminale di saluti (Bardovi-Harlig & Zoltan, 1991).

Per quanto riguarda l'italiano, gli studi sulle CC evidenziano da una parte il ruolo del ringraziamento e dall'altra la variabilità strutturale delle CC in scambi istituzionali o di servizio.

Lo studio di Zorzi (1990), confrontando conversazioni di servizio in italiano e inglese, rileva che il ringraziamento nelle CC svolge un ruolo cruciale nel ratificare il completamento del lavoro di riparazione, specialmente a seguito di sequenze dispreferite tra commessi e clienti. Tuttavia, è importante notare che l'analisi si concentra su una specifica sequenza di riparazione che precede la chiusura, piuttosto che sulla chiusura stessa. La struttura di queste sequenze dispreferite varia significativamente tra le due lingue. In italiano, una risposta dispreferita viene tipicamente formulata immediatamente dal commesso, seguita da un'azione riparatoria successiva. Al contrario, in inglese, il commesso tende a introdurre la risposta dispreferita con una spiegazione preliminare, gestendo la dispreferenza attraverso un'azione riparatoria preventiva. Questo evidenzia una ricerca comune, da parte dei parlanti di entrambe le lingue, di una sequenza preferita, sebbene con strategie conversazionali differenti. Zorzi (1990, p. 23) sottolinea che la chiusura di un incontro è possibile solo dopo che gli interlocutori hanno raggiunto una sequenza preferita, risolvendo i "problemi transazionali" come l'offerta delle informazioni richieste o la negoziazione di soluzioni alternative accettabili. In altre parole, la chiusura avviene quando le aspettative conversazionali sono soddisfatte, portando alla ratificazione dell'incontro. L'assenza di tale risoluzione può condurre a un fallimento sia sul piano transazionale (il richiedente non ottiene ciò che desidera) sia su quello conversazionale (mancanza di elementi chiave nella chiusura, come ringraziamenti e saluti).

Aston (1995) sostiene invece che, oltre alla gestione della dispreferenza, il ringraziamento fa parte di un processo di negoziazione locale[7] che coinvolge l'allineamento referenziale e di ruolo. In particolare, lo studioso individua che nelle sequenze di chiusura i parlanti hanno due necessità principali: rendere reciprocamente manifesto di essere d'accordo sui contenuti affrontati nello scambio e darsi conferma reciproca dei propri ruoli sociali. Il primo aspetto è chiamato allineamento referenziale *(referential alignment*), mentre il secondo allineamento al ruolo sociale (*role alignment*). Quando gli interlocutori ritengono di aver sufficientemente negoziato questi due aspetti, la conversazione può essere chiusa con successo.

Auer, Couper-Kuhlen & Müller (1999) mettono in discussione la struttura canonica del CC proposta da Sacks & Schegloff (1973), trovando che la forma più ricorrente in italiano sembra essere una variante estesa della struttura minima. Fele (1999) mostra che il ringraziamento da solo può concludere gli incontri di servizio, mentre De Stefani (2006) analizza i CC nelle interazioni al supermercato, rilevando che le sequenze dispreferite portano a chiusure più complesse. Nel complesso, gli studi italiani evidenziano l'importanza del ringraziamento nelle CC e i fattori di gestione locale che ne influenzano la struttura e la funzione.

3. Obiettivi dello studio e criteri di analisi

Poiché gli studi di AC dimostrano che la chiusura di una conversazione richiede una sequenza di azioni e di strategie interazionali che rendano manifesto ai partecipanti che si sta transitando verso la fine della

[5] Il fallimento pragmatico si verifica quando un parlante, pur utilizzando una lingua grammaticalmente corretta, non riesce a comunicare efficacemente l'intenzione desiderata a causa di una violazione delle norme sociolinguistiche o delle aspettative culturali dell'interlocutore (Thomas, 1983).

[6] Come ad esempio in inglese, lingua in cui smettere di parlare e rimanere in silenzio non è un modo adeguato di chiudere la conversazione, perché il silenzio dopo un turno di parlato non è un segnale di chiusura, ma indica il rifiuto di parlare (Button, 1987; Sacks, 1992; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973).

[7] Le conversazioni hanno due livelli di organizzazione: un sistema di gestione locale e un'organizzazione generale. Un esempio di sequenze della conversazione che concorrono alla sua organizzazione generale sono le aperture e le chiusure. Tra i meccanismi di gestione locale della conversazione, invece, si annovera, ad esempio, il *turn-taking* (Levinson, 1983).

conversazione ed evidenziano che è necessario che chi apprende una lingua straniera sia consapevole di come sono organizzate le CC nella lingua target per non incorrere in fallimenti pragmatici, il presente studio vuole rispondere alle seguenti domande di ricerca:

- quali segnali di pre-chiusura sono impiegati da studenti universitari PN di italiano e quali dai PNN?
- Con quale frequenza i PN e i PNN avviano la sequenza di chiusura nel colloquio con un o una docente?
- Con quante e quali azioni conversazionali si sviluppa la chiusura?
- Chi avvia lo scambio terminale? Qual è la sua struttura?
- Da che cosa dipende la lunghezza delle CC nei PN e nei PNN?

Nel presente studio risultano rilevanti le nozioni strutturali inerenti alle sequenze che costituiscono la sequenza di chiusura, ovvero la fase di pre-chiusura (PC), gli spazi di opportunità che qui vengono chiamati turni di transizione (TT) e lo scambio terminale (ST); salienti risultano anche le categorie di analisi, quali allineamento referenziale e al ruolo sociale.

Nel dettaglio, si specifica che per le PC si analizza chi avvia la sequenza e quali espressioni vengono scelte come segnali di apertura di questa sequenza. Si osserva chi avvia la sequenza perché si ipotizza che le CC siano sensibili al ruolo sociale degli interlocutori: in uno scambio asimmetrico c'è, infatti, una distribuzione complementare di diritti e doveri sul piano conversazionale (Marcarino, 2001, *inter alia,* per una sintesi delle caratteristiche della conversazione asimmetrica). Questa distribuzione avviene perché ogni interazione è modulata da un *frame*, cioè da una cornice cognitiva in base alla quale i parlanti orientano azioni linguistiche e non (Goffman, 1974). Il colloquio con il docente è un momento del discorso accademico in cui l'interazione tra studente e docente è assimilabile agli incontri istituzionali (Boxer, 2002), cioè a quelle interazioni asimmetriche in cui c'è un'autorità preposta a soddisfare bisogni o a indicare norme a chi la interpella. Nel colloquio con il docente universitario, lo studente si rivolge al docente per bisogni legati allo studio o alle procedure amministrative; in tal senso è dunque fruitore di un servizio che il professore per ruolo istituzionale garantisce. Dato questo *frame,* si ipotizza quindi che lo studente, in quanto "fruitore del servizio", sia detentore del diritto di chiudere lo scambio più del professore, su cui pesa maggiormente il dovere di essere disponibile all'ascolto e al confronto, per il ruolo istituzionale ricoperto. Si ritiene inoltre che la CC che viene avviata in linea con il ruolo sociale e con la distribuzione dei diritti/doveri comunicativi appena delineata, nel contesto del colloquio con il professore, sia un'azione preferita che linearmente porta all'uscita dalla conversazione; al contrario si ipotizza che, se la se CC è avviata da chi ha meno il "diritto conversazionale" di farlo, la sequenza avrà caratteristiche strutturali tipiche di un'azione dispreferita, quali maggior lunghezza e lavoro rimediale.

Per quanto riguarda i turni di transizione, invece, si osserva con quali azioni conversazionali vengano essi realizzati e in quanti turni. Analizzare quali siano le azioni conversazionali fatte per concludere la conversazione è rilevante dal punto di vista interlinguistico, per verificare se le scelte dei PN e dei PNN siano assimilabili oppure no. Osservare con quanti turni venga realizzata la sequenza è rilevante per osservare come i PN e i PNN organizzino la sequenza dei turni di transizione, importante per un'uscita coordinata dallo scambio.

Infine, per lo scambio terminale si osserva come venga realizzato (se tramite coppie adiacenti, se attraverso i saluti o se attraverso altri atti linguistici, come ad esempio i ringraziamenti, ecc.) e con quali espressioni linguistiche, per verificare se queste siano adeguate al *tenor* della conversazione.

3.1. La raccolta dei dati

Per gli scopi della presente ricerca, è stato analizzato un campione di interazioni comunicative tra studenti universitari italofoni e internazionali e i loro docenti. I dati sono registrazioni audio fatte presso l'Università di Roma Tre nel 2017. Per quanto riguarda i PN, le registrazioni sono state fatte durante l'orario di ricevimento di alcune docenti del Dipartimento di Lingue e Culture Straniere: il campione è composto da 15 colloqui spontanei, pari a 197 minuti. Per raccogliere le produzioni orali dei PNN, invece, sono stati proposti agli studenti dei *role-play* aperti e spontanei[8], nei quali viene simulato il colloquio con un professore

[8] Con 'aperto' si intende un *role-play* strutturato su una situazione stimolo iniziale che lascia libertà al parlante di costruire l'andamento della conversazione, senza limiti di tempo o di turni (Nuzzo & Gauci, 2012). Con 'spontaneo' si indica qui un tipo di *role-play* che ha consentito allo studente di mantenere la propria identità (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Il *role-play* spontaneo quindi ovvia a quella criticità propria delle tracce generaliste, in cui un apprendente assume un ruolo fittizio lontano dalla propria esperienza e dai propri scopi comunicativi: l'interpretazione di un ruolo diverso dalla propria identità, infatti, è stato dimostrato che inficia la naturalezza del dato linguistico (Kasper, 2000). La conversazione ottenuta quindi è

universitario. Il canovaccio proposto ai PNN prevede che lo studente mantenga il proprio ruolo e un intervistatore interpreti il ruolo del docente. Le situazioni stimolo sono state create a partire da situazioni reali individuate nel campione dei dialoghi spontanei dei PN: in questo modo la traccia del *role-play* riproduce non solo un compito comunicativo reale in una situazione verosimile, ma anche gli scopi comunicativi tipici degli studenti universitari. Il campione dei PNN è dunque composto da 147 conversazioni registrate audio, pari a 192 minuti di parlato.

I dati sono stati trascritti ortograficamente secondo il sistema CHAT[9] (McWhinney, 2000) e codificati mediante software specializzato, che ha consentito un'analisi quantitativa approfondita.

3.2. I soggetti dello studio

I soggetti che hanno partecipato allo studio sono 15 studenti PN (14 donne e 1 uomo), iscritti al corso di laurea triennale in Lingue e Mediazione Interculturale presso l'Università Roma Tre, di età compresa tra i 19 e 28 anni. Tale campione, pertanto, riflette principalmente la popolazione studentesca delle facoltà umanistiche con indirizzo linguistico.

Il campione di studenti PNN è composto da 147 studenti internazionali presenti nell'Università di Roma Tre in quanto aderenti a vari programmi di mobilità, tra cui Erasmus, accordi bilaterali, Marco Polo e Turandot. La maggior parte frequenta un corso di italiano L2 presso il Centro Linguistico di Ateneo (CLA) dell'Università Roma Tre, con livelli di competenza linguistica compresi tra A2 e C1, determinati tramite test di piazzamento. Gli studenti PNN, prevalentemente di età compresa tra i 19 e i 26 anni, provengono da diversi paesi europei (Spagna, Germania, Francia) ed extra-europei (Brasile, Nord Africa, Cina), con una prevalenza di lingue prime quali spagnolo, francese e tedesco. Il campione è prevalentemente femminile (98 donne e 47 uomini) e riflette le tendenze statistiche degli studenti in mobilità internazionale in Italia, come evidenziato da Bettini *et al*. (2015)[10].

4. Analisi e risultati

Si riportano in successione i dati risultanti dall'analisi del campione dei colloqui degli studenti PN (§ 4.1) e quelli dei PNN (§ 4.2).

4.1. Le chiusure conversazionali in italiano L1

Per quanto riguarda l'analisi delle pre-chiusure nel campione dei dialoghi dei PN, in prima battuta si osserva che sono prevalentemente gli studenti ad avviare la sequenza di chiusura (Tabella 1):

Tabella 1
Avvio delle PC nei dialoghi degli studenti PN

Avvio delle sequenze di chiusura nei dialoghi dei pn		
Studente	**Docente**	**Tot.**
61,5% (8)	38,5% (5)	100% (13)

ciò che più si avvicina al parlato spontaneo, perché *il role-play*, così come è stato disegnato per elicitarla, in primo luogo permette al PNN di mantenere la propria identità reale, in secondo luogo è inerente a compiti comunicativi che verosimilmente lo studente affronta all'università e, infine, richiede la pianificazione on line come nel parlato spontaneo.

[9] https://talkbank.org/0info/manuals/CHAT.pdf

[10] Al fine di ottenere dati il più possibile autentici e spontanei, il reclutamento dei partecipanti è stato differenziato tra PN e PNN. Per il gruppo dei PN, la raccolta dati del gruppo dei PN è avvenuta precedentemente a quella dei PNN, fino al raggiungimento circa 200 minuti di parlato, ritenuti sufficienti per l'analisi. Tuttavia, la raccolta dati per il gruppo PNN ha presentato sfide logistiche significative: l'assenza di studenti internazionali durante gli orari di ricevimento dei docenti ha, infatti, reso impraticabile l'utilizzo della stessa metodologia.

Si è reso dunque necessario adottare un approccio alternativo, considerato il più vicino possibile al parlato spontaneo: l'elicitazione dei dati tramite *role-play* aperti e guidati, come descritto nel paragrafo 3.1. Il reclutamento dei PNN è pertanto avvenuto presso il Centro Linguistico di Ateneo, e le tracce per i *role-play* sono state elaborate a partire da interazioni reali osservate nel campione dei PN. Sebbene questa variazione metodologica abbia portato a una certa eterogeneità nel campione, è fondamentale sottolineare che l'obiettivo primario dello studio rimane il confronto delle abitudini linguistiche tra PN e PNN. I dati dei PN hanno infatti primariamente la funzione di termine di paragone, per analizzare le differenze e le somiglianze nei modelli di interazione rispetto ai PNN. Pur riconoscendo le variazioni nella raccolta dei dati, si è cercato di minimizzarne l'influenza attraverso un'attenta progettazione dello studio e una chiara definizione degli obiettivi comparativi, affinché fosse possibile condure l'analisi interlinguistica tra PN e PNN per osservare scelte linguistiche reali.

Nell'interazione con lo studente, il professore, in base al proprio ruolo istituzionale, è a disposizione dello studente e interagisce in funzione dei bisogni di quest'ultimo. Nella fase di uscita dalla conversazione, dunque, il docente in virtù del suo ruolo tende a non avviare la sequenza di chiusura, bensì a lasciare l'opportunità di farlo allo studente. In base al *set* sociopragmatico che il rapporto studente-docente in ambito universitario proietta (Tracy & Carjuzaa, 1993)[11] , si può ritenere che l'avvio della sequenza di chiusura da parte degli studenti sia l'azione comunicativa preferita. Nei casi in cui la CC non è avviata da uno studente, si assiste, infatti, a un'espansione della sequenza di chiusura attraverso l'introduzione di nuovi argomenti, che creano il presupposto per azioni rimediali[12], come si può vedere nell'estratto riportato qui di seguito (es. 4):

(4)
1. D: Mi sa che la devo lasciare perché mi sa che ci sono un po' di persone che aspettano. C'è tutto qui, questo per esempio. Per quello se lo vuole lo posso prestare, per esempio, però faccia una cosa insomma un pochino sistematica magari e:hm cercando: su.
2. V: Ah e poi qui volevo chiederle riguardo alla, al titolo, come vogliamo:? Perché cioè io ho fatto la domanda alla preliminare, però quella.>
3. D: <Adesso ci pensiamo, adesso al titolo ci pensiamo un attimo con calma, io sono negata ai titoli eh.
4. V: Ok.
5. D: Tenga presente questo, quindi se lo trova lei un titolo, è meglio, però insomma lo troveremo, va bene?
6. V: Allora e questo aspetti.>
7. D: <Però potrebbe essere "saper più lingue, definizioni" cioè.>
8. V: "Confronto tra definizioni".
9. D: # Sì, se può intanto far entrare quella dopo.

V: Posso prendere anche questo, o:? # Grazie, arrivederci, arrivederci.

Nell'es. (4), la PC viene avviata dal professore, sotto l'urgenza di ricevere gli altri studenti in fila per il ricevimento. Il fatto che l'avvio della chiusura da parte del professore, nella situazione specifica del colloquio, possa considerarsi sul piano conversazionale un'azione dispreferita è visibile proprio nella organizzazione della sequenza: la studentessa non risponde con l'azione preferita di ratificare l'avvio della chiusura, ma inserisce, in maniera interruttiva violando anche le norme del *turn-taking*,, un altro *topic* nella conversazione che ritarda l'uscita dalla conversazione; questa infatti si conclude dopo otto turni, con uno scambio finale unilaterale, in cui la studentessa espleta insieme il rituale di ringraziamento e dei saluti.

Per quanto riguarda la PC, si osservano anche quali sono le espressioni che vengono impiegate dagli studenti PN come segnali che comunicano l'intenzione di avviarsi verso la fine dello scambio (Tabella 2):

Tabella 2
Segnali di pre-chiusura utilizzati dagli studenti PN nelle PC

Segnali	Percentuale	Tot
Va benissimo /va bene	56,25%	(18)
Perfetto	18,75%	(6)
Ok / ok ok	12,50%	(4)
Altro	12,50%	(4)
Tot.	100%	(32)

[11] Tracy e Carjuzaa (1993), sulla scia del modello dei *Face Threatening Acts* di Brown e Levinson (1987), chiamano la percezione dello *status* accademico faccia istituzionale e la percezione delle abilità e competenze faccia intellettuale[11]. Nella loro analisi, riscontrano che l'interazione orale accademica è caratterizzata da una costante ricerca di equilibrio tra la volontà di ottenere un riscontro positivo sulle capacità intellettuali e la volontà di non apparire saccenti e arroganti, da parte di tutti i membri accademici, di qualsiasi grado gerarchico (studenti, laureati, dottorandi, ricercatori, professori associati e ordinari). Questi tratti sociopragmatici che caratterizzano il rapporto tra studenti universitari e professori hanno delle ricadute pragmalinguistiche e conversazionali. Il colloquio tra docente e studente, infatti, sembra essere caratterizzato da una distribuzione degli atti linguistici (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990), e in ottica conversazionale è stato rilevato che anche la distribuzione dei tipi di azioni comunicative (Tracy & Carjuzaa, 1993) e della quantità di parlato e di silenzio riflette l'asimmetria dei ruoli sociali (Boxer & Cortes-Conde,1997; Orletti, 2000).

[12] "Rimediale" rispetto all'azione di chiudere la conversazione prima che si compia soddisfacimento dei bisogni dello studente.

Dai risultati emerge che non ci sia una grande varietà nella scelta di espressioni che segnalano l'avvio della sequenza di PC. L'espressione di gran lunga più utilizzata è *va bene*, compresa la sua variante con il superlativo *va benissimo*; seguono l'espressione *perfetto* e il segnale discorsivo *ok*, nella sua forma singola o reduplicata *ok ok*. Oltre alla poca varietà delle espressioni, si nota anche che i segnali di pre-chiusura impiegati dai PN si caratterizzano per essere scelte di registro tendenzialmente informale: l'uso del superlativo è infatti riconducibile al registro colloquiale (Lindbladh, 2015)[13], come anche quello dell'aggettivo *perfetto,* utilizzato come segnale discorsivo di conferma; l'impiego di *ok* è proprio delle varietà informali.

Per quanto riguarda l'analisi dei turni di transizione, si rileva la tendenza preponderante tra i PN a strutturare la CC inserendo una sequenza di turni di transizione (Tabella 3):

Tabella 3
Percentuale dei TT nelle CC degli studenti PN

Segnali	Percentuale	Tot
CC con turni di transizione	85%	(11)
CC senza turni di transizione	15%	(2)
Tot.	100%	(13)

Dai dati emerge che le sequenze di turni di transizione individuate vengono sviluppate dai PN prevalentemente per avere la conferma reciproca della chiusura della conversazione, come mostra l'esempio qui di seguito (5):

(5)
1. A: Ok, va benissimo. Allora giusto il tempo di capire un po' come funziona>
2. D: <Sì, faccia un po' di esperimenti.
3. A: Allora la ringrazio professoressa, alla prossima volta.>
4. D: <Arrivederci.
5. A: Arrivederci.

In (5**Errore. L'origine riferimento non è stata trovata.**), i TT servono per menzionare e chiudere definitivamente l'ultimo argomento trattato nel dialogo: lo studente avvia la CC con i segnali di pre-chiusura *ok, va benissimo* seguiti da un'espressione di commiato che serve a porre le condizioni per un futuro contatto con la docente (*giusto il tempo di capire un po' come funziona*); la professoressa conferma (*sì. Faccia un po' di esperimenti*) e lo studente ringrazia e saluta (*grazie mille, professoressa. Alla prossima volta.*). A questo punto ai due interlocutori è chiaro che non ci siano altri argomenti di cui parlare e viene così formulato lo scambio terminale (D: *<Arrivederci*. A: *Arrivederci.*). Le azioni fatte in questi TT hanno una funzione sostanziale nell'economia globale della conversazione: per tutto lo scambio la docente e lo studente parlano lungamente di come impostare una matrice di calcolo per l'analisi di dati linguistici; l'argomento richiede lunghe sequenze espositive, descrittive e diverse sequenze di negoziazione del significato. Nel momento del congedo, dunque, la funzione dei turni di transizione, pur nella loro semplicità, non è solo fatica (Sacks & Schelegoff, 1973), ma necessaria agli interlocutori per confermare la reciproca comprensione su tutto quello che è stato detto, ovvero per il *referential alignment* (Aston, 1995). Attraverso questo semplice esempio si osserva che la sequenza funziona come una sorta di macro-atto interazionale[14] in cui gli interlocutori co-costruiscono una chiusura coordinata della conversazione, cercando sia concludere tutti gli argomenti di cui hanno parlato sia di mantenere i rapporti di cortesia.

Si dà anche il caso in cui gli studenti sfruttino la pre-chiusura come "spazio di opportunità" (Button, 1987) per uscire momentaneamente dalla sequenza di chiusura e introdurre nuovo materiale topicale (es. 6):

[13] Lindbladh (2015) rileva che nelle pre-chiusure il segnale utilizzato prevalentemente dai parlanti nativi di italiano è *va bene* (o *va be'*). Già Bazzanella (2001) categorizza *va bene* tra i segnali discorsivi che sono usati nella sequenza conclusiva della conversazione, sia come segnali di risposta che come segnali di pre-chiusura. Jafrancesco (2015) registra che *va bene* è il segnale discorsivo d'elezione per cedere il turno anche per i parlanti di italiano L2. Nel corpus analizzato da Lindbladh (2015) tutte le chiusure sono avviate da *va bene,* mentre solo due dal superlativo *va benissimo* e solamente due non contengono né *va bene* né sue forme alterate o derivate. Lindbladh (2015, pp. 276-277) indica che "le due chiusure che non contengono nessuna di queste forme (*va bene, va benissimo, va be'; nda*) si trovano in contesti formali nei quali la sequenza conclusiva è breve, e contengono frasi pre-conclusive come *niente, non importa, grazie* e *la ringrazio*". La studiosa, quindi, deduce che nelle chiusure conversazionali formali non sia d'uso impiegare i segnali discorsivi quali *va bene* e simili.

