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## The effect of multilingual pedagogies on language aptitude: A study on lower secondary school students based on the LLAMA test

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### ABSTRACT

**EN** The paper presents an explorative study regarding the relation between multilingual pedagogies and language aptitude, a complex construct associated with metalinguistic awareness and cognitive processes, which predict the capacity of learning a foreign language. We administered the LLAMA test to 67 lower secondary school students in Italy, divided into two groups: the target group had been regularly exposed to *éveil aux langues* (awakening to languages) and translanguaging practices, with explicit focuses on crosslinguistic reflection, for the prior four years; the control group has been exposed to regular monolingual instruction. Results show that the target group achieved a better score in two LLAMA sub-tests (sound-symbol correspondence task and grammatical inferencing task). A composite pattern of correlations and predictors regarding the influence of Italian competence and English competence are also analysed and disentangled. Finally, the paper discusses the implications of these results in terms of research and educational perspectives.

**Key words:** MULTILINGUAL PEDAGOGIES, TRANSLANGUAGING, LANGUAGE APTITUDE, METALINGUISTIC AWARENESS

**ES** Este artículo presenta un estudio exploratorio sobre la relación que existe entre las pedagogías multilingües y la aptitud lingüística, un constructo complejo asociado a la conciencia metalingüística y a los procesos cognitivos que predicen la capacidad de aprender una lengua extranjera. El test LLAMA fue administrado a 67 estudiantes de secundaria obligatoria en Italia. Los estudiantes se dividieron en dos grupos: durante cuatro años, el grupo objetivo fue expuesto de forma regular a un *éveil aux langues* (despertar a las lenguas) y a prácticas docentes translingüísticas con un enfoque explícito en la reflexión interlingüística, mientras que el grupo de control fue expuesto de manera regular a una instrucción monolingüe. Los resultados mostraron que el grupo objetivo logró una mejor puntuación en dos subtest LLAMA (tarea de correspondencia sonido-símbolo y tarea de inferencia gramatical). El análisis consistió en un examen exhaustivo de un patrón composite de correlaciones y predictores sobre la influencia de la competencia en italiano y de la competencia en inglés. Finalmente, el artículo debate las implicaciones de estos resultados en términos de investigación y de perspectivas educativas.

**Palabras claves:** PEDAGOGÍAS MULTILINGÜES, TRANSLINGÜISMO, APTITUD LINGÜÍSTICA, CONCIENCIA METALINGÜÍSTICA

**IT** L'articolo presenta uno studio esplorativo sul legame tra pedagogie plurilingui e attitudine linguistica, un costrutto complesso associato alla consapevolezza metalinguistica e ai processi cognitivi, che stimano la capacità di apprendimento di una lingua straniera. Il test LLAMA è stato somministrato a 67 studenti di scuola secondaria di primo grado in Italia, divisi in due gruppi: per quattro anni, il gruppo target è stato esposto regolarmente a *éveil aux langues* (risveglio delle lingue) e pratiche translanguaging con un focus esplicito sulla riflessione tra le lingue, mentre il gruppo di controllo è stato esposto a regolari istruzioni monolingue. I risultati hanno dimostrato che il gruppo target ha ottenuto un risultato migliore in due sotto-test LLAMA (attività di corrispondenza suono-simbolo e di inferenza grammaticale). Viene analizzato e spiegato un modello composito di correlazioni e indicatori riguardanti l'influenza della competenza in lingua italiana e in lingua inglese. Infine, l'articolo tratta le implicazioni di tali risultati, sia in termini di ricerca che di prospettive educative.

**Parole chiave:** PEDAGOGIE PLURILINGUI, TRANSLANGUAGING, ATTITUDINE ALLE LINGUE, CONSAPEVOLEZZA METALINGUISTICA

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## 1. Introduction and theoretical framework: Language aptitude and multilingual pedagogies

This paper introduces a preliminary study regarding the effect of multilingual pedagogies on language aptitude. The primary aim of this research is to provide quantitative evidence on the linguistic impact of multilingual pedagogies (García & Flores, 2012; Marshall, 2022), which can be defined as instructional practices leveraging students' entire language repertoires, even in mainstream monolingual schools. *Éveil aux langues* ("awakening to languages," Armand et al., 2004; Candelier, 2003; Hélot, 2012), *identity text* approach (Cummins & Early, 2010), and translanguaging pedagogy (CUNY-NYSIEB, 2020), although conceptually and sometimes also practically different, can be associated to multilingual pedagogies. The benefits of these multilingual approaches have already been validated in terms of positive outcomes in students' empowerment and attitude, and teachers' beliefs and practices (Cummins, 2019; García & Sánchez, 2022; Lory & Armand, 2016). This study applies an experimental quantitative approach in order to investigate whether lower secondary school students engaged in multilingual learning strategies involving their entire language repertoire develop a more accurate language aptitude.

Carroll and Sapon (2002, p. 23) described language aptitude as a set of cognitive abilities that are "predictive of how well, relative to other individuals, an individual can learn a foreign language in a given amount of time and under given conditions." According to Carroll (1981), language aptitude is based on four sub-skills: phonetic coding ability (the ability to recognize sounds and learn sound-symbol associations), grammatical sensitivity (the ability to identify syntactic functions), rote learning ability (the ability to recall newly learned words), and inductive language learning ability (the ability to infer rules). These components have been integrated in the MLAT, the Modern Language Aptitude Test, which was initially designed by Carroll and Sapon in 1959. Even if the spread of communicative approaches to language education has raised criticism towards the appropriateness of MLAT, the test has been extensively used in several studies and it continues to shed light on language aptitude and its interaction with different variables (Stansfield & Reed, 2004).

In a recent article, Hyltenstam (2021) provides a review of the research regarding the relations between language aptitude and metalinguistic awareness. The two constructs seem to partially overlap in some components, in particular in language analytic ability, and have a bidirectional influence. Jessner (2006) underlines that "in an increasing number of investigations in multilingualism research, though, the language learning ability or aptitude of bilinguals learning an L3 has been compared with monolinguals learning an L2. And the cognitive advantages which have been shown to develop in multilinguals have been related to an enhanced level of metalinguistic awareness" (p. 65). Thus, conditions like bilingualism or trilingualism can influence the patterns of association between language aptitude and metalinguistic awareness in different ways (El Euch, 2018). While the nature of the relation between language aptitude and metalinguistic awareness is still debatable, other cognitive processes have been clearly associated with language aptitude (Skehan, 2019), in particular individual factors. Working memory, for instance, and its subcomponents, such as the verbal storage system (or "phonological loop") and central executive processes, play an important role in learning new words and retaining verbal information: the phonological loop, in particular, is considered a significant predictor of second language learning (Baddeley, 2003; Yalçın, Çeçen, & Erçetin, 2016).

Language aptitude has been traditionally conceptualized as a stable skill that is neither susceptible to training nor environmentally influenced, but rather incorporated in genetic cognitive abilities (Skehan, 1998). However, the stability assumption represents a contested issue: in the last twenty-years, in fact, several studies have investigated the relation between aptitude and second language acquisition across a variety of instructional settings. Sáfár and Kormos (2008) detected a major effect of intensive language learning in the sub-test measuring phonological sensitivity, which also resulted in a significant increase in the overall language aptitude test score. Li (2015) identifies two broad lines within aptitude research: predictive and interactional. The latter is based on experimental studies which compared different educational treatment. For example, it has been demonstrated that the effectiveness of explicit instruction is more related to aptitude than that of implicit instruction. Singleton (2017), in his review regarding the mutability of language aptitude, reports a series of studies which show the impact of experience and training on language aptitude, but he underlines that some pedagogical interventions might improve language aptitude via the improvement of working memory capacity. He concludes that we need more research to clearly understand the construct of language aptitude and its relations with other factors.

Very few studies have analysed language aptitude in multilingual pedagogies contexts. Candelier (2003, 2017), within the Evlang project based on the *éveil aux langues* approach, administered a language

aptitude test based on discrimination and memorization by listening and on syntax skills. Primary school students were exposed to language awareness activities in languages not officially taught by the school and generally unfamiliar to the children for at least 35 hours. The impact of *éveil aux langues* activities was confirmed in a large majority of the sample (around 2000 students) for listening skills. The tasks consisted of: 1) listening to a target word, then a series of three words/sentences which could or could not contain the target word; 2) identifying speakers of the same unfamiliar language in oral conversations. However, the deconstruction-reconstruction task concerning syntax (i.e., after observing three utterances written in an unknown language whose translation is provided in the school language, the student had to deduce the syntactic form of a fourth statement) obtained lower results. The study also demonstrated that the number of teaching hours and the intensity of the application of the *éveil aux langues* approach contribute to a more positive evident effect on language aptitude. Other studies investigated multilingual pedagogies, and especially translanguaging (García, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017) in relation with metalinguistic awareness: some of them, assuming a qualitative perspective, underlined that students attending programs in which emergent bilingual students have been allowed to employ their entire language repertoires in cognitively engaging school activities (like reading, analysing, elaborating, and producing content-related texts) enhance interlinguistic comparisons and metalinguistic understandings of different writing systems (Velasco & Fialais, 2018). Other studies, following a more quantitative orientation, showed that both majority and minority students exposed to multilingual instruction leveraging on the students' entire linguistic repertoires have positive outcomes on the development of the ability to reflect on language functions and forms (Hopp, Kieseier, Jakisch, Sturm, & Thoma, 2021). However, most studies related with multilingual pedagogies and translanguaging have focused on beneficial effects in terms of beliefs, attitude, and social inclusion (Carbonara & Scibetta, 2020; Duarte, 2020; Juvonen & Källkvist, 2021). Few studies until now have shown that a multiliteracy approach to education in superdiverse contexts can also lead to positive scholastic achievements. Little and Kirwan (2019), in the course of a long-term project based on multilingual pedagogies in a primary school in Dublin described that, despite the large immigrant-background school population coming from primarily lower socioeconomic backgrounds, the school's standardized test scores in English and mathematics have consistently been at or above the national average. The need to provide for more quantitative results in order to legitimize multilingual pedagogies within monoglossic instruction is slowly spreading, leading to new fields of investigation like literacy and metacognition (Carbonara, Scibetta, & Torregrossa, in press).

In this paper we decided to focus on language aptitude because it allows linguistic reflection to be investigated while avoiding the separate testing of languages by using monolingual standard tests for individual languages. The administration of a language-neutral aptitude test will target the core components of students' ability to reflect on formal aspects of linguistic systems, regardless of their plural or monolingual repertoires, and this could also contribute to obtaining some valuable insight into which components of language aptitude are more sensitive to multilingual instruction.

## 2. The study: methods

The aim of the study is to conduct a preliminary investigation to determine whether bilingual and monolingual lower secondary school students who have been continuously exposed to instructional practices based on multilingual pedagogies developed a better language aptitude compared to students attending the regular monolingual program. The context of this research is a lower secondary school in Italy in which several classes implemented translanguaging pedagogy (see Section 2.1). We investigated language aptitude employing the LLAMA test (Meara, 2005; see Section 2.2). The participants (see Section 2.3) are 67 lower secondary school students, divided into two groups according to their exposition to multilingual or monolingual practices in class. Our research question is twofold:

- 1) Have the students who were exposed to multilingual pedagogies developed a better general language aptitude? If so, in which LLAMA sub-test did they perform better than students attending traditional monolingual instructional settings?
- 2) Are there other conditions across the two groups that could have an impact on language aptitude (Italian language competence, English language competence, SES)?



### **2.1. The context: the school and the multilingual pedagogies implemented**

The study was conducted at a lower secondary school in the town of Serravalle Scrivia, in the province of Alessandria, which is in the Piedmont region. Alessandria has the second highest percentage of students from an immigrant background (17.5%) in the Piedmont region, which is slightly above the national rate (10.3%, according to the Italian Ministry of Education, 2021). Most of the minority immigrant students in Alessandria were born in Italy (69.4%), a condition which can be associated with better competence in the Italian language but also with the potential endangerment of the home language. In Serravalle Scrivia, 21.4% of the residents are foreigners, mostly coming from Morocco, Romania, Albania, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Ecuador, and India<sup>1</sup>. This demographic situation is reflected in the school population: in the only school in the town, “Martiri della Benedicita,” more than 40% of the students come from an immigrant background and are distributed differently across the educational levels and school complexes. A particularly high percentage is attending its kindergarten classes.