[14] Riley (1979) distingue tra atto illocutivo e atto interattivo e annovera le sequenze di chiusura tra gli atti interattivi.

(6)
1. T: <Ok va bene. E: dovrebbe essere tutto. Grazie. # E invece la registrazione non la devo inviare, solo trascrivere, giusto?
2. D: # Bella domanda, ah ah, non ci ho pensato, però, in realtà, forse quella me la potreste inviare via mail, perché no?
3. T: Ok, sì, va bene.
4. D: Se riuscite, insomma, sì, magari mando su questo se mi ricordo mando una mail per <per >// dirlo anche agli altri.
5. T: Va bene. # Grazie, arrivederci.
6. D: Arrivederci

Rilanciare lo scambio dopo il segnale di pre-chiusura, oltre a contravvenire alle norme che regolano la chiusura di un'interazione, rallentandone la sua progressività, in una relazione asimmetrica si può leggere anche come un compito linguistico di non semplice realizzazione, poiché minaccia la faccia negativa (Brown & Levinson, 1987) dell'interlocutore, in quanto limita la sua libertà di chiudere lo scambio e lo impegna a continuare l'interazione. In (6), ad esempio, la studentessa utilizza la sequenza per inserire una nuova richiesta, introdotta dal segnale di contrasto (*e invece*); nel fare questo, cerca tuttavia di rendere manifesta la sua intenzione di chiudere la conversazione tramite l'uso di molteplici segnali di pre-chiusura e molteplici atti di ringraziamento, entrambi ripetuti in più turni *(Ok, va bene. E: dovrebbe essere tutto; Ok, sì, va bene*), sia precedenti, sia successivi all'atto di richiesta. Tramite questa organizzazione della sequenza, la studentessa, dunque, in maniera ridondante comunica alla propria interlocutrice che, pur aggiungendo un ulteriore argomento, sarà breve e presto avverrà la chiusura della conversazione.

Passando all'analisi delle azioni comunicative realizzate per la gestione locale delle CC, risulta che gli studenti PN ne facciano cinque: ringraziare, confermare, chiudere l'ultimo argomento, blandire e congedarsi (Tabella 4):

Tabella 4
Azioni nei TT nei colloqui dei PN

Azioni	Percentuale	Tot
Ringraziare	44%	(15)
Confermare	27%	(9)
Chiudere UA	14%	(5)
Blandire	6%	(2)
Richiedere	6%	(2)
Congedarsi	3%	(1)
Tot.	100%	(36)

Ringraziare è la azione più frequente, presente nel 44% dei casi, e talvolta è presente all'interno della stessa sequenza con occorrenze multiple (es. 7). Segue la conferma di quanto detto dal professore, riguardo a un argomento o ad accordi (es. 8). Di più bassa frequenza sono invece i casi in cui gli studenti PN scelgono di chiudere l'ultimo argomento trattato (14% dei casi; es. 9)[15]. Infine, in due soli casi ciascuno, si rintracciano azioni per blandire il docente (es. 10). In un solo caso una studentessa si congeda esplicitando l'urgenza ad andarsene (11).

(7)
1. M: <Ok, ok grazie mille.
2. D: Va bene.
3. M: Perfetto, grazie.
4. D: Non dimentichi il manuale.
5. M: Ah no, sì # va bene.
6. D: Va bene? Ci vediamo dopo.
7. M: Sì ci vediamo tra poco, sì, grazie.

[15] Questa azione, infatti, è fatta prevalentemente dal professore. In questo studio, le azioni del professore non sono state analizzate per la diversità del materiale raccolto per i PN e per i PNN.

(8) 1. D: <E intanto se riesce a esplorare un po' queste cose nei ritagli, eh.>
2. M: <Certo.

(9) 1. D: Sì, poi stereotipo qui proprio quest'idea del del agganciare molto l'immagine: ehm tradizionale a tutta a tutta la realtà di que:l que:l di quel luogo quindi, sarà sì, un elemento di cultura non tutti si vestiranno così *castillan*, insomma.>
2. V: <No, no quindi, ehm, erano questi i miei dubbi.

(10) 3. D: <Focalizza meglio e l'indice. Va bene?
4. S: Perfetto, la ringrazio, sempre gentile.>

(11) 1. F: Grazie professoressa. Ora scappo.>

Complessivamente, dunque, all'interno dei turni di TT si osserva che gli studenti PN scelgano di fare azioni collaborative a vantaggio della cortesia.

Per quanto riguarda la fase di transizione, dall'analisi dei dati risulta che essa viene realizzata prevalentemente in più turni, nei quali si distribuiscono le varie azioni (Tabella 5).

Tabella 5
Numero dei TT nei colloqui dei PN

Turni di transizione	Percentuale	Tot
Più turni di transizione	85%	(9)
Unico turno di transizione	15%	(2)
Tot.	100%	(11)

La distribuzione delle azioni su più turni permette di saggiare progressivamente la disponibilità dell'interlocutore a chiudere lo scambio o, *mutatis mutandis*, di verificare che non ci siano ulteriori argomenti di cui parlare, e in ultima analisi, ad evitare un commiato brusco. Nell'esempio (12) qui di seguito, questo meccanismo si osserva bene:

(12) 1. M: <Ok, ok grazie mille.
2. D: Va bene.
3. M: Perfetto, grazie.
4. D: Non dimentichi il manuale.
5. M: Ah no, sì # va bene.
6. D: Va bene? Ci vediamo dopo.
7. M: Sì ci vediamo tra poco, sì, grazie. Arrivederci.
8. D: Arrivederci.
9. M: Arrivederci.

L'esempio (12) è estratto da un lungo colloquio, in cui la studentessa chiede spiegazioni su una esercitazione d'esame. Si nota, infatti che la studentessa e la professoressa fanno una serie di azioni per confermare l'un l'altra che non ci sono altri argomenti in sospeso e transitare verso la chiusura finale (M: *<Ok, ok grazie mille.* D: *Va bene*. M: *Perfetto, grazie*.; D: *Va bene? Ci vediamo dopo*. M: *Sì ci vediamo tra poco, sì, grazie*). Più nel dettaglio, si nota che la professoressa fa azioni di controllo, mentre la studentessa conferma e ringrazia. Sembra dunque che le interlocutrici, a fronte della lunga conversazione avuta, sentano il bisogno di coordinarsi su un'uscita non brusca, prima di terminare definitivamente lo scambio.

Infine, in merito allo scambio terminale, il risultato è di assoluta uniformità: nel 100% dei casi il saluto finale è espresso con la formula di saluto *arrivederci*, realizzata nella maggior parte dei casi all'interno di una coppia adiacente (Tabella 6):

Tabella 6
ST nei colloqui dei PN

Scambio terminale	Percentuale	Tot
Scambio terminale realizzato tramite coppia adiacente	85%	(11)
Scambio terminale mutilo	16,75%	(2)
Scambio terminale non realizzato	1,25%	(1)
Tot.	100%	(13)

In tutti e due i casi di scambio terminale mutilo, è il professore che non risponde al saluto, come nell'esempio (13):

(13) 1. D: # Sì, se può intanto far entrare quella dopo.
2. V: Posso prendere anche questo, o:? # Grazie, arrivederci, arrivederci.

4.2. Le chiusure conversazionali in italiano L2

Anche nel campione dei dialoghi degli studenti PNN, rispetto all'analisi degli avvii delle PC, sono gli prevalentemente gli studenti a iniziare la sequenza (Tabella 7):

Tabella 7
Avvio delle pre-chiusure nei dialoghi dei PNN

Studente	Docente	Tot.
85% (112)	15% (20)	100% (132)

Le sequenze avviate dagli studenti (14) e quelle avviate dall'intervistatore nel ruolo del docente (15) sono simili per lunghezza e struttura:

(14) 1. S: ah, d'accordo, perfetto. Grazie a lei.
2. D: prego, allora aspetto la sua e-mail.
3. S: ok. grazie a lei.
4. D: Arrivederci.
5. S: d'accordo.

(15) 1. D: va bene. Allora, ecco il libro. Mi raccomando fra dieci giorni però me lo riporti, perché è comunque un libro che mi serve.
2. S: va bene, perfetto.
3. D: va bene, arrivederci.
4. S: grazie, ciao.
5. D: Arrivederci.

In entrambi i casi, è infatti possibile osservare che la struttura della CC è molto simile e non subisce variazioni al cambiare dell'interlocutore che l'avvia. Nei colloqui dei PNN, dunque non emerge, almeno sistematicamente, che la lunghezza della CC dipende da chi avvia la sequenza.

Per quanto riguarda l'analisi delle espressioni che vengono impiegate come segnali di PC, si rileva una considerevole varietà, tuttavia, talune forme hanno una frequenza d'uso molto bassa; per rendere più agevole la fruizione dei dati, è parso dunque opportuno aggregare le varie espressioni individuate nel campione in base alla loro funzione svolta sul piano testuale. Dallo spoglio dei dati è emerso che le espressioni di PC sono ascrivibili alle categorie delle marche di accordo e dei demarcativi[16] (Tabella 8):

[16] Le marche di accordo sono elementi attraverso i quali il locutore ricerca un riscontro, in termini di comprensione e/o compiacenza, da parte del destinatario. Sono spesso utilizzati come strumento di *tuning* con l'interlocutore (*va bene? giusto? Vero?)*. I demarcativi sono segnali discorsivi che servono ad articolare e delimitare le parti del discorso (*allora, poi, dunque, ecc.*). Si *cfr.* Bazzanella (1995).

Tabella 8
Segnali di pre-chiusura utilizzati dagli studenti PNN nelle PC

Marche/Demarcativi	Segnali		Percentuale	Tot
Marche di accordo 88,80% (223)	Va bene / benissimo		52,60%	(132)
	Ok		29,00%	(73)
	Perfetto		6,40%	(16)
	D'accordo		0,40%	(1)
	Vale		0,40%	(1)
Demarcativi 11,20% (28)	(Ho) capito		4,78%	(12)
	Allora		3,60%	(9)
	È tutto		1,60%	(4)
	Chiaro		0,80%	(2)
		Terminato	0,40%	(1)
		Aggiornato	0,40%	(1)
	Tot.		100%	(251)

L'espressione di gran lunga più utilizzata è *va bene*, insieme alla sua variante *va benissimo*, attestata nel 52,60% dei casi; seguono *OK*, che ha una frequenza d'uso del 29%, e *perfetto*, con una frequenza d'uso del 6,4%. Le altre espressioni occorrono sporadicamente, con percentuali d'uso al di sotto del 5%.

Sul piano della variabilità del registro, anche le scelte dei PNN si mostrano orientate verso il registro colloquiale: come tra i PN, per confermare si riscontra l'uso del superlativo *va benissimo*, l'uso di *ok* e dell'aggettivo *perfetto*, propri delle varietà informali.

Per segnalare la PC idiosincratico è l'uso di *ho capito*, *allora* e del forestierismo *vale*, trasferito dalla L1. In particolare, *allora* viene utilizzato con la funzione di conferire valore conclusivo alla sequenza che introduce (16; 17):

(16)
1. S: **allora** così va bene. Grazie.
2. D: va bene, niente, aspetto tutti i documenti allora.
3. S: grazie, professore.
4. D: arrivederci.

(17)
1. D: Va bene.
2. S: Ehm, ehm, **allora** io non ho domande.
3. D: Va bene, allora arrivederci.
4. S: Arrivederci.

Questa funzione di *allora* è già stata registrata in studi precedenti sull'uso dei segnali discorsivi da parte di apprendenti di italiano L2: la letteratura è infatti concorde nel registrare che *allora* è uno dei connettivi maggiormente utilizzati dagli apprendenti con molteplici funzioni, tra cui quella conclusiva che emerge già nelle interlingue iniziali (Bazzanella *et al.* 2008; Ferraris, 2001; Jafrancesco, 2015).

Passando ai turni di transizione nel campione dei PNN, la loro presenza è nettamente preponderante: (Tabella 9):

Tabella 9
CC con turni di TT nei colloqui degli studenti PNN

CC	Percentuale	Tot
CC con turni di transizione	98,50%	(130)
CC senza turni di transizione	1,50%	(2)
Tot.	100%	(132)

Per quanto riguarda quali azioni conversazionali vengono fatte nei turni di transizione, dall'analisi risulta che gli studenti PNN ringraziano, confermano, chiudono l'ultimo argomento e blandiscono (Tabella 10):

Tabella 10
Azioni conversazionali nei TT dei colloqui degli studenti PNN

Azioni	Percentuale	Tot
Ringraziare	56%	(117)
Confermare	39%	(81)
Chiudere UA	4%	(10)
Blandire	1%	(3)
Richiedere	1%	(3)
Tot.	100%	(214)

In ultima istanza, osservando in quanti turni vengano realizzati i TT, risulta che l'81% di essi sono organizzati in più turni, mente il 19% in un unico turno (Tabella 11):

Tabella 11
Schema di realizzazione dei TT nei colloqui degli studenti PNN

TT	Percentuale	Tot
Più turni di transizione	81%	(105)
Unico turno di transizione	19%	(25)
Tot.	100%	(130)

I dati mostrano dunque che i anche PNN tendono a organizzare la CC realizzando più turni di transizione in cui ringraziano, chiudono gli ultimi argomenti trattati, confermano la comprensione degli argomenti trattati, degli accordi presi o degli appuntamenti futuri, per uscire gradualmente dalla conversazione. I turni di transizione, seppur in misura ridotta, vengono utilizzati dai PNN anche per introdurre anche nuovo materiale topicale (es. 18):

(18)
1. *D: è libero? Alle due?*
2. *S: sì, sì, va bene.*
3. *D: Va bene, allora torni qui con [/] alle due e vediamo insieme questi esercizi che non ha capito bene.*
   CC
   S: ok, perfetto.
4. D: va bene, allora l'aspetto più tardi.
5. S: ehm, più [/] ah, ok, ok.
6. D: ok?
7. S: ehm io ehm dopo può ehm portare: mio esercizio e cosa che io *he* *guardado* *en* la *web*
8. ehm più cosa che m/#i voglio [/] mi [vogliarìa], no [parole incomprensibili] a fare mi tempo libero e sapere cosa che può fare *por* [esemplo] in un viaggio a Firenze>
   D: <mhm, mhm>
   S: <che cosa e perché. E mi piace molto sapere cosa di Italia e monumenti.
9. D: ok, allora per quello c'è l'attività on line, no?>
10. S: <mhm, mhm (assenso)>
11. D: <lei appunto segue Moodle quindi queste cose le trova lì. Io>
12. S: <mhm, mhm>
13. D: <non ho tempo ovviamente per fare queste cose in orario di ricevimento. Qui al ricevimento se
14. vuole possiamo giusto controllare>
15. S: <mhm, mhm>
    D: <questi esercizi che per lei sono un po' difficili.
16. S: ok.
17. D: va bene?
18. S: va bene
19. D: allora l'aspetto alle due. L'aspetto alle due, quando torna alle due.

20. S: Ah, ok. Ehm, buongiorno
21. D: Arrivederci
22. S: Arrivederci

In (18) lo studente avvia la PC e all'invito della docente a tornare, risponde con "*ok*, *perfetto"*, manifestando di non avere altro da aggiungere; la docente interpreta la conferma dello studente come segnale di PC, tuttavia, prima di chiudere definitivamente la conversazione, a causa dell'esitazione dello studente (*ehm, più [/] ah, ok, ok*), fa una azione di controllo (*ok?*) che lascia il turno al suo interlocutore. Lo studente a questo punto sfrutta l'opportunità per inserire un nuovo argomento (*mi [vogliarìa], no [parole incomprensibili] a fare mi tempo libero e sapere cosa che può fare *por* [esemplo] in un viaggio a Firenze*) che espande la sequenza di numerosi turni prima dello scambio terminale. La sequenza è interessante perché lo studente menziona un argomento non "menzionabile" (Sacks & Schegloff, 1973, p. 303; § 2.2), come si nota dalla reazione della professoressa (*ok, allora per quello c'è l'attività on line, no?> … <lei appunto segue Moodle quindi queste cose le trova lì. Io>… <non ho tempo ovviamente per fare queste cose in orario di ricevimento*). L'aggiunta del nuovo argomento può considerarsi generalmente un'azione dispreferita nell'economia della sequenza di chiusura, perché, come suggerito sopra, frena la progressività dell'interazione, ormai proiettata verso la chiusura, in questo caso aggravata da una richiesta non pertinente. La docente così è portata a fare del lavoro rimediale sia per gestire più localmente il rifiuto della richiesta sia più globalmente per riorganizzare la sequenza di chiusura, così che, al turno (18) si ritrova la stessa sequenza iniziale, caratterizzata dalla PC, dalla transizione per controllare che non ci sia altro né altri dubbi e, alla fine, lo scambio finale.

Osservando in ultima battuta lo ST nel campione dei PNN, si rileva che esso è realizzato prevalentemente attraverso una coppia adiacente di saluti; nel 16% dei casi, tuttavia, si riscontra il mancato completamento della coppia, e solo in due casi lo scambio terminale non è realizzato (Tabella 12):

Tabella 12
ST nei colloqui dei PNN

Scambio Terminale	Percentuale	Tot
Scambio terminale realizzato tramite coppia adiacente	82%	(109)
Scambio terminale mutilo	16%	(21)
Scambio terminale non realizzato	2%	(2)
Tot.	100%	(132)

Negli scambi terminali mutili è sempre lo studente PNN a non realizzare la seconda parte della coppia adiacente, non rispondendo al saluto, come in (19), dove lo studente ringrazia, il docente espleta il rituale di ringraziamento e saluta; al saluto, tuttavia, non viene data risposta da parte dello studente. Questo tipo di schema in fase di chiusura crea una sorta di vuoto conversazionale, spesso compensato dall'interlocutore che reduplica la forma di saluto:

(19)
1. S: ah, bene. Grazie mille.
2. D: prego. **Arrivederci**, aspetto la sua relazione.
3. S: grazie.
4. D: prego, **arrivederci**.

Nei casi di mancata realizzazione dei saluti, si osserva la costante che i PNN usano il ringraziamento come azione conclusiva: questo *pattern* si riscontra in tutti e ventuno gli scambi terminali mutili. Il ringraziamento non seguito da saluti è dunque la azione che sancisce l'uscita dalla conversazione (ess. 20; 21):

(20)
1. D: va bene? A posto. Grazie
2. S: a te.

(21)
1. S: ok, grazie mille.
2. D: prego.

I dati analizzati in dettaglio mostrano che gli studenti PNN utilizzano una varietà di espressioni di saluto, che sono state raccolte nella (Tabella 13):

Tabella 13
Saluti nei colloqui dei PNN

Scambio Terminale	Percentuale	Tot
Arrivederci	77%	(83)
Ciao	10%	(11)
Altro	9%	(10)
Arrivederla	4%	(4)
Tot.	100%	(108)

L'espressione *arrivederci* si attesta come maggioritaria con una frequenza d'uso del 77%, tuttavia si osserva che occorre anche una formula di saluto francamente informale come *ciao*, presente nel 10% dei casi. Si nota anche la presenza del saluto formale *arrivederla* che, secondo lo *standard*, sarebbe la forma linguisticamente accurata e pragmaticamente adeguata a una relazione caratterizzata da alta distanza sociale (Renzi, 2012), come il rapporto docente-studente. Tra le formule di saluto comprese in "altro" si individuano: due occorrenze dell'espressione *ci vediamo*, due di *buona giornata*, una delle espressioni *a presto*, *a più tardi*, *a domani* e *buongiorno* e due casi di affermazioni, quali *ok*, *d'accordo*.

La maggior parte delle espressioni di saluto rilevate appartengono al registro neutro, adeguato alla situazione (*a presto, a più tardi, a domani, buongiorno, buona giornata)*; l'espressione *ci vediamo* e l'uso delle affermazioni *ok* per chiudere lo scambio, invece, si caratterizzano per essere sbilanciata verso l'informalità. Si vuole notare, infine, la presenza tra i PNN della formula di saluto di più recente diffusione, anch'essa propria del neo-standard come *buona giornata*. Renzi (2012, p. 64) le definisce formule di "saluto augurio", il cui uso si limita al commiato e non è legato alla distanza sociale: valgono infatti sia nella relazione paritaria tra amici sia in quelle asimmetriche (ad es., studenti /professore; Piotti, 2019, p. 24).

5. Discussione conclusiva

Questo studio ha esaminato le chiusure conversazionali nei colloqui tra studenti e docenti all'università. Complessivamente dall'analisi delle CC si rileva che sia i PN sia i PNN strutturano la chiusura della conversazione in tre sotto-sequenze: la pre-chiusura, la transizione e lo scambio finale.

In entrambi i campioni qui esaminati, la PC è avviata prevalentemente dagli studenti. Questa tendenza nell'organizzazione dei turni e delle sequenze può essere letta come l'attualizzazione pragmalinguistica dell'assetto sociopragmatico dell'interazione docente-studente: il colloquio con il docente è infatti un tipo di *institutional talk* (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993; Bonvillain, 2019; Boxer, 2002; Erickson e Schultz, 1982), in cui i ruoli sono distribuiti e l'interazione è gestita in termini di diritti e di vincoli conversazionali, rispetto a cui i parlanti si allineano in base al proprio ruolo nell'interazione (Goffman, 1967). Attraverso l'elaborazione quantitativa dei dati, si è visto che gli studenti PN avviano la PC nel 85% dei casi, mentre i PNN nel 65%. In base a questo risultato puramente quantitativo, sembra quindi che il "diritto conversazionale" di chiudere lo scambio sia maggiormente a favore dello studente.

Oltre ai parametri socio-pragmatici, tuttavia, i risultati ottenuti sembrano indicare che sulla struttura delle CC si riflettano anche fattori locali della gestione della conversazione, quali l'allineamento referenziale e il ruolo (Aston, 1995, p. 77). Affiancando all'analisi quantitativa un'analisi qualitativa, infatti, emerge che quando è il professore ad avviare la PC, l'intera sequenza di chiusura si espande per effetto del lavoro rimediale del professore; si sono visti casi in cui il professore si profonde in più azioni conversazionali attraverso cui dà consigli, suggerimenti e stabilisce appuntamenti futuri e casi in cui viene chiamato a gestire il rilancio della conversazione attraverso nuovo materiale topicale aggiunto dallo studente.