Since 2016, the school has belonged to the network of the “L’AltRoparlante” project carried out by the University for Foreigners of Siena (Carbonara & Scibetta, 2020) and ongoing in six schools in different Italian regions. The project promotes learning strategies that are integrated into regular curricular activities based on multilingual pedagogies addressing both immigrant and native Italian students. The “L’AltRoparlante” project combines the pluralistic approaches of the Council of Europe, and more specifically the “*éveil aux langues*” (Candelier, 2012), with translanguaging pedagogy (García et al., 2017). Several activities have been conducted within the project: annual teacher training; monthly meetings with teachers and educators to design and schedule multilingual activities; meetings with families about bilingualism and multilingual pedagogies; ethnographic and sociolinguistic fieldwork to investigate students’ language repertoires, uses, and attitudes; schoolscape reconstruction in order to make home languages, including dialects, more visible in symbolic, functional, and educational terms (Carbonara, 2021). Students’ multilingual repertoires are engaged in a variety of activities, according to their age: in lower secondary schools, which was the educational level analysed in this paper, students elaborate subjects’ contents through both Italian and their home languages, targeting both lower and higher-order skills like recalling, defining, summarising, classifying, comparing, inferring, making judgments, planning, and producing (Anderson et al., 2001). Students are required to create multilingual products, which are usually multimodal combinations of texts, visual elements, audio-video materials, oral presentations, etc. (Cummins & Early, 2011). Metalinguistic reflection is constantly stimulated drawing from FREPA/CARAP descriptors (Candelier, 2012), which underline the importance of the observation and the analysis of formal characteristics of languages. Students are regularly engaged in explicit reflections regarding different properties of the languages in class and in activities based on making comparisons, identifying regularities and patterns, as well as thinking inductively and deductively in order to infer rules. These skills are usually specifically targeted by aptitude tests, including the LLAMA test, which was adopted for this study.

Several studies throughout the “L’AltRoparlante” project have shown the positive effects of multilingual pedagogies in terms of students’ empowerment and motivation (Carbonara & Scibetta, 2020), and attitudes towards multilingualism and intercultural encounters (Bellinzona & Carbonara, 2021). More recently, the first investigation related with linguistic and cognitive aspects provided evidence of the advantages of this approach in narrative skills (Carbonara et al., in press).

Most of the classes of the “Martiri della Benedicita” school of the Serravalle Scrivia school complex, ranging from kindergarten to lower secondary school, have been gradually included in the “L’AltRoparlante” project, while the classes belonging to other two school complexes located in other towns but still formally belonging to the same school, are not participating in the project.

### **2.2. Materials and procedure: the LLAMA test**

The study belongs to a more extensive investigation, which included several measures:

- a language aptitude test, specifically the LLAMA test (Meara, 2005);
- an Italian metalinguistic test, specifically the TAM-2 test (Pinto, Candilera, & Iliceto, 2003);
- a vocabulary test, specifically the Italian version of the Primary Mental Abilities test (PMA) (Rubini & Rossi, 1982);
- a sociolinguistic questionnaire (Carbonara et al., in press).

<sup>1</sup> Data from <http://demo.istat.it/> (last access on 12/12/2021)

All the tests were administered to students and families in April-May 2021. In this preliminary study we will only focus on the data collected with the first instrument, the LLAMA test, and address the individual data provided by the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System (INVALSI) for the linguistic and socioeconomic background as well as for each students' competences and grades.

LLAMA is a computer-based test developed by the University of Wales Swansea, articulated in 4 sub-tests: vocabulary learning (Test B), sound recognition (Test D), sound-symbol correspondence (Test E) and grammatical inferencing (Test F). LLAMA is based on the MLAT test (see Section 1), but over the years the design of the LLAMA test has significantly diverged from MLAT, both in terms of user interface and in the structure of the tests, including the design of a test which was not present in MLAT (Test B) (Rogers et al., 2017).

We were not able to find any publication related with the administration of LLAMA test in Italy before this research. We selected LLAMA test as an effective instrument to investigate language aptitude in a multilingual context because this test is based on an unfamiliar language stemming from Central American languages (Meara, 2005), so neither Italian native students nor bilingual students could have an advantage due to their linguistic repertoires. The test has been examined for validity in different studies: Rogers and colleagues (2017) demonstrated that the LLAMA test is language-neutral, which means that the L1 of the test-takers does not have any effect on test performance. A more recent investigation (Mikawa & DeJong, 2021) claimed that agglutinative language speakers, and Japanese test-takers in particular, are at an advantage in Test D and Test F; however, the present study does not include participants speaking any agglutinative languages. Even if the bilingual participants could achieve better results, there should not be statistically significant differences between the bilingual and monolingual students, and, finally, the test is not influenced by gender, formal education or logic training (Rogers et al., 2016). Bokander and Bylund (2020), however, identified some test-internal deficiencies: Test D items, for instance, can be perceived by test takers as very difficult, leading to guessing. The authors argued that the LLAMA test would benefit from a process of revision to improve its internal validity, which Meara and colleagues actually started to conduct a couple of months after the present study.

In the following paragraphs I will briefly describe the different LLAMA sub-tests. In Test B (Figure 1), there is an initial learning phase, in which the participant has a short time to examine 20 pictures representing different abstract objects and learn their names, which are displayed by clicking on the different pictures. At the end of the learning phase, the computer shows the name of each object one by one, and the participant has to click on the corresponding picture.

In Test D (Figure 2), the test-taker has to listen to a series of short words in an unfamiliar language during the learning phase. In the test phase the participant has to listen to another series of short words and indicate, for each of them, whether the word was already included in the first series or not.



Figure 1. LLAMA Test B (Meara, 2005)



Figure 2. LLAMA Test D (Meara, 2005)

Test E (Figure 3) presents 24 syllables, which are transliterated into an unfamiliar alphabet. During the learning phase, the participant can click on the different syllables and listen to the corresponding sound. It is also possible to take written notes. Later, the program plays a series of two-syllables words and displays two possible spellings. The test-taker has to click on the correct one. Finally, in Test F (Figure 4) the participant firstly uses the time available to click on different buttons showing 20 abstract pictures of different geometric figures combinations, which are matched with corresponding short sentences that describe the picture. The test-taker can take notes and reflect on how the pictures and sentences are related in terms of syntactic and morphological aspects, like word order, singular and plural forms, prepositions, etc. During the testing phase, the computer shows a new set of pictures, with a combination of the previous elements, and two possible sentences describing the scene: the correct one has to be indicated by clicking on the right sentence.

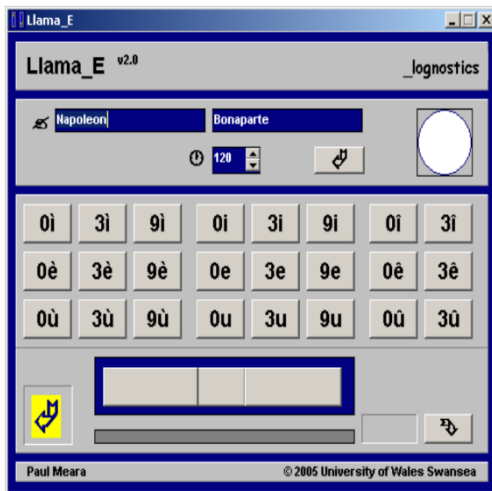


Figure 3. LLAMA TEST E (Meara, 2005)

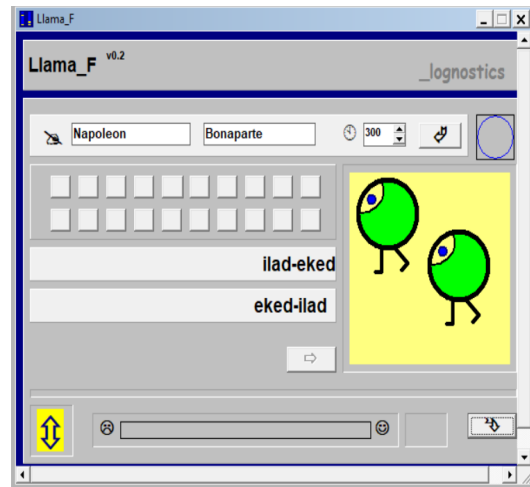


Figure 4. LLAMA TEST F (Meara, 2005)

For each test the computer offers a result based on a percentage of accuracy (Table 1). For Tests D, E, and F, every mistake is penalised. In order to conduct statistical tests and to analyse the most frequent mistakes, we also adopted a scoring system attributing 1 point to each correct answer in this study. The maximum scores achievable by the participants for each test are 20 for Test B, 30 for Test D, 20 for Test E, and 20 for Test F.

Table 1  
Percentages of accuracy for each LLAMA sub-tests

|                          | Test B     | Test D     | Test E     | Test F     |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Poor score               | 0 - 20 %   | 0 - 10 %   | 0 - 15 %   | 0 - 15 %   |
| Average score            | 25 - 45 %  | 15 - 35 %  | 20 - 45 %  | 20 - 45 %  |
| Good score               | 50 - 70 %  | 40 - 60 %  | 50 - 65 %  | 50 - 65 %  |
| Outstandingly good score | 75 - 100 % | 75 - 100 % | 75 - 100 % | 75 - 100 % |

The test was administered in a single individual session for each student. Considering the general competence in the Italian language (see Section 2.3), the instructions were provided in Italian only. The original LLAMA test suggests different time spans for the learning phases of Test B (2 minutes), Test E (2 minutes), and Test F (5 minutes). Previous research regarding the LLAMA test (Rogers et al., 2016) showed that younger participants (10-11 years) performed significantly worse in Test E compared to adult participants and could obtain generally lower results in the other sub-tests. Moreover, Rogers and colleagues (2016) demonstrated that allowing one additional minute in Test E leads to better results, while, on the contrary, one additional minute in Test F produces lower scores. Considering these conditions and our participants, which were between 11 and 12 years old, we decided to allow 3 minutes for the learning phase in Test E and to keep the

suggested time span of 5 minutes for Test F. Regarding Test B, Rogers and colleagues (2016) showed that potential additional time does not have any impact on performance, but a younger age can influence the results, so also in this case we decided to allow 3 minutes instead of 2 in the learning phase.

Our hypothesis is that students engaged in multilingual pedagogical activities should display a higher language aptitude compared to their peers who did not have this opportunity, as a result of the language awareness and metalinguistic activities they are used to deal with. We are also interested in investigating whether other variables, like SES and students' competence in Italian and English, which are obtained through the INVALSI scores, might influence the LLAMA test results.

### 2.3. Participants

Sixty-seven students (41 females) from five different classes attending the last year of lower secondary school (M age: 13.7) participated in the study. All students only attended lower secondary school at the "Martiri della Benedicita" school, and most of them had attended the same institute for their primary studies. The target group (TG) (N=32, 12 of them with an immigrant background) had been continuously exposed to multilingual pedagogies within the "L'AltRoparlante" project from the last year of primary school (5<sup>th</sup> grade) until the end of lower-middle school, and therefore continuously for 4 years, also through distance learning periods due to the Covid emergency. The students in the TG attend two classes in the school complex of Serravalle Scrivia. The control group (CG) (N=35, six of them from an immigrant background) had been exposed to the traditional monoglossic approach mainly involving the use of Italian only. The students in the CG attended two classes of the two school complexes in the other towns that were not included in the "L'AltRoparlante" project. Both groups were taught three weekly hours of English language and three weekly hours of French language during their lower secondary studies. It should be noticed that the TG initially included two other students from an immigrant background who were absent at the time of data collection, while the CG initially included three other students with an immigrant background who were excluded from the research by the teachers because they reported special educational needs.

The languages spoken by the students from an immigrant background across the two groups including Romanian, Arabic (Moroccan dialect), Spanish, Albanian, Polish, Punjabi, and Ukrainian. We used the data provided by the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System (INVALSI) to investigate potential differences between the two groups in terms of socio-economic status (SES) and competence in Italian language and in English reading and listening. We also considered and compared their average school grades (GPA) on a scale from 1 to 10 at the end of the school year. In a scale from low-SES (1) to high-SES (4), the TG has a mean SES of 2.34 (SD=1.03) and the CG has a mean SES of 2.60 (SD=1.21), however by conducting the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis tests we can observe that this difference is not statistically significant ( $\chi^2(1) = .872, p = .350$ ).

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the INVALSI test results and GPA across the two groups. Even if the mean scores across the four measures are slightly different, there are no statistically significant differences between the two groups in terms of Italian competence ( $t(65) = -1.22, p = .227$ ), English reading skills ( $t(65) = -.328, p = .744$ ), English listening skills ( $t(65) = -.133, p = .894$ ), and GPA ( $\chi^2(1) = .002, p = .969$ ). We can conclude that the two groups are comparable in terms of SES and Italian and English competence.

Table 2  
*Descriptive statistics for INVALSI test results and GPA for the TG (exposed to multilingual pedagogies) and the CG (exposed to traditional education)*

|                             | Target Group (N=32) |       | Control group (N=35) |       |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|
|                             | M                   | SD    | M                    | SD    |
| INVALSI – Italian test      | 204.26              | 38.50 | 215.58               | 37.44 |
| INVALSI – English reading   | 216.48              | 35.81 | 219.26               | 33.46 |
| INVALSI – English listening | 209.44              | 33.13 | 210.41               | 26.55 |
| GPA                         | 8.16                | 1.50  | 8.20                 | 1.71  |

Consent from the students' parents was collected at the beginning of the study, including privacy authorization forms for minors regarding the recording and reproduction of audio-visual materials.