Lo studio ha permesso di osservare che questo accade in due situazioni: in primo luogo, quando il professore percepisce come necessario assicurarsi che non ci siano sospesi né incomprensioni sugli argomenti trattati; una CC può avere luogo, infatti, solo quando gli argomenti trattati siano stati tutti adeguatamente chiusi e questo fatto venga mutualmente riconosciuto dagli interlocutori. In secondo luogo, l'espansione della CC si ha invece quando lo studente utilizza la PC come "spazio di opportunità" (Button, 1987) per aggiungere altri argomenti, senza incorrere in un fallimento pragmatico. L'espansione della CC tramite l'aggiunta di nuovi *topic*, tuttavia, avviene di rado nel campione: tra i PN si registrano solo due rilanci della conversazione e tra i PNN tre. Questo risultato è singolare rispetto ai dati sulle CC di conversazioni telefoniche analizzate da Sacks & Schegloff (1973), dove il rilancio della conversazione menzionando gli argomenti menzionabili nelle PC è molto frequente. La minor frequenza di rilanci della conversazione nella fase di pre-chiusura può essere ricondotta

alla natura degli scambi qui analizzati, sia perché faccia a faccia, sia perché di carattere formale-istituzionale. Rispetto a una conversazione telefonica, infatti, il parlato faccia a faccia richiede minor coordinamento agli interlocutori per uscire dalla conversazione (Aston, 1995).

Inoltre, uno scambio formale è "per *default* monotipico" (Levinson, 1983, p. 316) e pertanto rende poco necessario ai parlanti negoziare in fase di chiusura argomenti menzionabili non ancora non menzionati. Nel caso specifico, il colloquio con il docente è lo spazio che lo studente ha a disposizione per soddisfare i propri scopi comunicativi e per questo è ragionevole che lo scambio sia compiuto in maniera esauriente, senza il bisogno di rimandare le richieste, come accade nelle conversazioni informali[17]. L'espansione delle CC, quando esse sono avviate dal professore, si osserva bene nel campione dei PN, mentre è maggiormente variabile in quello dei PNN. Nelle CC avviate dal professore a colloquio con gli studenti non madrelingua, infatti, non si registra regolarmente un'espansione della sequenza. Questo fenomeno si pensa che sia dovuto alla natura del *task* somministrato che, per il canovaccio situazionale che proietta, porta i partecipanti a costruire uno scambio più efficientemente orientato al raggiungimento dello scopo.

Nelle pre-chiusure gli studenti sia PN sia PNN utilizzano elementi lessicali di registro neutro, come *va bene* o diafasicamente sbilanciati verso un registro colloquiale e tipici dell'italiano neostandard, come *ok* e *perfetto*. Nel registrare questo fenomeno, che non può giovarsi del confronto con precedenti ricerche sull'uso delle formule di chiusura in italiano, si vuole tuttavia suggerire una lettura in chiave sociopragmatica: il colloquio tra docente e studente, tra i tipi di discorso istituzionale, si colloca probabilmente su un piano di formalità minore rispetto ad altri rapporti istituzionali e, a giudicare dai dati qui analizzati, risulta caratterizzato non solo da scelte e comportamenti linguistici che ne confermano la formalità, ma anche da scelte e comportamenti linguistici che creano vicinanza, fiducia e solidarietà tra docente e studente. In altri termini, dai dati a disposizione, sembrerebbe che gli studenti facciano una sorta di lavoro conversazionale volto a rimodulare tutta una serie di parametri relazionali (distanza *vs* vicinanza, ad esempio), che una volta istaurati, abbassano il filtro affettivo (Krashen, 1981).

Tra i PNN la varietà delle forme impiegate come segnali di pre-chiusura aumenta e comprende in misura maggiore elementi demarcativi, come *ho capito*, *terminato*, *allora*, con funzione conclusiva. Tra i segnali di PC, le marche di accordo come *va bene, ok, perfetto* ecc. sono nettamente prevalenti nei due campioni: il loro uso pervasivo nelle PC è motivato dal fatto che, come ha dimostrato Beach (1993), nella conversazione funzionano da *shifter* discorsivi, sono cioè espressioni che consentono al parlante di segnalare che lo scambio avuto è soddisfacente e che si può transitare alla successiva fase della conversazione; nel caso delle PC, questi *shifter* sono impiegati per transitare alla chiusura vera e propria. Secondo Aston (1995), questi segnali, oltre a esplicitare che non si ha più niente da dire, sono utilizzati dal parlante per sollecitare la chiusura finale, manifestando che né l'allineamento referenziale né quello di ruolo sono problematici. Questo meccanismo è particolarmente evidente in quegli scambi del campione qui analizzato in cui la docente tramite azioni di controllo vuole assicurarsi che per lo studente sia tutto chiaro; lo studente, infatti, procede per azioni conversazionali di Conferma sempre più esplicite e supportate anche dal ringraziamento.

Per quanto riguarda i turni di transizione, dall'analisi risulta che questa sequenza è presente nella maggioranza assoluta delle CC sia degli studenti PN sia di quelli PNN, ed è realizzata prevalentemente in più turni. I TT vengono utilizzati durante i colloqui con il docente soprattutto per avere la conferma reciproca della chiusura della conversazione, e solo marginalmente per introdurre un nuovo argomento, come visto anche dall'analisi delle PC. Nei TT le azioni conversazionali organizzate da entrambi i gruppi di studenti sono prevalentemente tre: ringraziare, confermare e chiudere l'ultimo argomento. In particolare, è massivo l'uso del ringraziamento e della conferma che spesso hanno occorrenze multiple nella medesima sequenza. Inoltre, il ringraziamento è l'unica azione conversazionale che rimane presente anche nelle sequenze di transizione realizzate con un unico turno.

La prevalenza di ringraziamenti e conferme sembra indicare dunque che la sequenza dei TT sia strutturata da parte degli studenti in maniera tale che risulti manifesto il loro allineamento al quadro referenziale e al ruolo che rivestono nell'interazione. L'allineamento referenziale è ratificato tramite la conferma e la chiusura dell'ultimo argomento. Il ringraziamento, invece, permette di ratificare l'allineamento relazionale. Come ha già mostrato lo studio di Aston (1995) sui ringraziamenti nelle CC, infatti, solo quando l'allineamento referenziale e di ruolo è considerato soddisfacente dagli interlocutori, la conversazione può essere chiusa. conferma e ringraziamento, pertanto, sono motivate da bisogni di gestione locale della

[17] La letteratura è concorde nel riconoscere che atti linguistici delicati, come ad esempio richieste e proteste, vengono differiti il più possibile, nelle conversazioni informali, talvolta fino alla chiusura (Sacks & Schegloff, 1973).

conversazione, cioè, sono le azioni che permettono che la conversazione venga chiusa in maniera pragmaticamente adeguata. Questo dato viene confermato anche dalla rilevazione nel campione di alcuni scambi in cui la chiusura avviene senza lo scambio terminale, ma il ringraziamento e l'eventuale risposta della professoressa *prego* sono sempre presenti ed evidentemente considerati sufficienti per chiudere la conversazione.

La presenza costante dei ringraziamenti, anche nelle CC più brevi, è un indicatore interessante di che cosa per lo studente, PN e soprattutto PNN di italiano, sia più saliente nell'organizzare le chiusure: dai dati qui esaminati, sembra che nel colloquio con il professore ringraziare sia una delle azioni imprescindibili pragmaticamente, non solo perché è un atto linguistico a vantaggio della cortesia positiva, ma anche perché è un tassello dell'organizzazione della sequenza di chiusura funzionale a contrassegnare lo scambio come scambio formale. In maniera economica, dunque, il parlante utilizza questa azione per chiudere lo scambio, manifestando la propria consapevolezza circa la distanza sociale e la natura della conversazione appena svolta.

Per lo scambio finale, infine, l'uso di *arrivederci* è dominante, sia tra i PN sia tra i PNN, confermando anch'esso una tendenza a connotare il colloquio formale con tratti del registro più colloquiale. Solamente tra i PNN si riscontra l'uso di *arrivederla*, che sarebbe la formula di saluto dell'italiano *standard* adeguata alle situazioni formali (Canobbio, 2003) ed è senz'altro notevole rilevare che essa ricorra solamente nel gruppo dei PNN e mai in quello dei PN.

Riferimenti bibliografici

Aston, Guy (1995). Say *Thank you*: some pragmatic constrains in conversational closings. *Applied Linguistics*, 16(1), 57–86. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/16.1.57

Auer, Peter, & Couper-Kuhlen, Elizabeth, & Müller, Frank (1999). *Language in time. The rhythm and tempo of spoken interaction*. Oxford University Press.

Bardovi-Harlig, Kathleen, & Hartford, Beverly S. (1990). Congruence in native and nonnative conversations: status balance in the academic advising session. *Language Learning*, 40, 467-501. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1990.tb00603.x

Bardovi-Harlig, Kathleen, & Hartford, Beverly S. (1993). Learning the rules of academic talk: A longitudinal study of pragmatic development. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition,* 15, 279–304. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263100012122

Bardovi-Harlig, Kathleen, & Zoltan, Dornyei (1991). Developing pragmatic awareness: Closing the conversation. *ELT Journal*, 45, 4–15. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/45.1.4

Bazzanella, Carla, (1994). *Le facce del parlare. Un approccio pragmatico all'italiano parlato.* La Nuova Italia.

Bazzanella, Carla, (2001). I segnali discorsivi tra parlato e scritto. In Maurizio Dardano, Adriana Pelo, Antonella Stefinlongo (a cura di). *Scritto e parlato. Metodi, testi e contesti* (pp. 79-97). Aracne.

Bazzanella, Carla, Bosco, Cristina, Gili Fivela, Barbara, Miecznikowski, Johanna, Tini Brunuozzi, Francesca (2008). Polifunzionalità dei segnali discorsivi, sviluppo conversazionale e ruolo dei tratti fonetici e fonologici. In Massimo Pettorino, Antonella Giannini, Marianna Vallone, Renata Savy, *La comunicazione parlata*, Vol. 2. (pp. 934-963). Liguori.

Beach, Wayne A. (1993). Transitional regularities for 'casual' "Okay" usages, *Journal of Pragmatics*, *19*(4), 325-352. https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(93)90092-4

Bettini, Elena, & Miniati, Angela, & Silvestri, Luisella (2015). *La mobilità in Erasmus+. Primi risultati nei settori scuola, istruzione superiore, educazione degli adulti*. Firenze. Agenzia nazionale Erasmus+ INDIRE.

Bilmes, James (1997). Being interrupted. *Language in Society*, *26*(4), 507-531. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404500021035

Bonvillain, Nancy (2018). *Language, culture and communication, The meaning of messages*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Boxer, Diana (2002). Discourse issues in cross-cultural pragmatics, *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 22, 150-167. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190502000089

Boxer, Diana (2012). *Applying sociolinguistics.* John Benjamins.

Boxer, Diana, & Cortes-Conde, Florencia (1997). From bonding to biting: Conversational joking and identity display. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *27*(3), 275-294. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(96)00031-8

Brown, Penelope, & Levinson, Stephen (1987). *Politeness. some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.

Button, Graham (1987). Moving out of closings. In Graham Button and John R.E. Lee (Eds), *Talk and Social Organization* (pp. 101-151). Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781800418226-007

Cameron, Deborah (2001). *Working with spoken discourse*. Sage Publications.

Canobbio, Sabina (2003). *Salve prof! A proposito degli attuali riassestamenti nel sistema dei saluti*. In Gianna Marcato (a cura di). *Italiano strana lingua?* (pp. 147-153). *Atti del Convegno (Sappada / Plodn, Belluno, 3-7 luglio 2002).* Unipress.

Coppock, Liz (2005). *Politeness strategies in conversation closings.* Unpublished manuscript: Stanford University. https://tinyurl.com/ydsz3mpy (ultimo accesso: 21/03/2025)

Clark, Herbert H., & French, J. Wade (1981). Telephone goodbyes. *Language in Society*, *10*(1) 1–19.

Coulthard, Malcom (1977). *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis*, Longman.

De Stefani, Elwys (2006). Le chiusure conversazionali nelle interazioni al banco. In Yvette Bürki, Y. and Elwys De Stefani (Eds). *Trascrivere la lingua. Dalla filologia all'analisi conversazionale / Transcribir la lingua. De la Filología al Análisis Conversacional* (pp. 369-403). Peter Lang.

Drew, Paul, & Heritage, John (1992). Analyzing talk at work: An introduction. In Paul Drew and John Heritage (Eds.), *Talk at Work* (pp. 83-65). Cambridge University Press.

Erickson, Frederick, & Shultz, Jeffrey (1982*). The counsellor as gatekeeper: Social interaction in interviews.* Academic Press.

Fele, Giolo (1999). *Le piccole cerimonie dei media. I quiz telefonici della neo-televisione*. Rai ERI.

Flick, Uwe (2009). An introduction to qualitative research. Fourth edition. SAGE.

Gavioli, Laura, & Mansfield, Gillian (Eds.). (1990). *The PIXI corpora. Bookshop encounters in English and Italian*. CLUEB.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). The discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for qualitative research. Weidenfeld & Nicholson.

Goffman, Erving (1967). *Interaction Ritual*, Garden City, Doubleday Publisher Harren & Raitaniemi.

Heritage, John (2004). Conversation Analysis and Institutional Talk. In Robert Sanders and Kristine Fitch (a cura di), *Handbook of language and social interaction* (pp. 103-146). Erlbaum.

Hoey, Elliot, & Kendrick, Kobin H. (2018). Conversation analysis. In Annette M. B. De Groot and Peter Hagoort (a cura di), *Research methods in psycholinguistics and the neurobiology of language: A practical guide* (pp. 151-173). Wiley.

Jafrancesco, Elisabetta (2015). L'acquisizione dei segnali discorsivi in italiano L2*. Italiano LinguaDue*, 1, 1-39. https://doi.org/10.13130/2037-3597/5010

Kasper, Gabriele (2000). Data collection in pragmatics research. In Helen Specer-Oatey (a cura di), *Culturally speaking – managing rapport through talk across cultures* (pp. 316-341). Continuum.

Kasper, Gabriele, & Rose, Kenneth R., (2002). *Pragmatic development in a second language*. Blackwell.

Krashen, Stephen D. (1981). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. Pergamon Press.

Levinson, Stephen (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge University Press. (trad. it., *La pragmatica*. Il Mulino, 1993).

Lindbladh, Sara (2015). 'Va bene' e 'Va be'' nella sequenza conclusiva. Tra segnale di risposta e segnale di prechiusura. *Milli mála*, 7, 267-308.

MacWhinney, Brian (2000). *The CHILDES Project: Tools for analyzing talk* (3rdEdition). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Marcarino, Aurelia (2001). *Pratiche e rituali comunicativi. Un'indagine sulla costruzione del senso nell'interazione*. FrancoAngeli.

Nuzzo, Elena, & Gauci, Phillysienne (2012). *Insegnare la pragmatica in italiano L2. Recenti ricerche nella prospettiva della teoria degli atti linguistici.* Carocci.

Okamoto, N. (1990). Denwa niyoru kaiwashuketsu no kenkyu [A study of closing the conversation on the telephone]. *Nihongo Kyoiku, 72,* 145–159.

Orletti, Franca (2000). *La conversazione diseguale. Potere e interazione*. Carocci.

Pavlidou, Theodossia (1998). Greek and German telephone closings: Patterns of confirmation and agreement. *Pragmatics*, *8*(1), 79–94. https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.8.1.03pav

Piotti, Mario (2019). Minimi linguistici nei film di Carlo Verdone*. Italiano LinguaDue*, 1, 15-27. https://doi.org/10.13130/2037-3597/12201

Psathas, George (1995). *Conversation analysis. The study of talk-in-interaction*. Sage.

Renzi, Lorenzo (2012). *Come cambia la lingua. L'italiano in movimento*, il Mulino.

Sacks, Harvey (1992). *Lectures on conversation*. Blackwell.

Sacks, Harvey, & Schegloff, Emanuel (1973). Opening up closings, *Semiotica*, *8*(4), 289-237.

Sacks, Harvey, & Schegloff, Emanuel A., & Jefferson, Gail (1974): A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language 50*(4), 696-735. https://doi.org/10.2307/412243

Schegloff, Emanuel, & Jefferson, Gail, & Sacks, Harvey (1977). The preference for self-correction in the organization of repair in conversation. *Language*, *53*(2) 361-382. https://doi.org/10.2307/413107

Schegloff, Emanuel, (1988). Goffman and the analysis of conversation. In Paul Drew, Anthony J. Wootton, (eds.), *Erving Goffman: Exploring the Interaction Order* (pp. 89–135). Polity Press.

Schwitalla, Johannes (2003) *Gesprochenes Deutsch. Eine Einführung*. 2., überarb. Erich Schmidt.

Takami, Toshiya (2002). A study on closing sections of Japanese telephone conversations. *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics*, *18*(1), 67–85.

Thomas, Jenny (1983). Cross-cultural pragmatic failure. *Applied Linguistics*, *4*(2), 91-112. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/4.2.91

Tracy, Karen, & Carjuzaa, Jioanna (1993). Identity enactment in intellectual discussion. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *12*(3), 171-194. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X93123

Zhang, Shuling (2024). Face value in conversational closings: Insights from desperate housewives, *English Linguistics Research*, *13*(2) 13-27**.** https://doi.org/10.5430/elr.v13n2p13

Zorzi, Daniela (1990). Opening and closing service encounters: some differences between English and Italian, (pp. 445-458). In *Atti del XI congresso nazionale dell'AIA*. Guerini e ass.

Francesca Pagliara, Università degli Studi "Roma Tre"
francesca.pagliara@uniroma3.it

IT **Francesca Pagliara** Assegnista di ricerca e docente a contratto per il s.s.d. L-LIN/01 presso il Dipartimento di Filosofia, Comunicazione e Spettacolo dell'Università Roma Tre. Si occupa di ricerca sulla semplificazione del linguaggio amministrativo. Ha conseguito il titolo di Dottore di ricerca in Linguistica Teorica e Applicata presso le Università "La Sapienza" e "Roma Tre" (tesi: La competenza pragmatica per comunicare all'università: e-mail e colloqui di richiesta di studenti italofoni e internazionali, sotto la direzione di Elisabetta Bonvino ed Elena Nuzzo).

EN **Francesca Pagliara** is a research fellow and adjunct professor in the disciplinary field L-LIN/01 at the Department of Philosophy, Communication, and Performing Arts of Roma Tre University. Her research focuses on the simplification of administrative language. She holds a PhD in Theoretical and Applied Linguistics from the Universities "La Sapienza" and "Roma Tre" (dissertation: *Pragmatic competence for communication at the university: emails and request interviews by Italian and international students*, supervised by Elisabetta Bonvino and Elena Nuzzo).

IT **Francesca Pagliara** Investigadora postdoctoral y profesora adjunta en el área disciplinar L-LIN/01 del Departamento de Filosofía, Comunicación y Artes Escénicas de la Universidad Roma Tre. Su investigación se centra en la simplificación del lenguaje administrativo. Es doctora en Lingüística Teórica y Aplicada por las Universidades "La Sapienza" y "Roma Tre" (tesis: *La competencia pragmática para comunicarse en la universidad: correos electrónicos y entrevistas de solicitud de estudiantes italófonos e internacionales*, dirigida por Elisabetta Bonvino y Elena Nuzzo).

EuroAmerican Journal of Applied Linguistics and Languages
E-JournALL, Volume 12, Issue 2, November 2025, pages 58-75
ISSN 2376-905X
http://doi.org/10.21283/2376905X.1.12.2.3423
www.e-journall.org

Students smarter than teachers? Gen Z EFL students' perceptions of English pronunciation learning and teaching

ELINA BANZINA
Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, Latvia

Received 5 June 2025; accepted 30 October 2025

ABSTRACT

EN Generation Z L2 learners, who are immersed in English audiovisual content from an early age, might feel more comfortable with the pronunciation of English than their Generation X or Millennial non-native EFL teachers. This paper explores how Gen Z L2 learners in Northeastern Europe use English extramurally, how they rate their own and their teachers' English pronunciation, and whether they aspire to sound native-like. The data was collected from 140 college-level first year students through questionnaires and interviews. The main findings are that, first, Gen Z students rate their own pronunciation as fairly advanced, reporting extramural English as a greater influence than their English teachers' input, and second, view their non-native English teachers' pronunciation as less native-like than their own, yet generally rate their teachers as acceptable models of English pronunciation. Consequently, this paper proposes that Gen Z students might benefit from an alternative type of pronunciation teaching.

Key words: PRONUNCIATION TEACHING, EXTRAMURAL ENGLISH, INFORMAL LANGUAGE LEARNING, NON-NATIVE ENGLISH TEACHERS, GEN Z, ACCENTEDNESS

ES Los aprendientes de L2 pertenecientes a la Generación Z, expuestos al contenido audiovisual en inglés desde una edad temprana, pueden sentirse más cómodos con la pronunciación del inglés que sus profesores de EFL no nativos pertenecientes a la Generación X o a la generación Millennial. Este trabajo analiza cómo el alumnado de L2 de la Generación Z del noreste de Europa utiliza el inglés en contextos extraescolares, cómo evalúan su propia pronunciación y la de sus docentes, y si aspiran o no a sonar como hablantes nativos. Los datos de este estudio se recopilaron a partir de cuestionarios y entrevistas realizadas a 140 estudiantes de primer curso universitario. Los principales resultados muestran, en primer lugar, que el alumnado de la Generación Z valora su propia pronunciación como bastante avanzada, atribuyendo al inglés extracurricular una influencia mayor que al *input* recibido de sus docentes. En segundo lugar, perciben la pronunciación del profesorado no nativo de inglés como menos cercana al modelo nativo que la suya propia, aunque en general la consideran un modelo aceptable. En consecuencia, este artículo propone que el alumnado de la Generación Z podría beneficiarse de un enfoque alternativo en la enseñanza de la pronunciación.

Palabras clave: ENSEÑANZA DE LA PRONUNCIACIÓN, INGLÉS EXTRACURRICULAR, APRENDIZAJE INFORMAL DE IDIOMAS, PROFESORES DE INGLÉS NO NATIVOS, GENERACIÓN Z, ACENTO

IT È verosimile che i membri della Generazione Z, grazie all'esposizione costante all'inglese attraverso contenuti audiovisivi fin dall'infanzia, si sentano più a loro agio nella pronuncia dell'inglese L2 rispetto ai loro docenti millennial o appartenenti alla generazione X. Questo articolo esplora come gli apprendenti L2 della generazione Z dell'Europa nord-orientale usino l'inglese in contesti extrascolastici, come valutino la propria pronuncia e quella dei loro insegnanti, e se aspirino o meno a una pronuncia simil-nativa. I dati per questo studio sono stati raccolti tramite questionari e interviste a 140 studenti universitari del primo anno. I principali risultati mostrano, in primo luogo, che gli studenti della generazione Z considerano il livello della propria pronuncia piuttosto avanzato, grazie più all'inglese extramurale che all'*input* dei loro insegnanti. In secondo luogo, percepiscono la pronuncia dei loro insegnanti non nativi come meno simile a quella nativa rispetto alla propria, pur considerandoli generalmente modelli accettabili di pronuncia inglese. Di conseguenza, questo articolo propone che gli studenti della generazione Z possano trarre beneficio da un modo diverso di insegnare la pronuncia.