### 3. Results

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics regarding the scores students obtained in the four LLAMA tests across the two groups. We also computed the results in order to obtain the total LLAMA score. The table includes the average percentages of correct answers according to the interpretation of the LLAMA test manual.

Table 3  
*Descriptive statistics for LLAMA tests and average percentages of correct answers*

|  | Target Group (N=32)    |           | Control group (N=35)   |           |
|--|------------------------|-----------|------------------------|-----------|
|  | General score          | Average % | General score          | Average % |
| TEST B<br>(vocabulary learning task)         | M = 11.00<br>SD = 3.35 | 55%       | M = 11.34<br>SD = 4.15 | 56.7%     |
| TEST D<br>(sound recognition task)           | M = 23.00<br>SD = 2.85 | 40.1%     | M = 23.06<br>SD = 3.02 | 40.2%     |
| TEST E<br>(sound-symbol correspondence task) | M = 18.31<br>SD = 1.49 | 83.1%     | M = 17.34<br>SD = 1.93 | 77.4%     |
| TEST F<br>(grammatical inferencing task)     | M = 14.38<br>SD = 2.57 | 44.6%     | M = 12.91<br>SD = 2.83 | 30.8%     |
| Total LLAMA score                            | M = 66.68<br>SD = 6.89 |           | M = 64.65<br>SD = 8.22 |           |

For Test B (vocabulary learning task) and for Test D (sound recognition task), we can observe that the mean scores of the TG group, exposed to multilingual pedagogies, and the CG, attending a regular monolingual program are very similar. According to the LLAMA interpretation scale, on both tests both groups obtained a good score. For Test E (sound-symbol correspondence task) and Test F (grammatical inferencing task) we notice that the differences between the two groups in scores are more evident: the TG performed better in both tests, even if the two groups fall under the same categories based on the percentages of correct answers of the LLAMA interpretation scale (“Outstandingly good score” for Test E and “Average score” for Test F). The overall score achieved by the TG is slightly higher compared to the CG.

We conducted a series of t-tests in order to understand if there are significant differences in LLAMA tests between the two groups. Firstly, analysing the total LLAMA score, we did not find a statistically significant difference between the two groups ( $t(65) = 1.08$ ,  $p = .280$ ). Investigating the single tests, we did not find any statistically significant difference between the TG and the CG also for Test B ( $t(65) = -.369$ ,  $p = .713$ ) and for Test D ( $t(65) = -.079$ ,  $p = .937$ ), thus we can affirm that students performed equally in the vocabulary learning task and in the sound recognition task. However, the two groups scored significantly differently in Test F ( $t(65) = 2.19$ ,  $p = .032$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.54$ ). Since for Test E the normality assumption was not met (the Shapiro-Wilk Test significance value was greater than 0.05), we conducted a non-parametric test, the independent-samples Mann-Whitney U Test, which resulted to be slightly significant ( $U = 404$ ,  $p = .046$ ). Thus, students who conducted learning activities engaging their multilingual repertoires over a long period of time performed significantly better in the sound-symbol correspondence task and in the grammatical inferencing task compared to students who were exposed to mainly monolingual instruction.

Even if the LLAMA test should not be sensitive to the monolingual or bilingual backgrounds of the test-takers, we decide to examine Italian students and students with an immigrant background in terms of their performance in the two LLAMA sub-tests in which we found the TG to be at an advantage. Table 4 displays the descriptive statistics related to Italian students and students with an immigrant background across the two groups in Test E and in Test F.

Table 4  
*Descriptive statistics for Italian students and students with an immigrant background*

|        | Target Group         |                      | Control Group        |                      |
|--------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
|        | Italian              | Immigrant background | Italian              | Immigrant background |
| Test E | M =18.45<br>SD =1.35 | M =18.08<br>SD =1.73 | M =17.34<br>SD =2.02 | M =17.33<br>SD =1.63 |
| Test F | M =14.35<br>SD =2.81 | M =14.42<br>SD =2.23 | M =12.66<br>SD =2.84 | M =14.17<br>SD =2.78 |

Considering the small number of students in these sub-groups, we decided not to perform any inferential tests. However, we can still notice that, from a mere numeric perspective, the Italian students in the CG obtained a lower score compared to their peers from an Italian background in both Test E and Test F.

We conducted nonparametric Spearman correlation to investigate if SES has an impact on the LLAMA test score and sub-tests scores in the two groups. We used a nonparametric correlation because SES is not normally distributed across both groups. However, we did not find any significant correlation between SES and LLAMA test results for neither the TG nor the CG.

We also computed a series of parametric Person's and nonparametric Spearman correlations within the two groups in order to highlight possible patterns of relations between students' competences in Italian, English Reading and English Listening from the INVALSI results, and LLAMA test scores (Table 5). In the Appendix, we also presented a table (Table S1) including inter-correlations between the LLAMA tests and inter-correlations between the INVALSI tests across the two groups.

Table 5  
*Pearson's or Spearman correlation coefficients for LLAMA tests scores and INVALSI scores in the TG and in the CG*

|                      | Target Group (N=32) |                    |                    | Control Group (N=35) |                    |                    |
|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
|                      | Invalsi<br>ITA      | Invalsi<br>ENG (R) | Invalsi<br>ENG (L) | Invalsi<br>ITA       | Invalsi<br>ENG (R) | Invalsi<br>ENG (L) |
| TEST B               |                     |                    |                    |                      |                    |                    |
| Pearson correlation  | .253                | .283               | .288               | .165                 | .343*              | .285               |
| $\rho$               | .162                | .117               | .110               | .344                 | .044               | .097               |
| TEST D               |                     |                    |                    |                      |                    |                    |
| Pearson correlation  | .222                | .261               | .225               | .257                 | .536**             | .456**             |
| $\rho$               | .222                | .149               | .216               | .135                 | .001               | .006               |
| TEST E               |                     |                    |                    |                      |                    |                    |
| Spearman correlation | .233                | .114               | .202               | .399*                | .354*              | .451**             |
| $\rho$               | .200                | .533               | .268               | .018                 | .037               | .007               |
| TEST F               |                     |                    |                    |                      |                    |                    |
| Pearson correlation  | .386*               | .320               | .386*              | .468**               | .523**             | .456**             |
| $\rho$               | .029                | .074               | .029               | .005                 | .001               | .006               |
| Total LLAMA          |                     |                    |                    |                      |                    |                    |
| Pearson correlation  | .414*               | .397*              | .436*              | .434**               | .638**             | .572**             |
| $\rho$               | .019                | .024               | .013               | .009                 | .000               | .000               |

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Results show that for both the TG and the CG the scores obtained in the INVALSI tests in Italian language are correlated with the LLAMA F score and with the Total LLAMA score, and the coefficients indicate slightly higher correlations for the CG. Moreover, for the students of the CG a high score in the INVALSI tests in Italian language is also associated with a better score in TEST E.

Regarding the INVALSI test in English (Reading), for the CG there are significant correlations with each LLAMA sub-test and the Total LLAMA score, while for the TG there is a significant correlation only with the Total LLAMA score and it is quite weaker ( $r=.397$ ) than the resulting coefficient for the CG ( $r=.638$ ). Also, for the INVALSI test in English (Listening), for the CG there is a significant correlation with every LLAMA sub-test except LLAMA B and with the Total LLAMA score, while for the TG there is a significant correlation with TEST F and with the total score with lower correlation coefficients.

In order to understand these different patterns of relations between the INVALSI test results and the LLAMA test results within the two groups, we conducted a series of multiple linear regressions employing SPSS 26. Assumption of normal distribution of data residuals was assessed observing the P-P plot, while the assumption of homoscedasticity was assessed with scatterplots. Assumption of multicollinearity among predictors was assessed by means of the variance inflation factor (VIF)  $< 10$ . Assumption of independence of residuals was assessed by means of the Durbin-Watson test (between 1 and 3) (Field, 2009).

For the TG, any INVALSI result (Competence in Italian, Competence in English Listening and Competence in English Reading) predicts LLAMA TEST B, D, and E scores. Only Competence in English Listening significantly predicts the TEST F score ( $\beta=.030$ ) in a model including the three INVALSI measures as predictors with a forward selection of coefficients ( $F(1, 30) = 5.263, p = .029, R^2 = .149$ ), and the Total LLAMA score ( $\beta=.091$ ) in a model including the same predictors with forward method ( $F(1, 30) = 7.054, p = .013, R^2 = .190$ ).

For the CG, regression analysis showed that our model significantly predicted TEST B score when including only English Reading competence ( $F(1, 33) = 4.402, p = .044, R^2 = .118, \beta=.043$ ). English Reading competence is also the only significant predictor of TEST D score ( $F(1, 33) = 13.31, p = .001, R^2 = .287, \beta=.049$ ), of Test F score ( $F(1, 33) = 13.44, p = .001, R^2 = .274, \beta=.045$ ), and of the Total LLAMA score ( $F(1, 33) = 22.710, p < .001, R^2 = .408, \beta=.157$ ). English Listening competence is the only significant predictor of TEST E score ( $F(1, 33) = 7.416, p = .010, R^2 = .183, \beta= 10.76$ ).

#### 4. Discussion and conclusion

The study investigated language aptitude in lower secondary school students, attending a public school in Italy. The target group (TG) was exposed to a combination of *éveil aux langues* activities and translanguaging pedagogy implemented at a curricular level for four years, while the control group (CG) attended regular education, which is mainly rooted on a monolingual approach, except for the curricular English and French classes. The research included a larger set of instruments and data which are still being analysed, thus this study represents a preliminary step into the entire investigation. For instance, we still lack more detailed information regarding immigrant students' linguistic background, which can offer a clearer interpretation of their degrees of bilingualism in relation to their language aptitude. Relying on the data offered by the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System (INVALSI) we identified students' origin, and we retrieved information regarding SES, Italian language competence, English language competence, and general GPA. We could not find any differences between the two groups in relation to these measures; thus, we can assume that the students are comparable.

In order to analyse students' language aptitude, we adopted the LLAMA test (Meara, 2005). Our study attempted to contribute to the field of language learning aptitude by supporting the view that aptitude may change as a result of training (Singleton, 2017). To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study challenging the stability assumption of language aptitude in a context where multilingual pedagogies have been implemented.

Our first research question concerned whether students exposed to multilingual pedagogies showed a higher language aptitude and in which specific sub-components. In Test B (vocabulary learning task) and in Test D (sound recognition task) we could not find a statistically significant difference between the two groups. For both tests we suppose that other factors could have played a role, in particular individual differences in working memory processes (Yalçın et al., 2016): Test B taps into visual memory while Test D taps into auditory memory and both demand the participant to store information and retrieve it later. Moreover, Test D requires the ability to recognise patterns in spoken language and this can also be influenced by the amount of exposure to different phonological systems. Even if there is multiple use of collective language repertoires in classes where translanguaging pedagogy is applied, and therefore all students listen to texts in unfamiliar languages and are involved in activities concerning languages they do not know, students do not formally acquire other languages. It is probably rather a matter of incidental learning, which probably leaves fewer profound traces from a cognitive point of view than in contexts of bilingual learning or traditional teaching of a foreign language. We should also consider that both groups experimented more than six months of distance learning during the

year before the data collection was carried out because of the Covid-19 emergency, and this implied a reduction of multilingual activities, in particular those related with listening, for the TG.

However, in Test E (sound-symbol correspondence task) and in Test F (grammatical inferencing task) we could observe that the TG performed statistically better than the CG. These results meet our expectations: both tests rely less on memory and are grounded on explicit reasoning (Bokander & Bylund, 2020). Test E requires students to understand sound-symbol correspondence and decode the words heard in the testing phase by relying on what was understood regarding the phonological system of the target language. Test F, which was the most difficult in the battery, requires students to compare language patterns in order to deduce, internalise, and finally apply the rules in different combinations to “translate” the sentences. These kinds of strategies are similar to the ones the students in the TG are usually encouraged to employ during metalinguistic focuses that are proposed by teachers to analyse their peers’ language systems.