Parole chiave: INSEGNAMENTO DELLA PRONUNCIA, INGLESE EXTRAMURALE, APPRENDIMENTO INFORMALE DELLE LINGUE, INSEGNANTI DI INGLESE NON MADRELINGUA, GEN Z, ACCENTO

✉ **Elina Banzina,** Stockholm School of Economics, Riga; Department of Languages and Communication
elina.banzina@sseriga.edu

1. Introduction

Due to advances in technology and media, learners in EFL contexts now experience much greater exposure to English than in the past. Individuals born slightly before the year 2000 and later, often referred to as "digital natives", have grown up surrounded by technologies; as a result, their exposure to screen devices and audio-visual content in English is unprecedented. Generation Z, or, unofficially, the YouTube Generation, are characterized by skilful mastery of digital technologies and fully immersed in the digital world. They are constantly connected and can hardly imagine a world with no access to Wi-Fi; losing their phone would mean losing a part of themselves (Luttrell & McGrath, 2021). This has undeniably left a mark on their level of comfort with the English language. This generation now attends institutions of secondary and tertiary education, which must adapt to learners who receive as much—or often more—English input outside the classroom as inside it (Lindgren et al., 2013; Puimège & Peters, 2019). Pronunciation, one of the hardest aspects of the English language to teach, now seems to be within an easy reach for Generation Z. This can potentially change the power dynamic in the classroom, with the students often finding themselves in a more favourable position than their teachers, who are most likely Generation X or Millennials and have not had the luxury of an early exposure to the sound of English, as is often reflected in their pronunciation (e.g., Hendriks & van Meurs, 2022).

All of these considerations motivated the current study, which aims to explore students' exposure to English outside the classroom: the sources they use, the variety of English they are exposed to the most in a Northeastern-European setting, and whether the age of exposure and the amount of time spent on extramural English has had an effect on their confidence with English pronunciation and their views of their teachers. Does it matter to them that their teacher speaks with an accent that may be more pronounced than their own? How do Gen Z students rate their own pronunciation compared to that of their teachers? Do students look down on teachers who fail to reach native pronunciation? These are relevant concerns that affect every non-native English teacher who might feel more and more insecure about their own pronunciation (Kralova, 2019; Whitehead, 2023) in relation to the growing abilities of their students. Additionally, it is unclear whether the exposure to mostly native-generated content has made the students more eager to attain a native-like accent. Admittedly, the pronunciation classroom has changed: for many students immersed in digital media, intelligibility and comprehensibility goals are becoming increasingly redundant, and teachers might need to find new goals, which will also be discussed in this paper. Overall, this study is an attempt to explore the new realities of the digital world from a student's perspective—an effort which might either alleviate teachers' fears and insecurities or, conversely, exacerbate them.

2. Literature Review

Generation Z learners have been surrounded by digital technology since early childhood. The age at which young children have been reported to actively engage with screen media themselves has reached as little as four months, compared to four years in 1970 (Radesky & Christakis, 2016). As many parents will admit, these days screen media often work as a pacifier for children up to the age of 3 and as a solution for parents under stress (Brauchli, 2024). Not only has the age of exposure changed, but also the amount of screen time young children accumulate: the amount of time young children are exposed to screens has been found to range from an average of 12 h in a typical week in the UK (Funk et al., 2009) up to 2.5 hours a day in the U.S., with older children getting progressively more screen time (Rideout & Robb, 2020). In such a context, the presence of English in contemporary media is overwhelming: out of the top 20 most popular and highest-grossing YouTube channels in the world, at least 10 are in the English language, mostly American English (World Population Review, 2025); moreover, on-demand entertainment and video streaming services such as Netflix offer a wide variety of child-directed options such as cartoons, movies and TV shows in English, and English serves as the primary language for video games.

Language learning effects of the exposure to audiovisual content via television, social media or gaming beyond formal instruction have been reported quite extensively in the research literature (De Wilde et al., 2020; Muñoz et al., 2018; Reinhardt, 2019; Sockett & Kusyk, 2015; Toffoli et al., 2013). The term used in the field for out-of-class, incidental language learning experience, where learning happens while the learners' attention is devoted to a specific activity, such as listening to music or playing computer games, is "extramural English" (EE), established by Sundqvist (2009). Research reveals that exposure to extramural English has positive effects on language proficiency both before formal instruction starts and during it. Puimège and Peters (2019) found that Dutch-speaking children of ages 10 – 12 who had still not received formal English instruction but were frequently exposed to English via computer gaming, streaming videos, or watching TV, already demonstrated

knowledge of 2,356 – 3,157 word families in English that they acquired independently. Both the amount of exposure to digital audio-visual input and the number of words learned incidentally while involved in the process increased with age. A study by De Wilde and Eyckmans (2017) with 30 Flemish primary-school-age children demonstrated their substantial knowledge of English—listening, reading comprehension, writing and speaking—before they started formal English classes in school, and further tests revealed that their English scores were strongly related to their computer use and computer gaming—a finding corroborated by Lefever (2010) with Icelandic children of primary school age without any formal training in English who demonstrated significant gains in English learning based on their exposure to media and computer games alone.

The effectiveness of gaming has specifically been explored by a number of studies, which have consistently found encouraging results: Jensen (2017) reported significantly better performance on vocabulary tests in Danish young learners who were actively engaged in gaming. Similarly, in a study with 11-12-year-old Swedish children Sylvén & Sundqvist (2012) demonstrated significant gains in vocabulary growth among frequent players versus those who played less or did not play at all. Additionally, video gaming has been shown to have far-reaching effects that extend beyond vocabulary acquisition: larger vocabulary has been associated with improved writing performance and higher grades in English overall (Sundqvist & Wikström, 2015), and playing video games has been shown to promote autonomous, self-directed language learning (Chik, 2014).

Research is mixed and gender-specific with regard to which extramural activities young learners engage with most: in terms of the mean hours that young learners devote to them daily, according to a study that surveyed the parents of 10-11 year-old children from seven different European countries on their incidental language learning habits (Lindgren et al., 2013), listening to music in English took the lead, followed by watching subtitled movies and TV programs, and playing online video games. Other studies (e.g., Jensen, 2017; Peters, 2019), however, found that gaming was the top activity among boys, and significantly contributed to their English proficiency. However, the relative learning benefits of these different modes of incidental English learning—gaming, watching, or listening to music—have still not been clearly established in the literature. While some studies show that subtitled movies and television programs contribute most to language learning in general (Kuppens, 2010; Lindgren et al., 2013), gaming has been shown to have the strongest effect on boys' language proficiency specifically because gaming is more popular among boys than girls (Jensen, 2017; Muñoz, 2016). Additionally, the learning benefits of exposure to films and animated series in English are most pronounced in countries that provide subtitled rather than dubbed or voiced-over TV programming. This allows children in Belgium (Peters, 2018), Sweden (Sundquist, 2009), Denmark (Muñoz et al., 2018), or Iceland (Jóhannsdóttir, 2018), for example, to be immersed in authentic English in their households from an early age. In contrast, in European countries such as Germany, Switzerland, France or Italy, dubbing or voice-over programming have traditionally been the norm (De Riso, 2025; Krüger, 2023; Pavesi & Ghia, 2020). This may reduce learners' access to original-English audio, thus potentially delaying the onset of extramural English exposure and limiting the amount of English input they receive. This is also the case in Northeastern Europe, which is the focus of this study, where children's programming on TV is generally dubbed and thus creates less favourable conditions for language acquisition in childhood.

Passive exposure to English via television and online media has been shown to also have positive effects on pronunciation learning. A study with young French adult learners of English showed that their speech contained a mixture of British and American phonetic features; the fact that they were only exposed to British English in school led to the conclusion that they had inadvertently picked up American English sounds from the media they consumed (Yibokou, 2023). Similarly, research with Norwegian teenage learners showed a blend of British and American phonetic features, with the American ones likely prevailing due to the pervasive influence of American English in media and popular culture (Rindal & Piercy, 2013). In a study with adult learners, Wisniewska and Mora (2020) showed that watching captioned audiovisual material led to improvements in speech processing and gains in pronunciation production when the focus was on meaning, which is the most natural way of viewing TV. In a similar experiment, Scheffler and Baranowska (2023) demonstrated that watching a TV series with and without subtitles while attention is actively directed to the meaning of the audiovisual material led to improvements in production—but not when L1 subtitles were provided. Together, these findings suggest that frequent exposure to authentic English-language audiovisual media with a focus on meaning can have a positive effect on learners' pronunciation. The studies focus on adult or young-adult learners, for whom pronunciation learning from media can be partially intentional, and who can make use of subtitles to advance their speech learning. More research is needed to assess how and to what extent early onset and intensity of extramural English exposure influence the phonetic dimension of learners' speech. The current study focuses on students' self-perceptions and therefore contributes to the field by showing how

students' self-assessment of their pronunciation correlates with the onset and amount of exposure to audiovisual input in English.

Having outlined the effects of extramural English learning on the learners themselves, we now turn to their non-native English teachers, who are increasingly confronted with the reality of self-taught digital natives—students who enter school with a substantial command of English acquired prior to formal instruction and who continue to expand their language skills alongside their classroom learning. Generally, as Hannibal Jensen & Lauridsen (2023) demonstrate, teachers recognize the vocabulary-building benefits of extramural learning and appreciate the increased motivation to learn English that extramural exposure brings to the classroom. And yet, on a more personal level, this often presents a challenge to non-native English teachers who are Generation X or mostly Millennials, meaning that digital English entered their lives at a much later age; to a certain extent, this defines their English proficiency and pronunciation. A number of studies document the anxieties and sense of inadequacy experienced by non-native English teachers: in the Asian context, Korean EFL teachers often sensed a great deal of insecurity about their own pronunciation (Whitehead, 2023) and Chinese EFL teachers admitted that they felt inferior to native English speakers in terms of speaking, pronunciation, vocabulary, reading and listening (Tang, 1997). Research on European non-native English teachers demonstrates a similar sense of inferiority and anxiety, for example, among Slovak English teachers (Kralova, 2019) and Dutch English teachers (El Ouastani, 2022). Such feelings of inadequacy and fraudulence, self-doubt, low self-efficacy have been described in research literature on non-native English teachers as the so-called Impostor Syndrome, and have been reported among pre-service English teachers (Bernat, 2009).

Non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) are right to feel anxious, as students are often prejudiced against and critical of them, often believing that accentedness is an indication of their subpar competence and poorer teaching abilities overall, in comparison to what a native speaker could bring (e.g., Hendriks & van Meurs, 2022; Rubin & Smith, 1990). The idealized native-speaker model is often still the norm among non-native English learners, who view native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) more favourably (Ghanem & Kang, 2021; Kelch and Santana-Williamson, 2002) and also wish to sound native-like (Aiello & Mongibello, 2019; Newbold, 2022; Timmis, 2002). This occurs despite the strong advocacy for NNESTs as being just as effective as NESTs and the obvious misalignment between native-speaker ideals and the global nature of English (Mahboob, 2010). Gen Z students, however, are immersed in English content daily—mostly of American origin— which may result in even higher expectations of native-like proficiency and raise the bar for NNESTs. Given these added pressures from increasingly English-savvy learners, where does the non-native English teacher stand from the perspective of Gen Z students? Do NNESTs live up to the models Gen Z students hear daily on social media – and do they expect them to? The current study thus focuses specifically on the pronunciation aspect of the English language to explore Gen Z's perceptions of their own pronunciation, the pronunciation of their teachers, and students' exposure to extramural English. No other studies have explored this aspect, so this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1) What are Gen Z students' perceptions of which audiovisual activities in the English language have shaped their pronunciation skills the most? How frequently do Gen Z students receive audio visual input outside the classroom, and is there a correlation between the intensity of this input and the age at which it started, and self- and peer-assigned pronunciation scores?
2) How do Gen Z students rate their non-native English teachers' pronunciation in comparison to their own pronunciation and evaluate its acceptability?
3) How important is sounding native-like to Gen Z students? What are their aspirations with regard to their English pronunciation?

We hypothesize that it is audiovisual input, rather than their teachers at kindergarten or school, that has mostly shaped students' pronunciation, and that such input is most likely American. While television programs and films in the Northeastern European context are typically dubbed or voiced-over rather than subtitled, which limits learners' exposure to authentic content, we assume that children's active engagement with the rich online audiovisual content on digital devices may have partly compensated for the lack of subtitled television. As a result, we also expect that students have adopted a more critical stance of their Gen X or Millennial teachers' pronunciation in response to the intensive audiovisual input they are exposed to daily. In keeping with the findings of Newbold (2022), we anticipated that students would set the bar high for their own pronunciation and wish to sound native-like, which might make them evaluate the lack of native-like speech patterns in their non-native teachers' pronunciation more critically. We hypothesized that there could be a

negative association between one's self score and the teacher score, whereby the more inflated self-perceived pronunciation score is, the lower the score s/he might assign to their teacher.

To answer these questions, a survey was selected as the primary data collection method to gather quantitative and qualitative data with elements of peer assessment for greater reliability; interviews with 14 participants were also conducted to triangulate the data.

3. Methods

3.1 Participants

The participants of this study were 18- and 19-year-old first-year university students attending a business and economics program in Latvia (*n* = 141), where English was the medium of instruction. The sample was a convenience sample, with 59% male and 41% female participants, as there are traditionally more male students in the business and economics program. While the group was international, most of the students were Latvian (n=108). The rest of the nationalities were divided as follows: 16 were Russian, 5 were Estonian, 4 were Lithuanian, and 1-2 students were from China, Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. All participants had received formal instruction in English at school and passed a rigorous written English entrance test, which selected candidates at the C1 level of the European CEFR system, as well as an interview for the business and economics program.

Since the focus of this study is on students' experiences with non-native English teachers, 12 participants who reported having had native English teachers in school or studying in a high school abroad were removed from the sample. However, not all respondents replied to all the questions in the questionnaire, therefore the number of responses in the analysis varied between 141 and 117. The data were collected at the end of the first semester, after semester grades were assigned and course evaluations received, using the Qualtrics platform, on student laptops while in the classroom environment; participation in the survey was entirely voluntary and anonymous, with students creating code names for themselves.

3.2 Data collection instruments and procedure

Student perceptions were first gathered via a questionnaire consisting of 18 short questions (see Appendix 1 for the complete questionnaire). The study is based on students' perception, so the measures of hours spent on out-of-class activities and the age of activity onset were self-reported. While other studies have used parental surveys to gather this information, we speculated that that would not be an appropriate instrument at the fairly mature age of 18-19 and relied on self-reported data. The questionnaire was administered in class, in person, as it had an interactive component to it that could not have been completed in an online format at home. To this end, the researcher approached the students at the end of a microeconomics lecture, held in a large auditorium that could accommodate all 140 students, and prompted them in English to open their laptops and access the questionnaire that had been emailed to them shortly before the class.

After entering the demographic information, the students were instructed by the researcher (and the written prompt) to form random groups of 3 to 4 students, create code names for themselves to ensure anonymity for research purposes, and share these with their partners. Then, they were each asked to read aloud the first 5 sentences of the Rainbow Passage, a standard text that features most English phonemes and is commonly used by speech-language professionals to assess speech, and rate each other's pronunciation in a real-time setting on a scale from 0 – 100, assigning a score to each individual under a code name. The peer-score was used to assess the validity of the self-perception score. Afterwards, the students continued completing the questionnaire on their own, either in class or later at home. The survey included quantitative questions, such as whether the participants wished to sound native-like or whether they believed their non-native English teacher was a good model of English pronunciation, and qualitative questions, such as students' earliest memories with English or the perceived greatest influences on their English pronunciation. We purposefully kept the questions open (e.g., "Who/what has affected your pronunciation the most?") to allow a wide range of responses, varying from "teachers in formal education" to out-of-school activities such as "gaming" or "watching TV". The quantitative questions included 13 multiple-choice, numeric-scales, and Likert-scale questions with 5 responses (see Appendix 1).

All tests were run in IBM SPSS Statistics 30. The data were analysed as follows: first, a Pearson correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships between self-reported hours spent on extramural English, the age at which exposure to extramural English had started, and student self-scores. A multiple regression analysis was then conducted to examine the impact of hours spent on extramural English

and the age of exposure to extramural English on student self-scores, the dependent variable. The association between self-reported scores, peer scores and teacher scores was explored with the help of correlation analyses and t-tests. Additionally, a MANOVA was conducted to examine gender effects in the dataset as previous research has identified gender as a strong variable (e.g., Jensen, 2017; Peters, 2019).

The questionnaire was followed by individual interviews with the researcher three weeks later. Once again, the sample was a convenience sample, as the interviews were conducted in English with the same year-one students, but this time as part of a speech and accent elective course that is taught by the researcher. The speech and accent elective course traditionally features individual face-to-face meetings, the first of which discusses the speech learning experiences and preferences that are instrumental to the course. For the purposes of this study, up to 5 open and closed questions that were specific to and informative for the study were added to the existing questions. The researcher took notes during these interviews. After the course was completed and grades assigned, a permission to use the data for the purposes of this study was asked and obtained from each student, thus ensuring the utmost confidentiality. Thematic analysis, which is a data analysis method that helps identify, code and analyse reoccurring patterns of meaning or themes within the data, was used to analyse the interview data. Braun & Clarke (2006) proposed a 6-phase coding framework for thematic analysis—familiarization with the data, generation of codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, reporting the findings—and this method was used to identify themes and patterns in the data.

4. Results

4.1. The Survey

The quantitative part of the survey started with questions about the frequency of audiovisual input students have received ("How many hours a day did you spend on English media (audio, video) before entering our school?") and the age of exposure ("At what age did you start consuming English content (audio, video)?"). Student responses indicated that the average number of hours they spent on watching, listening to, or interacting with English media was 4 hours daily (M = 4.47; SD = 2.48), and that the average age they started to actively engage with English audiovisual media was 7 years old (M = 7.21; SD = 3.04). The majority of the students—81%—reported that they consumed American-speaking media; only 9% reported using British-speaking media and 6% indicated that they were exposed to both varieties; 4% preferred Australian, Canadian and "non-native" media. To identify the type of the input received, students were asked to report the main influences on their pronunciation by answering an open-form question (see Figure 1).

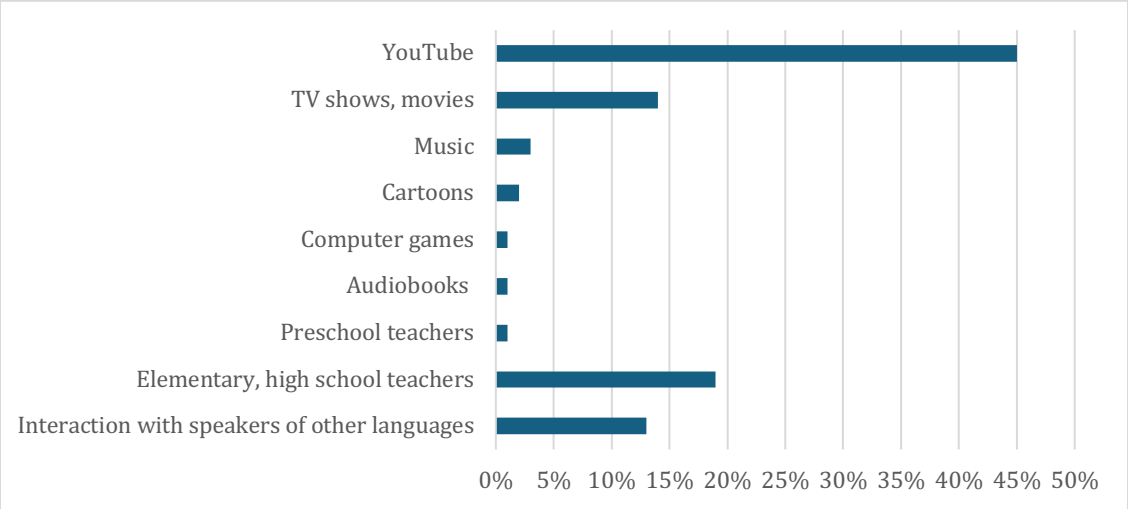


Figure 1. Student responses to the question "What/Who has affected your pronunciation the most?", expressed as percentages.

The majority of respondents (97 students, or 66%) cited their exposure to audiovisual input via media (YouTube; cartoons; TV programs and movies; audiobooks; music) and computer games as the main sources of influence that have shaped their speech; 29 students, or 20%, indicated that their kindergarten, primary and secondary teachers were their main influence; finally, 13% mentioned their experiences abroad or communication with English speakers as their main sources of influence. Finally, students were asked to

describe their earliest childhood memory associated with English in an open format that would reveal whether it included technologies, which would be in line with the "digital natives" narrative. The results showed that the human factor was the most memorable, with students most vividly remembering their English learning experiences in preschool (28%) or later in school (24%), followed by 39% of students who recalled watching cartoons or playing videogames (Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon, YouTube videos and Xbox were the most often mentioned sources of input), and finally 9% of students remembered actually using English with friends from abroad or when travelling abroad as their first memory. Interestingly, although students mentioned more experiences in preschool as their first exposure than at later stages of education, only 2 out of 29 responses included kindergarten teachers as the main influence on their pronunciation.

Given the intensity of the mostly American input students receive daily, the next questions assessed students' perceptions of their own pronunciation skills in relation to the input they receive, the assessment of their pronunciation skills by their fellow students compared to their own assessment, and students' views on their high school English teachers' pronunciation compared to their own. Bivariate correlations of these variables are provided in Table 1.

Table 1.
*Pearson's correlation coefficients for the self-assigned self-scores and teacher scores, and self-scores and peer scores. ** p < 0.01.*

			Significance	
Scores	**N**	**Correlation**	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Self-score & Teacher score	117	-0,044	0,320	0,640
Self-score & Peer score	117	0,332**	0,000	0,000

Pearson's correlation analyses revealed a significant positive correlation between self-scores and peer scores ($r = 0.33$; $p = 0.000$), but no correlation was found between self-scores and teacher scores ($r = -0.04$; $p = 0.64$), which goes against the hypothesis we established. Further, a statistically significant yet moderately strong negative correlation was found between the age of exposure to audiovisual media and the hours put in daily ($r = -0.32$; $p = 0.000$), whereby the lower the age of first exposure, the more hours the participants were likely to spend on extramural English. By the same token, a moderately strong and statistically significant positive association was observed between one's self-score and hours spent on extramural English activities daily ($r = 0.31$, $p < 0.01$). However, no significant correlation was found between the age of first exposure to extramural English and one's self-score ($r = -0.17$; $p = 0.03$). These findings informed the subsequent multiple regression analysis by highlighting potential key predictors.

We conducted a multiple regression analysis with students' pronunciation self-scores as the dependent variable, and two predictors: hours of received audiovisual English input and the age at which frequent exposure began (Table 2).

Table 2.
*Results of the multiple regression model for pronunciation self-scores (**p≤0.01).*

	Model	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	74,435	4,005		18,584	0,000
	Age of exposure	-0,301	0,364	-0,078	-0,828	0,409
	Hours of EE	1,462	0,488	0,281	2,996	0,003
	R	0,315**				
	R^2	0,1**				
	Adjusted R^2	0,08**				
	F	6,28**				
	N	116,0				

The regression model could explain 32% of the variance (R^2 = 0.32, *Adjusted* R^2 = 0.08). Despite the low R^2, which indicates more scattered data around the regression lines, the overall model was significant ($F(2, 114)$ = 6.28, $p < 0.01$), demonstrating a trend. Hours of English input received daily were positively associated with pronunciation self-scores ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$), while the age of exposure had no predictive value.

With regard to the relationship between self-scores and teacher scores, and self-scores and peer scores, paired sample t-tests were further performed to compare the means between these groups (Table 3).

Table 3.
Mean ratings and 95% confidence intervals of the differences between students' self-rated pronunciation, peer assessment, and student assessment of their teachers' pronunciation.

		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
Scores	**M**	**Lower**	**Upper**
Self-score	78,59829	76,4330	80,7635
Peer score	81,14530	79,4385	82,8521
Teacher score	71,18803	66,8333	75,5428

A critically important aspect lies in the fact that the scores students assigned to their own pronunciation (M = 78.60; SD = 11.82) were significantly higher than the scores they assigned to their English teachers' pronunciation (M = 71.19; SD = 23.78), t (117) = 2.97, $p < 0.01$, d = 0.27). There was no significant difference between self-scores (M = 78.60; SD = 11.82) and peer scores (M = 81.19; SD = 9.29) at the $\alpha = 0.01$ level (t (117) = 2.18; p = 0.03) (see Table 3). To examine the potential gender effects, a MANOVA with three dependent variables—self-, peer- and teacher-scores—was further performed; the analysis did not detect any statistically significant gender effects on the combined dependent variables (Wilks' $\Lambda = 0.95$, $F(3,96) = 1.82$, $p=0.15$, $\eta2=0.05$).

As a follow-up question to students rating their teachers' pronunciation, students were asked to assess whether their teacher, was a good model of English pronunciation, with 4 Likert-scale answers: "Excellent", "Good", "Average", and "Poor" (Figure 2).

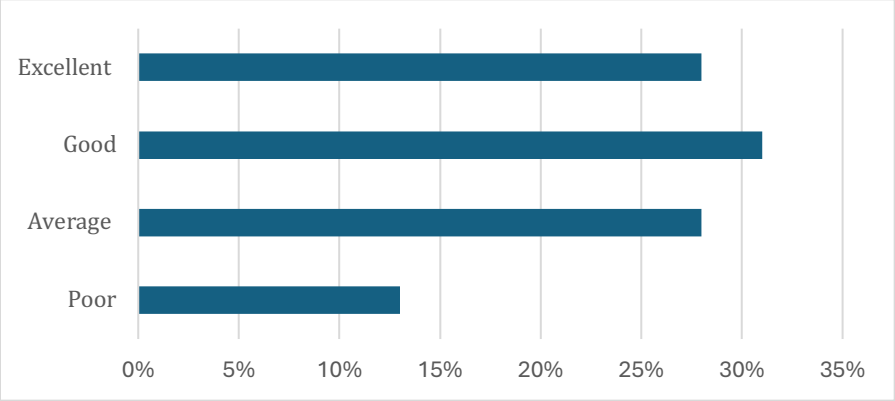


Figure 2. Student responses to the question:" Was your high school English teacher a good model of English pronunciation?

The responses ranged evenly across the "Excellent" to "Poor" continuum, with 39 students (28%) believing their teachers were excellent role models, 43 students (31%) assessing them as "good" role models, and an identical number of students—38, or 28%—deeming them to be average role models. Only 18 students (13%) considered their teachers to be poor role models of English pronunciation.

The subsequent question returned the focus to students, asking if they believed their own pronunciation needed improvement. Out of the 5 Likert scale options, most students (44%) gave a "probably yes" answer, 24% were less sure about that, selecting "might or might not", and an equal number of students (14%) were either of the opinion that they "definitely" needed improvement or "probably not". Finally, 4% answered with "definitely not".

Further, we inquired whether students wished to sound native-like, by asking "How important is sounding native-like to you?" (Figure 3).

.

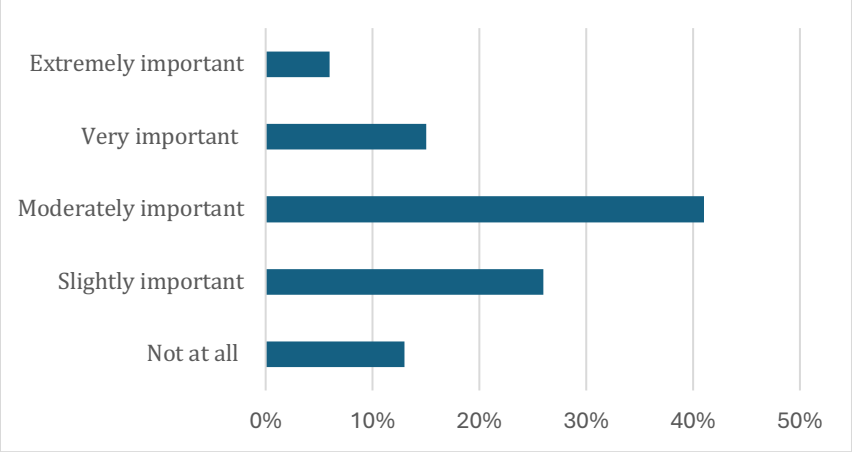


Figure 3. Student responses to the question: "How important is sounding native-like to you"?

The majority of students—41% and 26%—responded that it was "moderately important" or only "slightly important", respectively. 15% admitted that it was "very important", while 13% indicated it was "not at all important". The minority (6%) admitted it was "extremely important" for them to sound native-like.

The next question zeroed in on the specific variety of English to see whether students' exposure to mostly American content defined their aspirations, by asking "Are you striving for British or American pronunciation?" with 4 options, "American", "British", "other" and "not striving" (Figure 4).

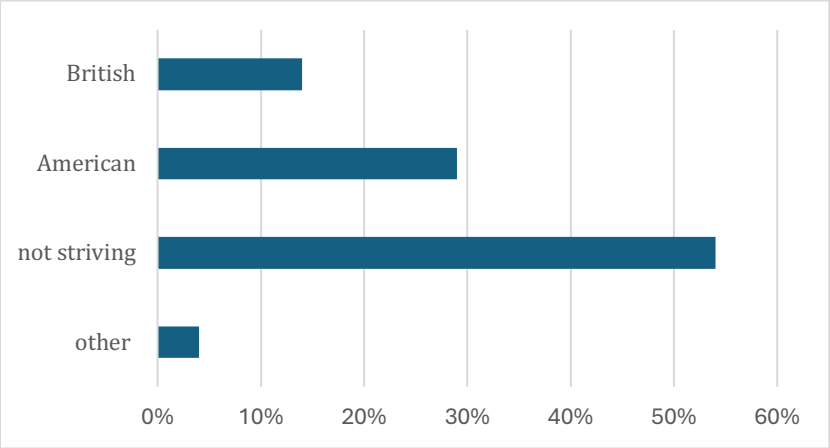


Figure 4. Student responses to the question: "Are you striving for a British or American pronunciation?"

The majority of respondents—54%—indicated that they were "not striving" at all; 29% were pursuing "American" English, 14% were pursuing "British", while 4% were aiming for some "other variety". Finally, when asked "If you were given a chance to sound more native-like in English or more persuasive in English, which one would you pick?", the overwhelming majority (75%) selected "sounding persuasive" rather than "sounding native-like", indicating that sounding native-like was in fact not the priority for most.

4.2. The Interviews

In this study, a thematic analysis was conducted to examine data from the interviews with the students (N = 14). Thematic analysis was carried out following the six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), which include familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. The themes identified in the data included: (1) American

content on social media as a dominant influence; (2) the increasing use of English with same-language peers; (3) English teachers' pronunciation not matching the native speaker model; (4) students' tolerance of non-native English accents; (5) the low priority given to pronunciation instruction in schools; (6) the preference for native English-speaking teachers.

Most interviewees noted that their teachers were non-native speakers who aimed for a British accent with different success rates ranging from "a nice British accent" to "she pronounced "this" and "three" as [zis] and [sri:]". The most common verb used among the respondents was "tried"—"the teacher *tried* to sound British"—acknowledging the teachers' effort yet subtly suggesting that the outcome fell short of the students' expectations. However, only two interviewees admitted that the accent bothered them because it was "forced" or "Russian", which was a native language not shared with the interviewee; 12 out of 14 respondents indicated that they were either not bothered by the accent at all, did not pay attention to it, or even liked it – "it was pleasant to listen to". One student pointed to the generational gap by tolerantly stating that "At that time, teachers were taught that way, and that's how they continue". Moreover, as seems to be the reality in most schools according to the interviewees, the pedagogical focus was on building vocabulary, developing writing skills and preparing for the final exams, so students ranked pronunciation much lower than the other skills due to external factors. As one respondent noted in a sweeping statement, "in Latvian schools, no-one cares about pronunciation", thus referring both to the pronunciation of the teachers and the generally low priority given to pronunciation teaching in class in general. Most of the respondents noted that pronunciation instruction in class was limited to "the teacher only correcting mispronounced words if there were any" and "teaching how to pronounce advanced vocabulary" by "asking us to repeat the words", thus taking the form of incidental corrections rather than a planned, systematic component of classroom teaching. One student noted that the teacher would only correct students' pronunciation when reading Shakespeare plays, indicating that instruction was also context-dependent. Interestingly, with respect to the variety of English promoted in class, a few students reported that the teacher was accepting of different varieties and advised students "to stick to one way of pronouncing, and she did not say which was better, but asked us to be consistent". One respondent, however, remarked that "the teacher enforced British pronunciation, but she failed miserably" because the students, according to the respondent, were not willing to give up their existing accents. This issue emerged only in the last few interviews, therefore its extent could not be fully explored, but the limited data indicate that treating a specific accent as a prescriptive norm creates student resistance, especially in a context where global media have already shaped learners' pronunciation preferences. Most students, however, agreed that having a native-English-speaking teacher would be nice as "it could motivate me" in general, but there was no special interest in learning the pronunciation aspect of the language.

Next, the interviews uncovered another interesting observation: with the exception of two interviewees, most claimed to regularly engage in code-switching between their native language and English when talking to their friends who share the same first language. Two individuals claimed to hold extended conversations exclusively in English with their same-language peers. This serves as additional evidence for the great influence of extramural English on Gen Z learners. The reasons cited for code switching were the fact that "certain topics are easier to express in English", "emotions and everyday topics are easier to convey in English", or "we use it just for practice". These responses underscore the level of comfort students have developed with the English language, or, as some interviewees put it, "I often think in English" or "English is in our heads, and we don't want to translate it". This finding aligns with De Wilde and Eyckmans (2017), who found that Flemish children would sometimes use English rather than their L1 among themselves; the motivations behind such a choice, however, were not explored.

5. Discussion

This study was motivated by the practical concerns and questions that surround classroom pronunciation teaching and might be on many English teachers' minds: if students have been exposed to native-like English since an early age, what does their increased proficiency mean for NNESTs and pronunciation teaching in general? Previous research has shown that extramural English has positively affected children's vocabulary and grammar, and studies with young adults and adolescents have demonstrated a link between extramural English and pronunciation; the extent to which early and frequent exposure to extramural English can shape learners' pronunciation and perceived accentedness, however, remains unclear.

The present study is an exploration of English learners' perceptions and relies on self-reports, thus it cannot make claims of causality, and reliability can be questioned in some instances (e.g., students citing their age of exposure to English, which will be addressed in greater detail in the next section). Nevertheless, the study

does yield some interesting findings about their pronunciation learning patterns, how the youth view their teachers' pronunciation in response to the digital input they receive daily, how they rate their own performance, and whether they believe there is room for improvement. These observations are mostly placed in the geographical context of Northeastern Europe. Despite variability in students' and teachers' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, the shared regional characteristics among these countries provide a meaningful context. The geographical area does matter, as studies from countries that broadcast subtitled movies and programs, such as Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Iceland, or Sweden show that children acquire English early, and to a great extent, due to subtitled TV that lets them hear original English input (Kuppens, 2010; Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013; Peters, 2018; Lefever, 2010). In Latvia, for example, voice-overs are commonly used in broadcast television programs, especially in children's programming; the option to manually switch the media language to English is a fairly recent addition, and even then, it is not always possible. It is not surprising, then, that watching YouTube has been cited as the main and most reliable source of accessible English-language content for students, likely due to the platform's easy access. Students also report watching movies and TV shows in English, all of which they identify as the most significant influences on their pronunciation—surpassing the influence of their teachers. That answers our first research question about whether it is in-class experiences or out-of-class experiences that students feel have contributed to their pronunciation learning the most, and it seems that these days the influence of extramural English is so profound that classroom teaching in many cases is merely assisting the learning that is happening outside the classroom. This carries important implications for classroom teaching.

Students' responses indicated that the average number of hours they spent on extramural English was 4 hours daily; the question specifically targeted their experiences *before* they started college, the intense curriculum of which might have affected this number considerably. The current study demonstrated that the input participants received was mostly American English (81%), which is not surprising, given that the most popular TV and YouTube channels are American. Consequently, 70% of respondents indicated that it was YouTube, cartoons, TV programs and movies, and in very few instances, audiobooks and podcasts that had shaped their speech. This content forms the lens through which they see and hear English, and it is what teachers encounter in the classroom. The results confirm previous findings of out-of-school exposure to English (Kuppens, 2010; Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013; Peters, 2018), which demonstrated that the main sources of extramural English were cartoons, TV shows, movies, YouTube videos, songs, and computer games.

Contrary to the hypothesis that exposure to English audiovisual media would occur at an earlier age, the average age at which the respondents started to actively engage with it was cited as 7 years old. Compared to studies that described preschool children's active engagement with technologies (e.g., Radesky & Christakis, 2016), this might appear relatively late. A potential explanation is that children's television programming in Northeastern Europe is generally dubbed or voiced-over, with the exception of music channels, leaving parents' digital devices as the primary—and not particularly convenient—source of English-language media. Another explanation for this might be that 18- and 19-year-olds, or any adult for that matter, have difficulty providing a precise date for their first exposure at an early age due to the so-called "childhood amnesia" that prevents people from recalling early memories consistently up until the age of 6 – 8 (Nelson et al., 2004) – precisely the age that the average respondent dated their first experiences to in our case. It was our hope that through parents' reminiscing, photos and videos from that age, or via inferential strategies participants could reconstruct memories from that time, but the relatively high age of extramural English onset data suggests otherwise. Furthermore, the correlational analyses showed that the age of exposure showed no correlation with pronunciation self-scores and had no predictive value in multiple regression, which is in line with Ojima et al. (2011), who showed – in the case of Japanese primary school children – that the hours spent on extramural English was a better predictor of their ability to semantically process spoken English than the age of their first exposure, or Munoz (2014), who demonstrated that there is a stronger correlation between the amount of input received and measures of oral performance than the age at which exposure to English began. These and other studies (e.g., Muñoz & Singleton, 2011) challenge the long-standing Critical Period Hypothesis (Lenneberg, 1967; Johnson & Newport, 1989), which traditionally posits that earlier exposure to a language leads to more native-like attainment. While success in pronunciation acquisition is often associated with an early start, studies on L2 phonetic/phonological learning have similarly found that it is possible for late learners to achieve native-like performance in pronunciation (Bongaerts et al., 1997), suggesting that attainment depends less on the mere age of onset and more on the extent and quality of the input received (Flege et al., 2021). Indeed, we found a moderately strong and significant correlation between the hours spent on extramural English and one's self-reported and peer-assessed pronunciation skills, indicating that the amount of input does matter—not only

for speaking, reading and writing but also for pronunciation. The correlation, however, was not as strong as we expected, and we hypothesize that the age of 18 might be too late to reliably establish a connection between the amount of input and pronunciation proficiency as the audiovisual exposure may have changed considerably over the years (especially, if it started early); therefore, recent years might not be representative of the amount of exposure received in childhood.

In response to Research Question 2, we further hypothesized that the intensive English input that Gen Z students receive outside the classroom would have made them competent and confident English users, and this confidence would make them rate their own pronunciation fairly highly while being excessively critical of pronunciation that does not match the native-like pronunciation norms they have been exposed to via media; in many cases, this would include their non-native teachers. The findings of our study showed that on a continuum from 0 to sounding native-like, the average student rated their own pronunciation in the top quartile of the scale (M = 78.60), which is fairly close to sounding native-like and indicates a high level of confidence or competence, or both. This score showed a high correlation with the score their peers provided and there was no statistically significant difference between the means, which provides some validity to the self-assessment. The next question of interest to this study then was how the students viewed their English teachers' pronunciation in comparison to their own. The results revealed that their teachers' pronunciation was rated as slightly *below* the students' skill level (M = 71.90), showing that we have reached a point where students believe they are in fact doing better than their non-native teachers in certain aspects of English, which confirms some of the fears and insecurities that teachers have about their own pronunciation. There is naturally great variability in their teachers' pronunciation, with some having attained a more native-like pronunciation than others, so the finding that students consistently rated themselves higher than their teachers—even across a diverse range of teacher pronunciation skills—adds to the robustness and generalizability of the results. Additionally, there was no correlation between one's self-score and teacher score: we anticipated that a high self-score could show a negative association with teacher score, making the self-assured student more critical of the non-native speakers around them. That, however, was not the case as no relationship was found. The question that arises, however, is whether the perceived lower score automatically marks the teacher as inferior and not a good model of English pronunciation because of their (mild) accent. Are non-native accents viewed more negatively? The good news is that only 13% of students believed their teachers were poor role models; the majority, or 59% of students, believed that their non-native teachers were "excellent" or "good" role models in terms of pronunciation, demonstrating a great degree of acceptance of accents that might not perfectly match native-like norms.

In fact, acceptance is a common pattern that interweaves the data and describes the Gen Z participants – acceptability in terms of the pronunciation of those around them and being content with their own pronunciation, which is also the answer to Research Question 3. Contrary to our hypothesis that we advanced based on Duryagin and Dal Maso (2022), Newbold (2022) and Timmis (2002) that demonstrated students' eagerness to sound native-like, our respondents did not exhibit a comparable level of enthusiasm or preoccupation with achieving native-like speech. If anything, there was doubt palpable in student responses in whether their pronunciation need improvement – only 14% clearly indicated that they needed improvement, with most providing a cautious "probably yes" response, but 42% stating openly that they probably or clearly did not need any improvement. Moreover, only 21% admitted that sounding native-like to them was "very" or "extremely important", with most settling for a more modest "moderately" (41%) or "slightly important" (26%), or "not important at all" (13%). In line with this demonstrated contentment with the current state of their pronunciation, students also indicated that they were not particularly interested in sounding American – only 29% were pursuing American English, with most —54%—pointing out that they were happy with their current pronunciation and were not striving for any particular variety. This finding mirrors earlier research from Norway, which demonstrated a widespread preference among teenagers for a neutral accent over a native-like pronunciation (Rindal & Piercy, 2013). Overall, Gen Z students come across as less critical and less fault-finding of themselves and those around them, and such acceptance of differences and deviations from the "norm" has indeed been shown to characterize this generation (Pew Research Center, 2020). This is good news for the multilingual, non-native-English-speaking world, where the shift from native-speaker-focused English toward international mutual intelligibility—the essence of which is captured in Jenkins' (2000) Lingua Franca Core—and toward a multilingual, multicultural approach emphasizing language functionality and the teacher's expertise rather than the variety they speak (Mahboob, 2010) has been slow. The students thus seem to be accepting of local English varieties and practices, and their digital experience with the native-variety evidently

does not prevent them from appreciating—and speaking—the local variety, which then enables them to operate in a variety of phonetic environments.

At the same time, it should be noted that the observed fairly moderate ambition to sound native-like in the current study could not be attributed to a less rigorous program or less motivated students, as ours is a top school in the region, and competition is fierce. As proof that students are in fact motivated, the next question offered a choice between pragmatic and functional pronunciation teaching/learning goals and purely aesthetic goals; namely, students were offered a choice in the last question to pick *persuasive English* or *native-like English* as a goal. Subsequently, an overwhelming 75% admitted that if given a chance, they would wish their English teacher would help them sound more persuasive or charismatic, which could help them in their careers. Since students in the European context have often reached a high degree of intelligibility and comprehensibility, to a large degree owing it to their frequent and intensive exposure to English extramurally, teachers can offer their students new goals that can help them advance professionally, namely, sounding more assertive and persuasive. Persuasiveness in certain instances is language-specific and can be achieved with specific phonetic means. For example, in the English language, consonant reinforcement, or extreme consonant lengthening with added articulatory energy, is a frequently used feature to convey a greater degree of assertiveness, importance and authority (see Banzina, 2024); practicing a lower pitch and a deeper, hallower sound via lowering of the larynx would help students convey their leadership potential and sound more native-like at the same time (Esling & Wong, 1983; Klofstad, 2016); similarly, falling intonation patterns—unlike rising, which are common in student production nowadays—would signal confidence and certainty (Jiang & Pell, 2017). Working on persuasiveness goals lets students focus on select native-like pronunciation aspects that are of professional significance and yield tangible benefits. Such communicative goals could serve as a realistic alternative to sounding simply native-like, as most features can be easily mastered by non-native speakers.

6. Conclusions

Teachers now have to adapt their teaching practices not only to include the latest technologies, but also to accommodate the fact that, due to these technologies, students feel more comfortable with English than ever. The fact that they grew up with a tablet or a smartphone means that they have been exposed to English content way earlier in their lives than their teachers, who had to adapt to the digital world at some point in their lives. Generation Z, in fact, were born into the digital world and were exposed to their share of English via social media sites and cartoons starting from at pre-school age, *as per* learners' account of their earliest memories. They spend hours every day listening to and watching native speakers online, and this input has undoubtedly shaped their own pronunciation. This study zeroed in on digital natives' perception of the importance of native-like pronunciation, their teachers' pronunciation and their own, and showed that students are confident about their pronunciation, with intelligibility and comprehensibility—the fundamentals of one's ability to be understood in a foreign language—generally not being a problem in the setting of Northeastern Europe. Conditioned by the native input they receive daily, they tend to view their non-native English teachers' pronunciation as slightly inferior to their own. However, they generally do not see it as a problem and exhibit the same relaxed confidence about their own pronunciation, not striving to sound perfectly native-like but being fairly content with the level of functional pronunciation they have already achieved. For teachers in the European context, this often means they can focus on goals other than pronunciation, or on more advanced pronunciation goals, such as persuasiveness in communication. With respect to research in general, the limitations of this study could be addressed in future work by using more objective and external assessments of both students' and teachers' pronunciation, such as evaluations by trained phoneticians instead of self-reports.

References

Aiello, Jacqueline, & Mongibello, Anna (2019). Supporting EFL learners with a virtual environment: A focus on L2 pronunciation. *Journal of E-Learning and Knowledge Society*, *15*(1). https://doi.org/10.20368/1971-8829/1444

Banzina, Elina (2024). Exploring phonetic cues to persuasive oral presentation: A study with British English speakers and English L2 learners. *Language Teaching Research*, *28*(5), 1777-1796. https://doi.org/10.1177/136216882110376

Bernat, Eva (2008). Towards a pedagogy of empowerment: The case of 'impostor syndrome' among pre-service non-native speaker teachers in TESOL. *English Language Teacher Education and Development*, *11*(1), 1-8.