Our second research question was about possible variables influencing language aptitude across the two groups. Socioeconomic background (SES) influences neither the TG’s, nor the CG’s language aptitudes. Analysing the relations between Italian language competence, English reading competence, and English listening competence, as assessed through the INVALSI tests, we found a variegated pattern of correlations and predictions. Generally, it seems that the CG’s English competence is strongly associated with language aptitude, thus we can deduct that students in the CG rely on their English knowledge more than students in the TG. This is particularly evident for Test E, which does not show any relation with Italian language competence or English language competence for the TG, while for the CG it is correlated to each INVALSI result. We can explain this by hypothesizing that, for the CG, the primary source of multilingualism and metalinguistic reflection is represented by the foreign languages studied at school, like English, while for the TG this source is also represented by all the other linguistic inputs provided in a context of pluralistic instruction, and for this reason the English language alone does not play a prominent role. In fact, in conducting a series of stepwise/forward regressions across the two groups, we noticed that English competence (Listening or Reading) is generally a significant predictor of each LLAMA test for the CG, while for the TG English competence is a predictor only for TEST F. Italian language competence is not a significant predictor of any test for either group.

To conclude, we are aware that this study is still exploratory: more data are needed to gain a more insightful view on language aptitude and multilingual pedagogies. We also know that this is not always possible, because of the nature of this educational context: not many schools are able to continuously implement translanguaging pedagogy to an extent which can allow researchers to identify linguistic phenomena. However, the future perspective of research within the domain of multilingual pedagogies should focus more on quantitative results, taking into account different components like literacy development, as well as cognitive and metalinguistic skills, in order to promote a significant role in reversing minority students’ underachievement through these kinds of approaches (Cummins, 2021).

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## Appendix

Table S1

*Inter-correlations between the LLAMA tests and inter-correlations between the Invalsi tests across TG and CG.*

|                      | Target group (N=32) |        |        |        |        |        |        | Control group (N=35) |        |       |        |        |        |        |
|----------------------|---------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----------------------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                      | 1                   | 2      | 3      | 4      | 5      | 6      | 7      | 1                    | 2      | 3     | 4      | 5      | 6      | 7      |
| 1. TEST B            |                     |        |        |        |        |        |        |                      |        |       |        |        |        |        |
| Pearson correlation  | -                   | .084   | .484** | .150   | .253   | .283   | .288   | -                    | .314   | .145  | .350*  | .165   | .343*  | .285   |
| <i>p</i>             |                     | .646   | .005   | .414   | .162   | .117   | .110   |                      | .067   | .404  | .040   | .344   | .044   | .097   |
| 2. TEST D            |                     |        |        |        |        |        |        |                      |        |       |        |        |        |        |
| Pearson correlation  | .084                | -      | .137   | .505** | .222   | .261   | .225   | .314                 | -      | .052  | .402*  | .257   | .536** | .456** |
| <i>p</i>             | .646                |        | .456   | .003   | .222   | .149   | .216   | .067                 |        | .768  | .017   | .135   | .001   | .006   |
| 3. TEST E            |                     |        |        |        |        |        |        |                      |        |       |        |        |        |        |
| Spearman correlation | .527**              | .143   | -      | .199   | .233   | .114   | .202   | .210                 | .120   | -     | .330   | .399*  | .354*  | .451** |
| <i>p</i>             | .002                | .436   |        | .274   | .200   | .533   | .268   | .227                 | .491   |       | .053   | .018   | .037   | .007   |
| 4. TEST F            |                     |        |        |        |        |        |        |                      |        |       |        |        |        |        |
| Pearson correlation  | .150                | .505** | .221   | -      | .386*  | .320   | .386*  | .350*                | .402*  | .282  | -      | .468** | .523** | .456** |
| <i>p</i>             | .414                | .003   | .225   |        | .029   | .074   | .029   | .040                 | .017   | .101  |        | .005   | .001   | .006   |
| 5. Invalsi ITA       |                     |        |        |        |        |        |        |                      |        |       |        |        |        |        |
| Pearson correlation  | .253                | .222   | .252   | .386*  | -      | .695** | .627** | .165                 | .257   | .397* | .468** | -      | .753** | .623** |
| <i>p</i>             | .162                | .222   | .164   | .029   |        | .000   | .000   | .344                 | .135   | .018  | .005   |        | .000   | .000   |
| 6. Invalsi ENG (R)   |                     |        |        |        |        |        |        |                      |        |       |        |        |        |        |
| Pearson correlation  | .283                | .261   | .150   | .320   | .695** | -      | .839** | .343*                | .536** | .364* | .523** | .753** | -      | .799** |
| <i>p</i>             | .117                | .149   | .414   | .074   | .000   |        | .000   | .044                 | .001   | .032  | .001   | .000   |        | .000   |
| 7. Invalsi ENG (L)   |                     |        |        |        |        |        |        |                      |        |       |        |        |        |        |
| Pearson correlation  | .288                | .225   | .273   | .386*  | .627** | .839** | -      | .285                 | .456** | .428* | .456** | .623** | .799** | -      |
| <i>p</i>             | .110                | .216   | .131   | .029   | .000   | .000   |        | .097                 | .006   | .010  | .006   | .000   | .000   |        |

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

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## English language teaching and learning at a time of change: Young learners' perceptions of instructional contexts

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### ABSTRACT

**EN** Over the last twenty-five years, English has been introduced into the primary school curriculum around the world at an ever-earlier age. Several research studies on those directly involved in this policy implementation, i.e., young learners, have been carried out, particularly in Europe. The ENRICH Project—aimed at promoting teacher competences necessary for responding to the challenges raised in today's multilingual classrooms across Europe—has explored contexts of teaching/learning in five countries where English language teachers teach learners from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The project investigated the needs of today's young and adolescent learners, their awareness and understanding of new forms of communication, and their learning through English. The focus of the present article is data collected by means of focus groups in which over 100 participants, aged 11-13, were asked to think back to their role as learners and users of English, thus triggering personal responses and enhancing reflections on their learning experiences. The analysis of young learners' statements revealed their positioning in terms of awareness of English language teaching and of the current role of English in multilingual contexts.

**Key words:** ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING, ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA, YOUNG LEARNERS, FOCUS GROUP, QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

**ES** En los últimos veinticinco años, la enseñanza del inglés se ha introducido en las escuelas primarias de todo el mundo a una edad cada vez más temprana. Además, en las últimas décadas se han llevado a cabo varios estudios, en especial en Europa, sobre quienes están directamente involucrados en la implementación de esta política: los estudiantes muy jóvenes. El proyecto Erasmus+ ENRICH –que promueve las competencias docentes necesarias para responder a los desafíos que surgen en las aulas multilingües en toda Europa– exploró las prácticas de enseñanza/aprendizaje en cinco países donde el profesorado de inglés enseña a estudiantes de diferentes contextos lingüísticos y culturales. Asimismo, este proyecto investigó las necesidades de los estudiantes (niños/as y adolescentes), su conocimiento y comprensión de nuevas formas de comunicación y del aprendizaje a través del inglés. La presente investigación se enfoca en los datos recopilados a través de una serie de grupos focales donde se invitaron a más de 100 participantes, con edades entre los 11 y los 13 años. Se les pidió a los participantes que reflexionaran sobre su rol como aprendices y usuarios del inglés, lo que provocó respuestas personales y más detalladas sobre sus experiencias de aprendizaje. El análisis de las reflexiones de los jóvenes estudiantes reveló sus posturas en términos de conocimiento de la enseñanza del inglés y del rol que tiene este idioma en contextos multilingües.