Bongaerts, Teo, van Summeren, Chantal, Planken, Brigitte, & Schils, Erik (1997). Age and ultimate attainment in the pronunciation of a foreign language. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *19*(4), 447-465. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263197004026

Brauchli, Valérie, Sticca, Fabio, Edelsbrunner, Peter, von Wyl, Agnes, & Lannen, Patricia (2024). Are screen media the new pacifiers? The role of parenting stress and parental attitudes for children's screen time in early childhood. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *152*, 108057. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2023.108057

Braun, Virginia, & Clarke, Victoria (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Chik, Alice. (2014). Digital gaming and language learning: Autonomy and community. *Language Learning & Technology.* 18. 85 - 100. 10.64152/10125/44371. https://doi.org/10.64152/10125/44371

De Riso, Camilla (2025). *Informal learning of English at University: A cross-sectional and longitudinal perspective*. Franco Angeli

De Wilde, Vanessa & Eyckmans, June (2017). Game on! Young learners' incidental language learning of English prior to instruction. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, *7*(4), 673-694. https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2017.7.4.6

De Wilde, Vanessa, Brysbaert, Marc, & Eyckmans, June. (2020). Learning English through out-of-school exposure. Which levels of language proficiency are attained and which types of input are important? *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, *23*(1), 171-185. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728918001062

Duryagin, Peter, & Dal Maso, Elena (2022). Students' attitudes towards foreign accents: General motivation, the attainability of native-like pronunciation, and identity issues. In David Newbold, & Peter Paschke (Eds.), *Accents and pronunciation* (pp. 33-62). Venice University Press.

El Ouastani, Soufiane (2022). Foreign language teaching anxiety: The perspective of non-native foreign language teachers. In Mathea Simons and Tom Smits (Eds.) *Language Education and Emotions* (pp. 111-133). Routledge.

Esling, John H., & Wong, Rita F. (1983). Voice quality settings and the teaching of pronunciation. *TESOL Quarterly*, *17*(1), 89-95. https://doi.org/10.2307/3586426

Flege, James Emil., Aoyama, Katsura, & Bohn, Ocke-Schwen (2021). The revised speech learning model (SLM-r) applied. In Ratree Wayland (Ed.) *Second language speech learning: Theoretical and empirical progress* (pp.84-118). https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108886901.003

Funk, Jeanne B., Brouwer, Jason, Curtiss, Kathleen, & McBroom, Evan (2009). Parents of preschoolers: Expert media recommendations and ratings knowledge, media-effects beliefs, and monitoring practices. *Pediatrics*, *123*(3), 981-988. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2008-1543

Ghanem, Romy, & Kang, Okim (2021). ESL students' reverse linguistic stereotyping of English teachers. *ELT Journal*, *75*(3), 330-340. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccab011

Hannibal Jensen, Signe, & Lauridsen, Jørgen T. (2023). Extramural English for early language learning: A blessing or a curse? *Language Teaching for Young Learners, 5*(1), 85-109. https://doi.org/10.1075/ltyl.22011.han

Hendriks, Berna, & van Meurs, Frank (2022). Dutch students' evaluations of EMI and L1MOI lectures: The role of non-native pronunciation. *System, 108*, 102849. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2022.102849

Jenkins, Jennifer (2000). *The phonology of English as an international language*. Oxford University Press.

Jensen, Signe H. (2017). Gaming as an English language learning resource among young children in Denmark. *CALICO Journal*, *34*(1), 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1558/cj.29519

Jiang, Xiaoming, & Pell, Marc D. (2017). The sound of confidence and doubt. *Speech Communication*, *88*, 106-126. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.specom.2017.01.011

Jóhannsdóttir, Asrun (2017). English exposure and vocabulary proficiency at the onset of English instruction. In *Language development across the life span: The impact of English on education and work in Iceland* (pp. 57-78). Springer International Publishing.

Johnson, Jacqueline S., & Newport, Elissa L. (1989). Critical period effects in second language learning: The influence of maturational state on the acquisition of English as a second language. *Cognitive psychology*, *21*(1), 60-99. https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0285(89)90003-0

Kelch, Ken, & Santana-Williamson, Eliana (2002). ESL students' attitudes toward native-and nonnative-speaking instructors' accents. *The CATESOL Journal*, *14*(1). https://doi.org/10.5070/B5.36411

Klofstad, Casey A. (2016). Candidate voice pitch influences election outcomes. *Political Psychology*, *37*(5), 725-738.

Kralova, Zdena, & Tirpakova, Anna (2019). Nonnative EFL teachers' speaking anxiety: Post-communist country context. *Sage Open*, *9*(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019846698

Krüger, Maleika (2023). *Media-related out-of-school contact with English in Germany and Switzerland: frequency, forms and the effect on language learning*.Springer Nature.

Kuppens, An H. (2010). Incidental foreign language acquisition from media exposure. *Learning, Media and Technology, 35*(1), 65-85. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439880903561876

Lefever, Samúel (2010). English skills of young learners in Iceland: "I started talking English when I was 4 years old. It just bang… just fall into me." Presented at the Menntakvika Conference, Reijkjavik, Iceland.

Lenneberg, Eric H. (1967). *Biological foundations of language*. Wiley.

Lindgren, Eva, & Muñoz, Carmen (2013). The influence of exposure, parents, and linguistic distance on young European learners' foreign language comprehension. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *10*(1), 105-129. https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2012.679275

Luttrell, Regina, & McGrath, Karen (2021). *Gen Z: The superhero generation*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Mahboob, Ahmar (Ed.). (2010). *The NNEST lens: Non native English speakers in TESOL*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Muñoz, Carmen (2014). Contrasting effects of starting age and input on the oral performance of foreign language learners. *Applied Linguistics*, *35*(4), 463-482. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amu024

Muñoz, Carmen (2020). Boys like games and girls like movies. Age and gender differences in out-of-school contact with English. *Revista Española de Lingüística Aplicada 33*(1): 172-202. https://doi.org/10.1075/resla.18042.mun

Muñoz, Carmen, Cadierno, Teresa, & Casas, Isabel (2018). Different starting points for early foreign language learning: A comparative study with Danish and Spanish young learners of English. *Language Learning* 68(4). https://doi-org.pros1.lib.unimi.it/10.1111/lang.12309

Muñoz, Carmen, & Singleton, David (2011). A critical review of age-related research on L2 ultimate attainment. *Language teaching*, *44*(1), 1-35. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444810000327

Nelson, Katherine, & Fivush, Robyn (2004). The emergence of autobiographical memory: a social cultural developmental theory. *Psychological Review*, *111*(2), 486. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.111.2.486

Newbold, David (2022). ELF 'Awareness': Student attitudes towards accents in a context of English as an International Language. In David Newbold, & Peter Paschke (Eds.), *Accents and pronunciation*. Venice University Press. http://doi.org/10.30687/978-88-6969-628-2/004

Ojima, Shiro, Matsuba-Kurita, Hiroko, Nakamura, Naoko, Hoshino, Takahiro, & Hagiwara, Hiroko (2011). Age and amount of exposure to a foreign language during childhood: Behavioral and ERP data on the semantic comprehension of spoken English by Japanese children. *Neuroscience Research*, *70*(2), 197-205. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neures.2011.01.018

Pavesi, Maria, & Ghia, Elisa (2020). *Informal contact with English: A case study of Italian postgraduate students*. ETS.

Peters, Elke (2018). The effect of out-of-class exposure to English language media on learners' vocabulary knowledge. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *169*(1), 142-168. https://doi.org/10.1075/bct.109.itl.00010.pet

Peters, Elke, Noreillie, Ann-Sophie, Heylen, Kris, Bulté, Bram, & Desmet, Piet (2019). The impact of instruction and out-of-school exposure to foreign language input on learners' vocabulary knowledge in two languages. *Language Learning*, *69*(3), 747-782. https://doi-org.pros1.lib.unimi.it/10.1111/lang.12351

Pew Research Center. (2020, May 14). *On the cusp of adulthood and facing an uncertain future: what we know about Gen Z so far.*" [Report]. https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/05/14/on-the-cusp-of-adulthood-and-facing-an-uncertain-future-what-we-know-about-gen-z-so-far/

Puimège, Eva, & Peters, Elke (2019). Learners' English vocabulary knowledge prior to formal instruction: The role of learner-related and word-related variables. *Language Learning*, *69*(4), 943-977. https://doi-org.pros1.lib.unimi.it/10.1111/lang.12364

Radesky, Jenny S., & Christakis, Dimitri A. (2016). Increased screen time: implications for early childhood development and behavior. *Pediatric Clinics*, *63*(5), 827-839. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pcl.2016.06.006

Reinhardt, Jonathon (2018). *Gameful second and foreign language teaching and learning: Theory, research, and practice*. Springer.

Rideout, Victoria, & Robb, Michael B. (2020). *The Common Sense census: Media use by kids age zero to eight, 2020*. Common Sense Media.

Rindal, Ulrikke, & Piercy, Caroline (2013). Being 'neutral'? English pronunciation among Norwegian learners. *World Englishes*, *32*(2), 211-229. https://doi-org.pros1.lib.unimi.it/10.1111/weng.12020

Rubin, Donald L., & Smith, Kim A. (1990). Effects of accent, ethnicity, and lecture topic on undergraduates' perceptions of nonnative English-speaking teaching assistants. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 14*(3), 337-353. https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(90)90019-S

Scheffler, Paweł & Baranowska, Karolina (2023). Learning pronunciation through television series. *Language Learning and Technology, 27*(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.64152/10125/73520

Sockett, Geoffrey, & Kusyk, Meryl (2015). Online informal learning of English: Frequency effects in the uptake of chunks of language from participation in web-based activities. *Usage-based perspectives on second language learning*, 153-177. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110378528-009

Sundqvist, Pia (2009). *Extramural English matters: Out-of-school English and its impact on Swedish ninth graders' oral proficiency and vocabulary* (Doctoral dissertation, Karlstad University).

Sundqvist, Pia, & Sylvén, Liss Kerstin (2016). Extramural English in Teaching and Learning. From Theory and Research to Practice. Palgrave Macmillan.

Sundqvist, Pia, & Wikström, Peter (2015). Out-of-school digital gameplay and in-school L2 English vocabulary outcomes. *System*, *51*, 65-76. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2015.04.001

Sylvén, Liss Kerstin, & Sundqvist, Pia (2012). Gaming as extramural English L2 learning and L2 proficiency among young learners. *ReCALL*, *24*(3), 302-321.

Tang, Cecilia (1997). The identity of the nonnative ESL teacher. *Tesol Quarterly*, *31*(3), 577-580. https://doi-org.pros1.lib.unimi.it/10.2307/3587840

Timmis, Ivor (2002). Native-speaker norms and International English: A classroom view. *ELT Journal,* 56 (3), 240-249. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/56.3.240

Toffoli, Denyze, Sockett, Geoffrey, & Kusyk, Meryl (Eds.). (2023). *Language learning and leisure: Informal language learning in the digital age* (Vol. 66). Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG.

Whitehead, George E., & Ryu, Young Mok (2023). "I am not a native speaker…": Exploring the perceived pronunciation teaching difficulties faced by Korean public elementary school English teachers. *System*, *115*, 103056. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2023.103056

Wisniewska, Natalia, & Mora, Joan C. (2020). Can captioned video benefit second language pronunciation? *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *42*(3), 599–624. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263120000029

World Population Review (2025). Top YouTubers by Country 2025.

Yibokou, Kossi Seto (2023). Influence of television series on pronunciation. In Denyze Toffoli, Paul Sabatier, Geoffrey Sockett, and Meryl Kusyk, (Eds.), *Language learning and leisure: Informal language learning in the digital age* (pp. 121-140). De Gruyter Mouton.

Appendix
Online Survey Questions

1. Create a short code name for yourself (for anonymity purposes), enter it in the space below, and tell it to your classmates. Now ask 3 of your classmates to rate your pronunciation as you read the following: "When the sunlight strikes raindrops in the air, they act as a prism and form a rainbow. The rainbow is a division of white light into many beautiful colors. These take the shape of a long round arch, with its path high above, and its two ends apparently beyond the horizon. There is, according to legend, a boiling pot of gold at one end. People look, but no one ever finds it."
2. Now rate the pronunciation of 3 of your classmates as they read the same passage. Write down each classmate's (i) CODE NAME and (ii) SCORE from 0 (poor) to 100 (native-like):
3. At what age did you start consuming English content (audio, video)?
4. What is your earliest childhood memory using English?
5. What/who has affected your pronunciation the most?
6. How many hours daily did you spend on English media (audio, video) before entering our school?
7. Do you mostly consume British or American content, or do you prefer other English varieties? (a) American; (b) British; (c) other (specify)
8. Are you striving for a British or American pronunciation, if at all? (a) American; (b) British; (c) other (specify)
9. Please rate your English pronunciation now, from 0 (poor) to 100 (native-like):
10. Does your pronunciation need improvement? – Select Choice
11. How important to you is sounding native-like? – Select Choice
12. Your high school English teacher was: (a) a native English speaker; (b) a non-native English speaker
13. If your high school English teacher was a NON-NATIVE speaker, please rate their pronunciation from 0 (poor) to 100 (native-like):
14. Was your high school English teacher a good model of English pronunciation? – Select Choice
15. Did your high school English teacher address pronunciation in class? – Select Choice
16. If "yes", what features did your teacher address, and how?
17. If "yes", was pronunciation a special component of your English class?
18. If you were given a chance to sound more native-like in English or more persuasive in English, which one would you pick? – Select Choice

Elina Banzina, Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, Department of Languages and Communication
elina.banzina@sseriga.edu

EN **Elina Banzina** is an Assistant Professor at the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga. Her research focuses on English pronunciation learning and teaching, second-language speech perception and production, and the phonetics, use, and perception of persuasive speech in English from a cross-linguistic perspective.

ES **Elina Banzina** es profesora adjunta en la Escuela de Economía de Estocolmo en Riga. Su investigación se centra en el aprendizaje y la enseñanza de la pronunciación del inglés, la percepción y la producción del habla en una segunda lengua, y la fonética, el uso y la percepción del discurso persuasivo en inglés desde una perspectiva interlingüística.

IT **Elina Banzina** è ricercatrice universitaria presso la Stockholm School of Economics di Riga. La sua ricerca si concentra sull'apprendimento e l'insegnamento della pronuncia inglese, sulla percezione e la produzione del parlato in una seconda lingua e sulla fonetica, l'uso e la percezione del discorso persuasivo in inglese da una prospettiva interlinguistica.

EuroAmerican Journal of Applied Linguistics and Languages
E-JournALL, Volume 12, Issue 2, November 2025, 76-79
ISSN 2376-905X
http://doi.org/10.21283/2376905X.1.12.2.3474
www.e-journall.org

Reseña: Benati, Alessandro G. (2024). *Second language teacher education. A cognitive and evidence-based perspective*. Bloomsbury.

GIACOMO CUCINOTTA
Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia

Book Review
Received 10 August 2025; accepted after revisions 13 October 2025

ABSTRACT

ES El volumen reseñado ofrece una exposición clara y bien fundamentada de los principios que subyacen a la moderna didáctica de idiomas, dirigida principalmente a estudiantes de didáctica de lenguas y a quienes se ocupan de su formación. El autor presenta la materia dentro de un marco cognitivo que integra la investigación académica con la práctica en el aula. La obra destaca por su enfoque en los principios modernos de la enseñanza de lenguas, como la importancia de proporcionar un input de calidad y actividades significativas. Sin embargo, presenta ciertas limitaciones en el tratamiento de los factores afectivos en el aprendizaje de lenguas y carece de referencias bibliográficas directas que faciliten una profundización autónoma. A pesar de algunas limitaciones editoriales, el libro se valora como un recurso útil para la formación inicial en didáctica de idiomas.

Palabras clave: FORMACIÓN DEL PROFESORADO, ENSEÑANZA DE LENGUAS, MANUAL DE ENSEÑANZA, DIDÁCTICA DE IDIOMAS.

EN The volume presented in this review provides a clear and well-founded overview of the principles underlying modern language teaching, chiefly directed at undergraduate students in language teaching and teacher trainers. The author presents the subject within a cognitive framework that integrates academic research with classroom practice. The book highlights key principles of modern language education, such as the importance of high-quality input and meaningful activities. However, it presents some limitations in addressing the affective factors of language learning and lacks direct bibliographical references to facilitate further independent study. Despite some editorial shortcomings, the book is considered a valuable resource for language teacher education programmes.

Keywords: TEACHER EDUCATION, LANGUAGE TEACHING, TEXTBOOKS, LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY

IT Il volume presentato in questa recensione offre una trattazione chiara e ben fondata dei principi alla base della moderna glottodidattica e si rivolge principalmente a studenti delle lauree triennali in didattica delle lingue e a chi si occupa di formazione. L'autore espone la questione all'interno di un quadro cognitivo che integra i risultati della ricerca accademica con la pratica in classe e sottolinea l'importanza di alcuni principi fondamentali dell'insegnamento linguistico, come l'importanza di input di qualità e di attività significative. Risulta, tuttavia, poco approfondito nel trattare i fattori affettivi dell'apprendimento linguistico e manca di riferimenti bibliografici diretti che facilitino un approfondimento autonomo. Nonostante alcune carenze editoriali, il libro è comunque da considerarsi come una risorsa utile per la formazione iniziale in didattica delle lingue.

Parole chiave: FORMAZIONE DOCENTI, INSEGNAMENTO DELLE LINGUE, LIBRI DI TESTO, DIDATTICA DELLE LINGUE

✉ **Giacomo Cucinotta,** Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia
giacomo.cucinotta@unive.it

Second Language Teacher Education: A Cognitive and Evidence-Based Perspective se distingue por su enfoque en la didáctica de lenguas desde una perspectiva moderna y basada en la evidencia; por lo tanto, se alinea con los principios más recientes de la investigación en la adquisición de segundas lenguas. Alessandro Benati estructura su exposición de manera accesible, proporcionando una base teórica fundamentada sin descuidar su aplicabilidad en el aula. El volumen está diseñado para estudiantes de grado en formación como docentes de idiomas, integrando resúmenes concisos ("In a nutshell"), actividades reflexivas ("Reflect on this") y cuestionarios de autoevaluación, recursos que facilitan la interiorización progresiva de los contenidos.

El volumen está estructurado en once capítulos, correspondientes a las diversas facetas de la didáctica de lenguas. Los primeros dos capítulos establecen los fundamentos teóricos al examinar los ingredientes básicos del aprendizaje y el desarrollo del sistema lingüístico en la mente del aprendiente. El capítulo 3 evalúa los efectos de la instrucción formal, sopesando los beneficios y límites de una enseñanza explícita. A partir del capítulo 4, el enfoque se desplaza hacia la práctica en el aula: primero, se define el concepto de "lengua" y su relevancia pedagógica, para luego, en el capítulo 5, explorar formas dinámicas de organizar la clase. Los capítulos 6 y 7 se centran en el corazón del enfoque comunicativo, detallando estrategias para crear un entorno rico en input y para desarrollar la competencia comunicativa de los estudiantes. Los últimos tres capítulos abordan cuestiones metodológicas cruciales: el capítulo 8 se dedica a la enseñanza de la gramática y a la corrección de errores; el capítulo 9 ofrece una guía para el diseño de tareas didácticas eficaces; y el capítulo 10 explora el uso de la tecnología como herramienta de apoyo. Cierra la obra un capítulo final que recopila y responde a las preguntas frecuentes sobre enseñanza/aprendizaje de idiomas.

Uno de los aspectos más destacados de la obra es su capacidad para sintetizar los pilares fundamentales de la didáctica de lenguas modernas. Benati enfatiza la primacía de un input comprensible y significativo como motor esencial de la adquisición, desestimando enfoques anticuados basados en la instrucción explícita de reglas gramaticales. Además, resalta la importancia de actividades comunicativas que fomenten la construcción y la negociación del significado en contextos auténticos.

Uno de los aciertos más notables y valientes del volumen es, sin duda, la decisión pedagógica del autor de minimizar la exposición historiográfica para centrarse casi exclusivamente en los hallazgos empíricos recientes y en los enfoques de enseñanza que hoy gozan de un sólido respaldo científico. Mientras que muchos manuales introductorios optan por un recorrido diacrónico por la historia de la didáctica de lenguas —un enfoque que, si bien puede ofrecer una visión panorámica completa, corre el riesgo de dedicar un tiempo precioso a teorías hoy consideradas obsoletas—, Benati adopta una perspectiva radicalmente pragmática. Esta elección resulta especialmente beneficiosa para el futuro profesorado. En lugar de perderse en los meandros de debates teóricos superados, se le ofrece un acceso más directo a los principios metodológicos que la investigación actual considera más eficaces para promover la adquisición de una segunda lengua. De este modo, la obra no solo facilita una comprensión más ágil de los fundamentos, sino que se posiciona como una herramienta formativa de gran pertinencia, orientada a la acción y a la práctica informada, en perfecta sintonía con las exigencias de la enseñanza de idiomas contemporánea.

El lenguaje del libro es preciso y bien calibrado para un público que se acerca por primera vez a la materia. El autor consigue una prosa clara, directa y capaz de evitar los tecnicismos innecesarios y el simplismo excesivo; el resultado es un texto que, si bien es siempre accesible, nunca resulta laxo o impreciso. Esta accesibilidad se manifiesta en la exposición de conceptos teóricos complejos y en la definición de nociones clave de la disciplina, facilitando la comprensión de los fundamentos, incluso sin conocimientos previos en la materia.

En este sentido, hay que reconocer que, cuando Benati propone actividades prácticas, demuestra una notable habilidad para diseñar tareas que invitan a trabajar con la lengua y no meramente sobre la lengua. Este es, sin duda, uno de los méritos del libro, ya que alinea la práctica propuesta con el principio fundamental de que el aprendizaje se consolida a través del uso significativo y comunicativo. Sin embargo, es precisamente esta calidad la que deja a quien lee con el deseo de más, ya que la cantidad de ejemplos de aplicación directa en el aula es limitada. El futuro profesorado se beneficiaría enormemente de ver cómo los principios teóricos se materializan en actividades adaptadas a distintos contextos de enseñanza/aprendizaje. Por ello, si bien el texto sienta bases sólidas, su uso en un programa de formación docente debería ser complementado con un repertorio mucho más amplio y diversificado de ejemplos prácticos que muestren la flexibilidad de los principios expuestos.

En su trabajo, el autor consigue mostrar los beneficios y la validez del enfoque comunicativo en la enseñanza de idiomas; pero, en varias ocasiones, las explicaciones se desarrollan principalmente en contraste con el enfoque formalista. Este planteamiento, aunque pertinente, podría haberse ampliado para incluir una mayor consideración de otros enfoques metodológicos, teniendo en cuenta que gran parte del alumnado de

hoy en día ya ha recibido una formación lingüística en marcos didácticos que van más allá de la tradición formalista.

Si bien cuenta con muchos méritos, la obra presenta ciertas deficiencias. En primer lugar, aunque Benati reconoce la relevancia de los factores afectivos en el aprendizaje de segundas lenguas (motivación, ansiedad, autonomía, etc.), estos aspectos reciben un tratamiento somero; lo cual es especialmente notable si se considera que, en la última década, la investigación en lingüística aplicada ha destacado el papel de las variables afectivo-emotivas en la adquisición de idiomas. Asimismo, el volumen adopta un enfoque teórico predominantemente innatista, lo que podría haberse enriquecido con una integración más equilibrada de otras perspectivas contemporáneas, como los modelos basados en el aprendizaje estadístico, la teoría de la mente o la pragmática.

En segundo lugar, otro punto crítico es la ausencia de referencias bibliográficas directas en el desarrollo del texto. Si bien cada capítulo incluye una sección con lecturas recomendadas, la falta de citas explícitas dificulta la verificación de fuentes, especialmente en lo que respecta a estudios sobre metodologías didácticas y mecanismos de aprendizaje, lo que complica el contraste autónomo con la literatura científica existente, en particular con fines de investigación o para la elaboración de una tesis.

Finalmente, algunos elementos dan la impresión de que el libro se habría beneficiado de una revisión editorial más exhaustiva, ya que presenta algunas repeticiones innecesarias, errores tipográficos y pasajes contradictorios en la exposición de algunos conceptos. Además, la insistencia del autor en repetir algunos conceptos clave (como la indiscutible importancia del input comprensible) genera una sensación de redundancia que podría haberse mitigado con una estructura argumentativa más variada. A este respecto, el estilo de redacción tiende a ser reiterativo, con un uso excesivo de la voz pasiva, lo que afecta la fluidez de la lectura. En cuanto a la presentación visual, el uso de esquemas y gráficos es escaso y, en los casos en los que se incluyen, su efectividad podría mejorarse. Todos estos son elementos que se podrían ajustar con una revisión más minuciosa.

A pesar de sus limitaciones, *Second Language Teacher Education: A Cognitive and Evidence-Based Perspective* constituye un recurso valioso para la formación inicial en didáctica de lenguas. Su claridad expositiva y su énfasis en la fundamentación empírica lo convierten en una herramienta muy útil para estudiantes de didáctica de lenguas, así como para profesorado que busca actualizarse en los principios esenciales de la disciplina. La falta de profundidad en algunas teorías más modernas y la ausencia de referencias directas pueden ser complementadas con otras fuentes que asimismo aborden de manera más equilibrada las dimensiones cognitivas y afectivas del proceso de adquisición de idiomas.

La elección de condensar toda la perspectiva histórica en apenas tres páginas —que podrían parecer pocas pero resultan del todo suficientes— indica que la intención del volumen no es la erudición histórica, sino la competencia práctica del futuro profesorado. Esta orientación se traduce en un esfuerzo constante por dirigir la atención no solo hacia los mecanismos de adquisición lingüística, sino también hacia su aplicación en el aula de idiomas. En este sentido, destaca que los ejemplos de actividades propuestos induzcan a trabajar con la lengua en situaciones comunicativas significativas, lo cual constituye un principio clave para una didáctica de lenguas moderna.

El libro incluye una variedad de ejercicios que van desde actividades de comprensión conceptual hasta tareas más aplicadas, como el diseño de secuencias didácticas y el análisis de interacciones en clase. Estos ejercicios representan uno de los puntos fuertes de la obra, ya que fomentan una aproximación activa a los contenidos teóricos. La ausencia de claves de corrección o modelos de respuesta limita su efectividad para el aprendizaje autónomo; aun así, las actividades representan tareas desafiantes para un público con poca experiencia docente. Su potencial, por tanto, se aprovecha al máximo dentro de un curso de didáctica que incluya ejercitaciones prácticas, ya que este contexto guiado es el marco ideal para ofrecer la retroalimentación y la variedad de ejemplos aplicados que el libro no proporciona.

En conclusión, *Second Language Teacher Education. A Cognitive and Evidence-Based Perspective* de Alessandro Benati cumple su función como introducción a la didáctica de lenguas desde una perspectiva basada en la evidencia. Su enfoque teórico es sólido y su claridad expositiva lo hace accesible, aunque el libro se beneficiaría de una edición más atenta y de un tratamiento más equitativo de los factores afectivos del aprendizaje. Cabe destacar su contribución a la consolidación de principios esenciales de la moderna enseñanza de segundas lenguas y su potencial como material de formación inicial, especialmente si se complementa con lecturas adicionales.

Giacomo Cucinotta, Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia
giacomo.cucinotta@unive.it

ES **Giacomo Cucinotta**, natural de Varese, de segunda generación, estudió mediación y ha impartido clases de italiano como segunda lengua y como lengua extranjera (L2 y LE) durante doce años, tanto en Italia como en el extranjero. Obtuvo el doctorado en la Universidad Ca' Foscari de Venecia, institución con la que sigue colaborando en investigaciones relacionadas con la psicología del aprendizaje y la enseñanza de lenguas, así como, especialmente, con la formación del profesorado. Sus principales ámbitos de interés son la motivación y la ansiedad de hablar en lengua extranjera.

EN **Giacomo Cucinotta**, a second-generation native of Varese, studied language mediation and has taught Italian as a second and foreign language (L2 and LS) for twelve years in Italy and abroad. He earned his PhD at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, where he continues to collaborate on research related to the psychology of language learning and teaching, and, above all, to the training of future teachers. His main areas of interest are motivation and foreign language speaking anxiety.

IT **Giacomo Cucinotta,** varesino di seconda generazione, ha studiato mediazione ed ha insegnato italiano L2 e LS per dodici anni in Italia e all'estero. Ha conseguito il dottorato presso l'Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia, ateneo con cui collabora dedicandosi alla ricerca relativa alla psicologia dell'apprendimento/insegnamento delle lingue e, soprattutto, alla formazione di chi vuole diventare insegnante. I suoi principali ambiti d'interesse sono la motivazione e l'ansia di parlare in lingua straniera.

EuroAmerican Journal of Applied Linguistics and Languages
E-JournALL, Volume 12, Issue 2, November 2025, pages 80-83
ISSN 2376-905X
http://doi.org/10.21283/2376905X.1.12.2.3472
www.e-journall.org

Review: Sindoni, Maria Grazia, & Moschini, Ilaria (Eds.) (2022). *Multimodal literacies across digital learning contexts.* Routledge.

AUDREY WILLOUGHBY
University of Milan

Book review
Received 5 August 2025; accepted 9 October 2025

ABSTRACT

EN This review looks at *Multimodal Literacies Across Digital Learning Contexts*, edited by Maria Grazia Sindoni and Ilaria Moschini with a focus on how it might be useful for language educators working in digital classrooms. The review takes the volume as a starting point for thinking through teaching practices, especially how educators might make better use of digital tools and multimodal approaches. This review highlights ideas that can help teachers reflect on their roles not just as instructors, but as people who shape learning experiences that value students' voices, agency, and different ways of making meaning. The volume offers examples of how multimodal thinking plays out in real educational settings from early childhood to university, touching on topics like digital storytelling, translanguaging, and assessment with multiple modes in mind. This review highlights how the book can support language teachers, teacher trainers, and curriculum designers in rethinking what counts as learning and how to support it in more inclusive and creative ways. In doing so, it underscores the volume's value not only as a contribution to multimodality research but also as a resource for reimagining language learning environments.

Keywords: MULTIMODALITY, PEDAGOGY, DIGITAL LEARNING, LEARNING DESIGN, TEACHING.

ES Esta reseña analiza el volumen *Multimodal Literacies Across Digital Learning Contexts*, editado por Maria Grazia Sindoni e Ilaria Moschini, centrándose en su posible utilidad para el profesorado de lenguas que trabaja en aulas digitales. La reseña toma el volumen como punto de partida para reflexionar sobre las prácticas docentes, en particular sobre cómo el profesorado puede aprovechar mejor las herramientas digitales y los enfoques multimodales. Se destacan ideas que pueden ayudar al profesorado a reflexionar sobre su papel como instructores y como personas que promueven experiencias de aprendizaje que valoran las voces, la autonomía y las diversas formas de construcción de significado de los estudiantes. El volumen presenta ejemplos de cómo el pensamiento multimodal se manifiesta en contextos reales de todos los niveles educativos abordando temas como la narración digital, el *translanguaging* y la evaluación, teniendo en cuenta múltiples modos de expresión. Esta reseña destaca cómo el libro puede apoyar a quienes enseñan lenguas, forman al profesorado o diseñan currículos a la hora de repensar qué se entiende por aprendizaje y cómo promoverlo de manera más inclusiva y creativa. De este modo, se subraya el valor del volumen como recurso para reimaginar los entornos de aprendizaje de lenguas y para la investigación sobre multimodalidad.

Palabras clave: MULTIMODALIDAD, PEDAGOGÍA, APRENDIZAJE DIGITAL, DISEÑO DE APRENDIZAJE, ENSEÑANZA DE LENGUAS.

IT Questa recensione esplora il volume *Multimodal Literacies Across Digital Learning Contexts*, a cura di Maria Grazia Sindoni e Ilaria Moschini, con attenzione alla sua possibile utilità per docenti di lingue che operano nelle aule digitali. La recensione prende spunto dal volume per riflettere sulle pratiche didattiche, in particolare su come chi insegna possa fare un utilizzo migliore di strumenti digitali e approcci multimodali. Si evidenziano idee che invitano i docenti a riflettere sul proprio ruolo come veicolatori di conoscenze e come soggetti che promuovono esperienze di apprendimento aperte alla pluralità di voci, autonomie e modalità espressive di chi apprende. Il volume offre esempi di come il pensiero multimodale si manifesti in contesti reali, dall'infanzia all'università, affrontando temi quali la narrazione digitale, il *translanguaging* e la valutazione attraverso diversi modi comunicativi. La recensione evidenzia come il libro possa supportare chi insegna le lingue, forma i docenti o progetta i curricula nel ripensare che cosa si intende per apprendimento e come promuoverlo in modo più inclusivo e creativo. In tal modo, si sottolinea il valore del volume come contributo per reimmaginare gli ambienti di apprendimento linguistico e per la ricerca sulla multimodalità.

Parole chiave: MULTIMODALITÀ, PEDAGOGIA, APPRENDIMENTO DIGITALE, PROGETTAZIONE DIDATTICA, INSEGNAMENTO

✉ **Audrey Willoughby,** University of Milan
audrey.willoughby@unimi.it

Published by Routledge in 2022 as part of the Routledge Studies in Multimodality series, *Multimodal Literacies Across Digital Learning Contexts* is an edited collection that brings together voices from across the field of multimodality, digital communication, and education. The volume is edited by Maria Grazia Sindoni, Professor of English Linguistics and Translation at the University of Messina, and Ilaria Moschini, Assistant Professor of English Language and Linguistics at the University of Florence. It gathers fourteen chapters organized into three sections: early childhood education, secondary and higher education, and teacher-focused pedagogical practices.

As a reviewer coming from a background in applied linguistics and language teaching, I read this book with an eye toward what it might offer educators not just in terms of theoretical framing, but in the way it can inform daily teaching practices, shape how learning environments are designed, and support teachers in rethinking the materials they create. I'm especially interested in how this volume might help teachers integrate multimodal perspectives in meaningful, grounded, and practical ways without needing to reinvent their practices from scratch or adopt digital tools that don't serve clear instructional purposes. The review that follows is written as a reflective walkthrough of the volume for teachers and teacher educators wondering, "How can this book deepen my understanding of multimodality in the context of using digital tools and practices more creatively and effectively in today's classrooms?".

The editors open the volume with an important reminder that, although digital texts are often described as multimodal, the ways we teach with and about them rarely reflect the full complexity of how meaning actually works across visual, aural, spatial, and linguistic resources. They highlight the fact that multimodality isn't something new introduced by technology, but part of every human communicative act. Framing education through that lens pushes us to think beyond tools and toward practices, and prompts us to consider how we can design learning experiences that make room for students' full communicative repertoires.

The first two chapters following the editors' introduction offer distinct theoretical perspectives. In Chapter 1, "A Sensational Theory of Designed Experience: Replacement Parts for a Theory of Multimodality", Qing Archer Zhang and James Paul Gee reconceptualize multimodality through a theory of embodied learning and lived sensation. Their approach is theoretical, grounded in conceptual reflection. Chapter 2, "Pedagogies for Digital Learning: From Transpositional Grammar to the Literacies of Education", by Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis, introduces five principles of "reflexive pedagogy" using design-based research developed through the CGScholar platform.

For educators, these opening chapters are a kind of gentle provocation. They don't demand total reinvention, but they do raise questions about what we're doing when we ask students to create or engage with digital texts. Are we asking them to express meaning using all the resources available to them? Are we scaffolding reflection and choice-making? Are we recognizing the multimodal literacies they already bring with them? The early sections of this book offer a space to pause and reflect on these everyday practices with care and intentionality.

Part I turns attention to young learners and their early encounters with digital media. Chapter 3, "Stars, Scores and Cheers. A Social Semiotic Critique of "Fun" Learning in Commercial Educational Software for Children" by Gunhild Kvåle, uses critical multimodal discourse analysis to examine "fun" educational apps that often reinforce ideas of conformity and correctness under the guise of entertainment. Chapter 4, "Storytelling with Children in Informal Contexts: Learning to Narrate Across the Offline/Online Boundaries", by Maria Bortoluzzi, Elisa Bertoldi, and Ivana Marenzi, presents a qualitative case study from an Italian teacher training program, using observation and ELAN annotation to explore how storytelling across physical and digital spaces can empower children to construct their own narratives. Chapter 5, "Multilingual Children's Expressions of Participation in Preschools Using Digital Tablets" by Petra Petersen, draws on ethnographic fieldwork in Swedish preschools to explore how digital tablets support language development and social participation among children from minority language backgrounds. Chapter 6, "Watching the Sound: Sign-Making in Musical Expressiveness of Children with Motor-Related Disabilities Made Through Eye Tracking Software" by Záira Bomfante Dos Santos, Clarice Lage Gualberto, and Sônia Maria Oliveira Pimenta, uses classroom observation and interviews to examine the role of assistive tools in supporting diverse learners. Chapter 7, "Popularizing Scientific Knowledge for Children: A Multimodal Perspective" by Giuliana Diani, employs multimodal textual analysis of a children's climate change website to examine how verbal and visual modes work together to support understanding. These chapters encourage teachers of young learners to rethink what counts as literacy, and how we might expand our materials and methods. Imagine a teacher working with multilingual children reframing digital storytelling not as a polished "product," but as a process in which children combine image, voice, gesture, and language to express themselves and make sense of their experiences. In another

classroom, a student with dyslexia might use a visual mind-mapping tool to plan ideas for a class project, organizing thoughts through icons, color-coded connections, and short voice notes, highlighting their understanding in ways that don't rely on extended written text.

Part II focuses on learners in secondary and higher education. Chapter 8, "Exploring Multimodality in Video Podcasting to Enhance Intercultural Awareness in the East Asian Context" by Martin Parsons, Mikel Garant, and Larry Walker, uses classroom-based action research and student-produced video podcast data from university courses in Japan and China. Chapter 9, "Recognition of Student Resources in Digital Environments" by Arlene Archer, is based on meta-analysis and classroom case studies in South Africa to rethink assessment as recognition of learner diversity. Chapter 10, "Theory and Practice of the Common Framework of Reference for Intercultural Digital Literacies (CFRIDiL)" by Maria Grazia Sindoni, Elisabetta Adami, Styliani Karatza, Ilaria Moschini, and Sandra Petroni, details the development of a flexible assessment framework based on a multi-country pilot study involving students' digital productions and teacher feedback. These chapters connect with the increasing push in education to move away from teacher-led instruction and toward classrooms where students' lived literacies are welcomed and built upon. Rather than framing learners as blank slates, these chapters position them as creators who are already participating in multimodal meaning-making outside of school, and more than capable of bringing those abilities into academic work. A language teacher reading these chapters might find themselves rethinking familiar assignments. Instead of only analyzing a media text, why not ask students to create one, using video, images, and their voices to explore a topic they care about? This isn't about using tech for its own sake, but rather about recognizing students' fluency in multimodal expression and offering space for that in classrooms.

Part III shifts the focus to teachers themselves. Chapter 11, "Preparing for Teaching Digital Literacies in the Curriculum Disciplines: Meta-Semiotic Knowledge and Pedagogy" by Pauline Jones, Annette Turney, Wendy Nielsen, and Helen Georgiou, draws on reflective practitioner narratives and professional development data to explore how teachers build multimodal awareness. Chapter 12, "Analyzing Attitudinal Stance in OpenCourseWare Lectures: An Experimental Mixed-Method Approach" by Belinda Crawford Camiciottoli, uses corpus-assisted multimodal discourse analysis to investigate the interpersonal tone of academic lectures available on OpenCourseWare platforms. Chapter 13, "Making Science Easier to Access: Investigating Academic Social Networks as 'Composites of Connotations'" by Flavia Cavaliere, uses critical discourse analysis to examine how scholars construct their identities on academic platforms like ResearchGate. Chapter 14, "Teaching, Learning and Assessment of Multimodal Digital Academic Numeracy Practices" by Robert Prince, draws on classroom-based qualitative data to propose new ways of teaching numeracy through visual and multimodal strategies.

For those who train future teachers or lead professional development, these chapters offer concrete examples of how we can shift conversations from "what tech do I use?" to "how do I make learning experiences that are meaningful, inclusive, and attuned to the full range of how a group of students might communicate?" For teachers themselves, the chapters offer thoughtful models and a chance to reflect on how we are preparing ourselves (and not just our students) for this kind of learning.

Outside of the language education sphere, this book holds important insights for professionals and researchers working in multimodality, digital media studies, educational technology, literacy studies, and curriculum theory. Anyone interested in how communication, learning, and design intersect in digital contexts, especially through a social semiotic lens, will find this volume a valuable resource for expanding perspectives on meaning-making in contemporary education.

In bringing together such a wide range of perspectives, the volume cannot possibly cover every aspect of multimodal literacies in equal depth. Certain areas, such as assessment practices and informal learning contexts, are touched on only briefly, and the geographical coverage, while diverse, is not global. Far from diminishing its contribution, this selectivity underscores how expansive the field has become and points to directions for future inquiry. At the same time, because digital tools evolve so quickly, the studies included here serve as an important benchmark, offering insights that will continue to inspire new investigations as technologies and classroom practices continue to develop.

Multimodal Literacies Across Digital Learning Contexts doesn't hand readers a step-by-step guide or a definitive framework. Instead, it offers something more expansive: an open-ended invitation to rethink how we understand learning and how we create the conditions for it. The digital tools and practices this book explores aren't presented as magic solutions, but in the hands of thoughtful educators, they can become meaningful ways to recognize learners' voices, support their agency, and create more responsive classrooms

in context. It invites educators to see their classrooms as spaces of multimodal design, their students as active meaning-makers, and their materials as dynamic, layered texts.

References

Huang, Cheng-Wen (2022). Book Review: Multimodal Literacies Across Digital Learning Contexts. *Multimodality & Society, 2*(4), 451–453. https://doi.org/10.1177/26349795221126802

Audrey Willoughby, University of Milan
audrey.willoughby@unimi.it

EN **Audrey Willoughby** is a doctoral candidate in Linguistics at the University of Milan, in the Department of Languages, Literatures, Cultures and Mediations. She earned her Master's degree in Applied Linguistics from Texas A&M University–Commerce, where she wrote her thesis *Humor Markers in Computer-Mediated Communication*, and also completed a Graduate Certificate in TESOL. Her research examines how humor is realized semiotically in short-form video platforms, drawing on multimodal discourse analysis to investigate meaning-making in digital performance media. In addition to her academic work, Audrey has over ten years of experience as an English language instructor in international schools and public universities in both the USA and Italy, and has served as a CLIL coordinator in the Italian educational context.

ES **Audrey Willoughby** es doctoranda en Lingüística en la Universidad de Milán, en el Departamento de Lenguas, Literaturas, Culturas y Mediaciones. Obtuvo el máster en Lingüística Aplicada en la Texas A&M University–Commerce, donde elaboró su tesis *Humor Markers in Computer-Mediated Communication*, y completó asimismo un Certificado de Posgrado en TESOL. Su investigación analiza cómo se manifiesta el humor desde una perspectiva semiótica en las plataformas de vídeo de formato breve, utilizando el análisis del discurso multimodal para estudiar la construcción de significado en los medios digitales. Además de su actividad académica, Audrey cuenta con más de diez años de experiencia como profesora de lengua inglesa en centros escolares internacionales y universidades públicas tanto en Estados Unidos como en Italia, y ha desempeñado el cargo de coordinadora de Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y Lenguas Extranjeras (AICLE) en el contexto educativo italiano.

IT **Audrey Willoughby** è dottoranda in Linguistica presso l'Università degli Studi di Milano, presso il Dipartimento di Lingue, Letterature, Culture e Mediazioni. Ha conseguito la laurea magistrale in Linguistica Applicata presso la Texas A&M University-Commerce, con una tesi dal titolo *Humor Markers in Computer-Mediated Communication*. Possiede inoltre il Graduate Certificate in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). La sua ricerca esplora la resa dell'umorismo a livello semiotico nelle piattaforme digitali di video brevi. Attraverso l'analisi del discorso multimodale, vengono studiati i processi di costruzione del significato nei media digitali performativi. Oltre all'attività accademica, Audrey vanta oltre dieci anni di esperienza come docente di lingua inglese in scuole internazionali e università pubbliche, sia negli Stati Uniti che in Italia, e ha ricoperto il ruolo di coordinatrice CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) nel contesto educativo italiano.

EuroAmerican Journal of Applied Linguistics and Languages
E-JournALL, Volume 12, Issue 2, November 2025, 84-89
ISSN 2376-905X
http://doi.org/10.21283/2376905X.1.12.2.3479
www.e-journall.org

Book Review: Hiratsuka, Takaaki (2024) *Native-speakerism and trans-speakerism. Entering a new era.* Cambridge University Press.

GIULIA BERCHIO
Institut de plurilinguisme / Pädagogische Hochschule Graubünden

Book Review
Received 18 August 2025; accepted 24 September 2025

ABSTRACT

IT Questa recensione ha l'obiettivo di descrivere la struttura e i contenuti del volume *Native-Speakerism and Trans-Speakerism. Entering a New Era* di Takaaki Hiratsuka, edito nel 2024 dalla Cambridge University Press, e di porre in rilievo aspetti salienti della ricerca effettuata dall'autore. In particolare, vengono fatte emergere le ragioni che hanno dato modo all'interesse di ricerca nei confronti delle nozioni di *nativismo* e di *antinativismo* di farsi strada, e vengono poste in evidenza le proposte avanzate per far progredire la ricerca e la pratica nel campo dell'educazione linguistica, liberando le persone che operano in questo campo (future/i insegnanti e ricercatrici/ricercatori, insegnanti di scuola secondaria in servizio, docenti d'università) dalla visione dicotomica "parlante nativa/o" vs. "parlante non nativa/o". La recensione si conclude con alcune riflessioni di chi scrive sui pregi del volume, sulle potenziali criticità e sui possibili gruppi destinatari dei contenuti dell'opera.

Parole chiave: NATIVISMO, ANTINATIVISMO, EGEMONIA LINGUISTICA, PARLANTI NATIVE/I, PARLANTI NON NATIVE/I

EN This review aims to describe the structure and content of the volume *Native-Speakerism and Trans-Speakerism. Entering a New Era* by Takaaki Hiratsuka, published in 2024 by Cambridge University Press, and to emphasise the relevant aspects of the study carried out by the author. In particular, it presents the reasons that have driven the research on the notions of *native-speakerism* and *trans-speakerism* and it highlights the proposals introduced to advance in the analysis and practice of this subject in the field of Language Education, in an attempt to free those working in this field (future teachers/researchers, secondary school teachers in service, University professors) from the dichotomous perspective of "native speaker" vs "non-native speaker. The analysis concludes with some reflections by the author of the review on the virtues of the volume, including potential criticisms and addressees of the work.

Key words: NATIVE-SPEAKERISM, TRANS-SPEAKERISM, LINGUISTIC HEGEMONY, NATIVE SPEAKERS, NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS

ES Esta reseña tiene como objetivo describir la estructura y el contenido del volumen *Native-Speakerism and Trans-Speakerism. Entering a New Era* de Takaaki Hiratsuka, publicado en 2024 por Cambridge University Press, y destacar los aspectos relevantes del estudio realizado por el autor. En particular, se presentan las razones que han impulsado la investigación sobre las nociones de *nativismo* y *antinativismo*, y se evidencian las propuestas introducidas para hacer avanzar los análisis y la práctica de estos temas en el campo de la educación lingüística, intentando liberar a las personas que trabajan en este ámbito (futuro profesorado e investigadores/investigadoras, docentes de secundaria y de universidad) de la visión dicotómica de "hablante nativo" vs "hablante no nativo". Se concluye con algunas reflexiones de la autora de la reseña sobre las virtudes del volumen, las potenciales críticas y sus posibles destinatarios.

Palabras clave: NATIVISMO, ANTINATIVISMO, HEGEMONÍA LINGÜÍSTICA, HABLANTES NATIVOS/AS, HABLANTES NO NATIVOS/AS

✉ **Giulia Berchio,** Institut de plurilinguisme / Pädagogische Hochschule Graubünden / Universität Bern
giulia.berchio@unifr.ch

Attraverso un lavoro di revisione della letteratura e un'indagine narrativa, la ricerca qualitativa di Takaaki Hiratsuka, presentata nel volume *Native-Speakerism and Trans-Speakerism. Entering a New Era*, edito nel 2024 dalla Cambridge University Press, si propone di approfondire la nozione di *native-speakerism* applicata alla lingua inglese e le sue implicazioni per il mondo accademico e per il campo dell'educazione linguistica. Nello specifico l'autore, docente e ricercatore nell'ambito delle scienze linguistiche applicate presso la *Graduate School of International Studies* della *Ryukoku University* in Giappone e parlante non nativo dell'inglese, affronta il problema della debole presenza di studi teorici o empirici sul tema del *native-speakerism* inglese condotti da parlanti non-native/i di tale lingua (*non-native English speakers*, abbreviato in NNES nel testo originale) provenienti, in questo specifico caso, dal contesto giapponese. Come risposta a tale problema viene proposto un cambio di paradigma verso il *trans-speakerism*, un concetto che permetterebbe alle persone che operano nell'ambito dell'educazione linguistica e della ricerca in e sulla lingua inglese di vedere riconosciute le proprie abilità e competenze in questo settore, indipendentemente dalla propria lingua madre.

Il volume è suddiviso in sette capitoli. Il capitolo 1 introduce le premesse dello studio e gli obiettivi. Dapprima l'autore formula una considerazione sulla capacità della lingua madre di stabilire una connessione tra le/i parlanti e la società. Tuttavia, allo stesso tempo sottolinea che la lingua madre può avere un potere limitante, in particolare se confrontata con meccanismi di egemonia linguistica da parte di altre lingue. Nello specifico, le lingue in gioco nel contesto di questo studio sono il giapponese e l'inglese, dove l'inglese ha il ruolo di lingua non nativa nel repertorio di parlanti di lingua madre giapponese che operano nel campo dell'educazione linguistica inglese, sia in qualità di (future/i) insegnanti e ricercatrici/ricercatori di inglese sia come docenti d'università.

Per approfondire il problema sollevato, l'autore si è proposto di indagare il vissuto di tali figure. L'obiettivo era quello di ottenere un quadro articolato del modo in cui le loro vite sono influenzate dal concetto di *native-speakerism* e di ragionare sulle nuove opportunità che un concetto maggiormente flessibile come quello di *trans-speakerism* potrebbe offrire, soprattutto per ciò che concerne la riduzione dei *bias* che la dicotomia "parlante nativa/o" vs "parlante non nativa/o" ha contribuito ad alimentare.

Il capitolo 2 intende far luce, da una parte, sulla genesi del concetto di *native-speakerism* e, dall'altra, vuole porre in evidenza ciò che la letteratura scientifica sul tema ha già o non ha ancora detto. Relativamente al concetto di *native-speakerism*, l'autore pone in evidenza come la globalizzazione abbia dato adito a un incontro più intenso tra parlanti dell'inglese come lingua nativa (NES, ovvero *native English speakers*) e parlanti dell'inglese come lingua non-nativa in contesti come la scuola. Inoltre, viene rilevato come ciò abbia generato fenomeni di legittimazione del *native-speakerism* e dell'uso del repertorio e della storia linguistica di un'/un insegnante come metro per misurare le sue competenze in termini pedagogici. Da qui la proposta che questa dicotomia si ammorbidisca e venga valorizzato il continuum tra le due etichette, nel tentativo di conferire maggior dignità alle singole capacità, non esclusivamente linguistiche, di ciascun individuo operante in ambito educativo.

Nello stesso capitolo l'autore descrive il processo di revisione sistematica della letteratura sul *native-speakerism*, per portare a compimento il quale ha utilizzato principalmente *Google Scholar* e indicato, come termine di ricerca, "native-speakerism". Inoltre, il protocollo per la revisione prevedeva che della selezione facessero parte esclusivamente contributi a) contenenti tale termine non solo nel testo ma anche nel titolo, b) scritti in inglese, c) in cui l'inglese fosse oggetto di studio (insegnanti di inglese/insegnamento della lingua inglese) e d) pubblicati previo rigoroso processo di *peer-review*. In tutto, la revisione si è basata su 63 contributi (22 studi teorici e 41 studi empirici) e ha evidenziato come esistano pochi studi che si concentrino su parlanti non native/i dell'inglese (future/i insegnanti e ricercatrici/ricercatori, insegnanti di scuola in servizio, docenti d'università). L'autorevolezza e l'imprescindibilità di tali figure che, attraverso le proprie testimonianze, potrebbero arricchire e far progredire il campo d'indagine che si sviluppa attorno alla nozione di *native-speakerism* appaiono infatti, in base alla revisione della letteratura sul tema, ancora sottovalutate. Questo porta Hiratsuka a rivendicare un approccio più umano alla ricerca, che tenga conto delle voci di tutte le persone il cui agire è influenzato (e spesso limitato) da una determinata ideologia. L'autore rileva altresì come oltre ad approcci metodologici più inclusivi manchino anche studi capaci di proporre ideologie alternative. La resistenza al cambiamento nello specifico ambito di questa ricerca viene valutata vieppiù insostenibile, dal momento che le/i parlanti non native/i della lingua inglese nei contesti in cui l'inglese viene insegnato come lingua straniera costituiscono la maggior parte.

L'autore prosegue con una critica nei confronti delle/dei parlanti native/i dell'inglese che si esprimono a favore di una riconcettualizzazione del concetto di *native-speakerism*. Cita, a questo proposito, l'esempio di Rivers (2018), il quale afferma che le categorie estreme esistono solo nella mente di chi crede in queste

distinzioni, e sottolinea come il proprio pensiero si trovi in contrasto con quest'ultimo: secondo Hiratsuka, infatti, appartenere alla categoria delle/dei parlanti non native/i dell'inglese permette in realtà di percepire in modo netto la distinzione tra le due categorie "native/i" vs "non native/i", visibile già a partire dalla letteratura scientifica sul tema, dove è più folta la presenza di fonti sulle/sui parlanti native/i. Vengono sollevate, poi, altre criticità, in particolare relativamente alle strategie che le/i parlanti native/i metterebbero in atto per distogliere l'attenzione dal tema della discriminazione di parlanti non native/i dell'inglese negando, di fatto, l'esistenza di esigenze specifiche da parte di questa categoria e la difficoltà che essa incontra nell'ottenere un reale riconoscimento.

Riflettendo sull'ampia diffusione del termine *native-speakerism*, Hiratsuka pensa infine che sia ancora più necessario ponderare il passaggio ad altre terminologie che darebbero maggior dignità alle categorie delle/dei parlanti non native/i dell'inglese. Il prodotto di tale riflessione è la proposta del termine *trans-speakerism*, approfondito al capitolo 3. L'autore pone l'accento sull'importanza che siano soprattutto le/gli insegnanti di inglese a dover mappare e a far conoscere la realtà vissuta dalle/dai parlanti non native/i dell'inglese, a porre in evidenza le proprie percezioni, così da potersi sentire maggiormente legittimate/i ad agire in quel campo.

Il capitolo 3 è dedicato ad approfondire l'obiettivo ultimo del volume, ovvero quello di proporre un cambio di paradigma dalla nozione di *native-speakerism* a quella di *trans-speakerism*. Come afferma Hiratsuka, l'avvio di questa riflessione è stato possibile grazie alla lente della pedagogia critica, che permette di ragionare sui temi della riproduzione dei privilegi per certi gruppi, incoraggiando la ricerca di soluzioni che privilegino l'eterogeneità del panorama del mondo dell'educazione – linguistica, in questo caso – e smantellando etichette dicotomiche che alimentano meccanismi nocivi di messa a confronto, passibili di sfociare in atteggiamenti discriminatori. Agendo in questa cornice disciplinare, l'autore spiega di aver indagato, con la collaborazione dei suoi dottorandi, l'impatto della nozione di *native-speakerism* sulla vita delle persone che lavorano nell'ambito della ricerca e dell'insegnamento dell'inglese come parlanti non native/i di questa lingua e di aver posto le basi per la nascita della nozione alternativa di *trans-speakerism*.

Il consolidamento di questo percorso di ricerca è avvenuto attraverso uno studio multiplo di caso, sul quale si basa il presente volume. Tale studio ha previsto la raccolta (online) audio e video di testimonianze di parlanti non native/i dell'inglese in merito alle loro percezioni, alle emozioni, ai valori e alle esperienze che caratterizzano il loro rapporto con le due nozioni *native-speakerism* e *trans-speakerism*. Nel chiarire il proprio approccio al lavoro di indagine l'autore sottolinea l'importanza del paradigma di ricerca come "guide for readers to descern the study's underlying interpretive framework" (p. 50) e la responsabilità di chi conduce la ricerca di rendere tale paradigma trasparente. In questo caso, il paradigma scelto è quello costruttivista-interpretativo, che prevede un lavoro di co-costruzione del sapere, sapere che non è ricavato dal rapporto gerarchico tra chi ricerca e chi partecipa alla ricerca ma che pone al centro un processo di co-creazione e co-interpretazione.

Le/i partecipanti a questo studio di caso sono tutte/i residenti in Giappone e parlanti dell'inglese come lingua non nativa: quattro insegnanti di scuola secondaria, quattro future/i insegnanti di scuola secondaria o ricercatrici/ricercatori e quattro docenti d'università. Per effettuare il campionamento, l'autore riporta di aver scelto il metodo *maximum variation samplying*, che permette al campione di essere il più possibile diversificato, qui nello specifico in termini di età, genere, formazione ed esperienze vissute in ambienti anglofoni. Il livello di inglese delle/dei partecipanti allo studio è stato autovalutato. I dati sono stati analizzati attraverso un procedimento induttivo (raccolta dati, estrazione dei temi e spiegazione teorica dei temi estratti), tenendo sempre costante l'obiettivo di co-creazione delle storie di ciascuna/ciascun partecipante.

Nei capitoli 4, 5 e 6 l'autore si concentra sui risultati, dedicando ogni capitolo a un gruppo target. Ciascun capitolo presenta la stessa struttura: in linea con la tipologia di ricerca qualitativa adottata – l'indagine narrativa – vengono in un primo momento presentate le testimonianze dei singoli componenti di ciascun gruppo target. Si tratta di quattro estratti di intervista per ogni capitolo, intitolati con il nome (fittizio) della persona intervistata, dai quali emergono aspetti delle esperienze personali e formative in relazione alla lingua inglese e alle nozioni di *native-speakerism* e *trans-speakerism*. I due paragrafi successivi alle serie di narrazioni di ciascun gruppo target contengono un commento dell'autore sui contenuti di tali narrazioni, prima sul concetto di *native-speakerism*, poi di *trans-speakerism*. Seguono un paragrafo dedicato alla cornice concettuale che emerge dalle testimonianze di ogni gruppo e le considerazioni conclusive per ciascuno di essi.

Il capitolo conclusivo del volume si divide in tre sezioni. Nella prima vengono riprese le considerazioni dell'autore sui risultati dell'indagine per ciascuno dei tre gruppi target. In generale, viene posta in evidenza la necessità di riflessioni sistematiche sul tema del *native-speakerism* e del *trans-speakerism*, le quali

permetterebbero a tutti i gruppi di orientarsi maggiormente nel dibattito terminologico e ideologico, accrescendo le possibilità di inserirvisi in modo agentivo. Per quanto riguarda il gruppo delle/degli insegnanti di scuola secondaria in servizio, lo studio ha ad esempio rilevato la necessità di sviluppare materiali didattici maggiormente inclusivi dal punto di vista dei gruppi rappresentati, ovvero delle persone che parlano l'inglese, così da avere un'idea più diversificata di questa lingua e delle sue/dei suoi parlanti. Seguono le conclusioni relative al gruppo delle future e dei futuri insegnanti e ricercatrici/ricercatori, dove le misure prospettate per contrastare l'opposizione tra *native-speakerism* e *trans-speakerism* consisterebbero, ad esempio, in una nuova distribuzione dell'importanza degli obiettivi nell'ambito della formazione. Nello specifico, Hiratsuka sottolinea qui l'importanza di considerare alla pari concetti quali la precisione linguistica, l'efficacia comunicativa e la qualità della vita di queste figure. Infine, relativamente al gruppo delle e dei docenti d'università rileva la necessità che queste/i agiscano come promotrici e promotori del nuovo paradigma *trans-speakerism* e che il loro lavoro di divulgazione venga reso più sostenibile dalle case editrici e da tutte le figure che lavorano nel campo dell'editoria, che dovrebbero essere orientate a proporre politiche linguistiche di pubblicazione più inclusive e meno anglocentriche.

Nella seconda parte delle conclusioni vengono illustrati i limiti dello studio e conseguentemente proposte nuove vie di ricerca. Nello specifico, viene posto l'accento sul fatto che per poter validare il concetto di *trans-speakerism* e comprendere quali ostacoli potrebbero impedirne la diffusione dovrebbero essere potenziate le linee di ricerca in questo ambito. In particolare, si incoraggiano nuovi studi condotti con ampi campioni provenienti da diversi contesti: ad esempio, viene segnalata l'importanza di prevedere confronti non inclusi nella presente indagine, in particolare quello tra insegnanti locali di inglese (LTA, cioè *local teachers of English*), ovvero appartenenti al contesto giapponese (in questo caso) e assistenti madrelingua inglese (ALT, cioè *foreign assistant language teacher*). Secondo l'autore, i risultati dovrebbero poi poter confluire agevolmente nei moduli per la formazione delle/dei future/i insegnanti, contribuendo a mitigare visioni monolitiche e normative della competenza linguistica derivate dal successo, fino al giorno d'oggi, della nozione di *native-speakerism*.

La terza sezione della parte conclusiva è fermamente ancorata alla storia personale dell'autore. Il volume termina infatti con la descrizione del suo percorso accademico, culminato nel 2023 portandolo a rappresentare, come *chairperson*, il convegno sull'educazione linguistica più grande del Giappone (JALT). Per l'autore, questo ruolo diventa carico di significato e sintomo di un passo concreto verso un cambio di paradigma, quello dal *native-speakerism* verso il trans-speakerism, considerato come possibile solo se ad essere allenata e applicata è anche la nozione trasversale di *growth mindset*. Secondo Hiratsuka, infatti, una "mentalità di crescita" permetterebbe a chi agisce nel settore dell'educazione linguistica di vedere il proprio profilo identitario e il proprio ruolo di parlante, studentessa/studente o insegnante sempre in divenire, in costante evoluzione e orientato alla resilienza, alla perseveranza, all'individuazione delle opportunità di crescita, intellettuale e personale.

In generale, il pregio di questo volume consiste, a parere di chi scrive, nella capacità dell'autore di analizzare in profondità il proprio ruolo di docente e ricercatore, riflettere sulle proprie esperienze in relazione alla nozione di *native-speakerism* e individuare i bisogni non solo della propria categoria ma di tutte le figure il cui profilo formativo e professionale si sviluppa entro il contesto accademico di cui l'autore fa parte. Come parlante non nativo dell'inglese e formatore di future/i insegnanti di inglese della scuola secondaria e di ricercatrici/ricercatori, Hiratsuka appare infatti consapevole delle conseguenze causate dalla visione dicotomica "parlante nativa/o" vs "parlante non nativa/o" e non si attarda nel proporre delle alternative ideologiche che conferirebbero maggior dignità all'agire pedagogico di ciascuna attrice e di ciascun attore del mondo dell'educazione linguistica. Inoltre, dal punto di vista metodologico appare cosciente di possibili *bias* nel suo approccio alla ricerca (ad esempio, a p. 22 vi è un'autocritica nei confronti della scelta del termine di ricerca "native-speakerism" nel corso della revisione della letteratura, che può aver limitato l'accesso a contributi altrettanto pertinenti anche se privi di quel termine nel titolo), della limitatezza dello studio e delle sue possibilità di sviluppo (p. 141), che potrebbe nel futuro coinvolgere un maggior numero di gruppi target da contesti diversi da quello giapponese, permettendo così di soppesare meglio le probabilità che la nozione di *trans-speakerism* abbia successo.

Un aspetto critico del lavoro, non tanto in termini di struttura o di metodologia ma di prodotto della ricerca, potrebbe consistere invece nel fatto che, nonostante siano state coinvolte le figure sulle quali il concetto di *native-speakerism* appare esercitare il suo effetto più diretto, la riflessione sul cambio di paradigma verso il *trans-speakerism* rischia di rimanere perlopiù su un piano ideologico (e idealista). Il lavoro di Hiratsuka, come già sottolineato, ha dato una voce a parlanti non native/i dell'inglese che operano nell'ambito della ricerca e

dell'insegnamento delle lingue, alle e ai quali la ricerca, come rilevato dalla revisione della letteratura sul tema, non aveva finora dedicato uno spazio adeguato. Tuttavia, seppur l'autore sia riuscito a elicitare, da un lato, il loro malcontento nei confronti dell'egemonia del *native-speakerism* e, dall'altro, a individuare gli elementi che permetterebbero di raggiungere un riconoscimento maggiore (puntare di più sulla consapevolezza interculturale, sulla professionalizzazione delle e degli insegnanti e sul concetto di *Global Englishes*), rimane il dubbio relativo al se e al quanto tempestivamente l'augurio di un cambio di paradigma possa essere tradotto in azioni concrete. Certamente, alcuni spunti vengono forniti direttamente dall'autore, che sottolinea come siano state già prese alcune iniziative in ambito accademico (come precedentemente menzionato, il suo ruolo al convegno JALT del 2023 costituirebbe già un segnale di cambiamento). Dall'altra parte, però, anche se sembra vi sia il virtuoso intento di preparare un terreno adatto alla crescita del dibattito non solo all'interno del contesto universitario, il volume non sembra fornirci elementi a sufficienza per valutare quante possibilità esso potrebbe avere di permeare sistematicamente il mondo della scuola e di trovare risposte a domande quali, ad esempio: in che modo si possono costruire reti virtuose tra il mondo della ricerca e della pratica, accrescendo così le probabilità di circolazione delle idee e l'instaurarsi dei dibattiti nati in accademia anche all'interno della scuola? Come si può aumentare la partecipazione di insegnanti non native/i dell'inglese a eventi scientifici, divulgativi e formativi come il citato JALT, frequentato non solo da figure dell'accademia ma anche da insegnanti che, come afferma Hiratsuka, sono tuttavia principalmente native/i dell'inglese?

In conclusione, la natura metodologica di questo studio, che pone in evidenza, per mezzo di narrazioni, le esperienze e le percezioni di gruppi target che agiscono nell'università e nella scuola (insegnanti, future/i insegnanti e ricercatrici/ricercatori, docenti d'università non native/i dell'inglese) in merito alle nozioni di *native-speakerism* e *trans-speakerism*, rende il testo una lettura indicata a tutte le persone che, agendo con tali ruoli nell'ambito dell'educazione linguistica e delle scienze linguistiche applicate, si confrontano quotidianamente con dinamiche che pongono al centro il valore delle lingue (sia come veicolo comunicativo sia come oggetto di studio) e vorrebbero saperne di più su come etichette ben acclimatate come quella di *native-speakerism* (estendibile ad altre lingue oltre all'inglese) possano influenzare il proprio pensiero, le proprie azioni pedagogiche e il proprio approccio alla ricerca. L'ampia gamma di attrici e attori dell'educazione rappresentata nel volume costituirebbe inoltre un incentivo, a parere di chi scrive, per avvicinare settori in parte diversi e con esigenze diverse allo stesso dibattito, gettando così basi utili alla creazione di un terreno comune di contenuti sul tema affrontato; una premessa, quest'ultima, di fondamentale importanza nell'ottica di stabilire connessioni tra la ricerca e la pratica (Becker, 2024).

Bibliografia

Becker, Anna (2024). Applied linguistics communities of practice: Improving the research practice relationship. *Applied Linguistics (45)*2, 272–286. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amad010

Rivers, Damian J. (2013). Institutionalized native-speakerism: Voices of dissent and acts of resistance. In Stephanie A. Houghton and Damian J. Rivers (Eds.), *Native-speakerism in Japan: Intergroup dynamics in foreign language education* (pp. 75–91). Multilingual Matters.

Giulia Berchio, Institut de plurilinguisme / Pädagogische Hochschule Graubünden
giulia.berchio@unifr.ch

IT **Giulia Berchio** è attualmente collaboratrice scientifica presso l'Alta Scuola Pedagogica dei Grigioni e l'Istituto di plurilinguismo di Fribourg, dove si occupa di progetti di ricerca e sviluppo e dell'organizzazione di eventi relativi all'apprendimento e all'insegnamento delle lingue. Ha conseguito il dottorato di ricerca in Scienze del linguaggio presso l'Université de Fribourg con una tesi sulla struttura informativa di parlanti adulti bilingui italiano/svizzero-tedesco.

EN **Giulia Berchio** is currently a research associate at the Graubünden University of Teacher Education and the Institute of Multilingualism in Fribourg, where she works on research and development projects and organises events related to language learning and teaching. She obtained her PhD in Language Sciences from the Université de Fribourg with a thesis on the information structure of bilingual Italian/Swiss German adult speakers.

ES **Giulia Berchio** es actualmente colaboradora científica en la Escuela Pedagógica de los Grisones y en el Instituto de Multilingüismo de Friburgo, donde se ocupa de proyectos de investigación y desarrollo, y de la organización de eventos relacionados con el aprendizaje y la enseñanza de idiomas. Obtuvo el doctorado en Ciencias del Lenguaje por la Universidad de Friburgo con una tesis sobre la estructura informativa de hablantes adultos bilingües italiano/alemán suizo.