**Palabras clave:** DIDÁCTICA DE LA LENGUA INGLESA, INGLÉS COMO LENGUA FRANCA, APRENDICES JÓVENES, GRUPO FOCAL, ANÁLISIS CUALITATIVO

**IT** Da oltre venticinque anni l'insegnamento della lingua inglese è stato introdotto nelle scuole primarie di tutto il mondo in età sempre più precoce. In particolare in contesto europeo sono stati condotti molti studi sui giovani apprendenti direttamente coinvolti nell'attuazione di questa politica. Il Progetto Erasmus+ ENRICH – finalizzato alla promozione delle competenze degli insegnanti necessarie a rispondere alle sfide che le classi multilingui pongono in tutta Europa – ha esplorato pratiche di insegnamento e apprendimento in cinque Paesi in cui docenti di lingua inglese insegnano a studenti provenienti da diversi contesti linguistici e culturali e ha indagato i bisogni degli studenti (ragazzi/e e adolescenti), la loro consapevolezza e comprensione di nuove forme di comunicazione e di apprendimento attraverso l'inglese. Il punto focale della presente ricerca si colloca sui dati raccolti attraverso una serie di focus group durante i quali oltre 100 partecipanti, di età compresa tra gli 11 e 13 anni, sono stati invitati a considerare il loro ruolo di studenti e utenti di inglese, fornendo opinioni personali e riflessioni sulle loro esperienze di apprendimento. L'analisi del discorso ha messo in luce le posizioni dei giovani studenti sulla didattica dell'inglese e sul ruolo di questo in contesti multilingui.

**Parole chiave:** DIDATTICA DELLA LINGUA INGLESE, INGLESE COME LINGUA FRANCA, GIOVANI APPRENDENTI, FOCUS GROUP, ANALISI QUALITATIVA

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## 1. Introduction

The spread of English as a global lingua franca (ELF) and the impact of the related sociolinguistic phenomena are nowadays unquestionable, especially when the use of English as a shared common language is frequent in migration contexts or in multilingual professional settings, such as institutions, diplomacy, trade, or tourism. Across these settings, speakers from different socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds exchange messages for communicative purposes. As a result of these increasing global phenomena, the sociolinguistic realisations of English and the growing diffusion of World Englishes have received considerable scientific attention in the last two decades in terms of language use and language teaching/learning (e.g., Graddol, 2006; Lopriore, 2016; Pennycook, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2009). The emergence of new linguistic landscapes, affecting English Language Teaching (henceforth, ELT), reveals the importance of considering current societal changes and their impact on education and on teacher education in defining innovative approaches and trends in language teaching. In this sense, the research focus of this study is on the exploration of learners' perceptions, attitudes, and practices, and the role they may have nowadays on language teaching as well as on teacher training, starting from issues of identity, teaching practices, proficiency levels, intercultural communication, and the language awareness of young learners.

Data presented in the following sections originate from the ENRICH project (see Section 2.1) which provided innovation in fields such as: language teacher education (since it helped teachers develop particular competences necessary for preparing learners to effectively use English as it is used among people with diverse mother tongues); English language teaching and learning (since it promoted an innovative view of the English classroom by embracing and enriching the linguistic repertoire of all learners through a dynamic, variable and mutually shared language); continuous professional development (CPD) for EL teachers (since it integrated face-to-face tasks and reflective activities through a blended learning approach, promoting collaborative professional enquiry and peer-learning through networking).

To this end, the ENRICH team preliminarily collected information from EL teachers through a questionnaire about current ELT practices, as well as personal beliefs and attitudes regarding ELT and new instantiations of English. Similar information was acquired from English language learners regarding their individual language learning habits, perceptions, and preferences. The learners' group was divided into two groups: young learners (11-13 years) and adolescents (14-17 years) so as to carefully explore their diverse needs and conditions. In this study, the research focus and investigation will be on the former group of learners and on the results of a qualitative data analysis based on their responses.

## 2. Theoretical background and research focus

### 2.1. Teaching English to young learners

The introduction of foreign languages into the primary curriculum has been the most relevant development in language education policy around the world over the last 25 years. In the majority of countries, the English language is taught and at an ever-earlier age. To support this change, considerable investments in pre-service and in-service early primary teacher education have been made over the last years. To date, a relatively large amount of research has been carried out in a wide geographical area to teach English to young learners from the point of view of language policy, of teaching practices and lesson planning, and of teacher education. It especially concerns the gap between policy and practice caused by the introduction of new methodologies and approaches such as communicative language teaching (e.g., in Western contexts: Benvenuto & Lopriore, 2000; Costa & Pladevall Ballester, 2020; Enever, 2011; Garton & Copland, 2018; Lopriore, 2014, 2015; Lopriore & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2011; Nikolov & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2011; Nunan, 2011; Pinter, 2017).

Among others, a detailed insight of the policy and implementation processes for early foreign language learning programmes has been provided in the European context by the Early Language Learning in Europe (ELLiE; Enever, 2011) study which provided a tool to guide policy-makers thanks to a transnational, longitudinal approach to understanding and investigating the effectiveness of the teaching of languages in primary schools in a range of seven European countries. The research gives evidence of the benefits, as well as of the challenges, of early start programmes faced by learners, thanks to the analysis of data from over 1,400 children, their schools, teachers, and parents in different national contexts.

The term *young learner* is often used in the ELT profession to refer to any learner under the age of 18. As underlined by Ellis (2014), "it is used by private language providers, publishers, and exam boards; however, it is rarely used by parents or professionals in mainstream education or Ministries of Education" (p. 75).

However, an unambiguous definition is needed to unequivocally identify the target group under investigation, in spite of different education systems and/or school levels in each country. In this regard, different sources might be considered. In general, as mentioned before, the term “young learner” refers to any child under the age of 18 as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) defines *child* as a person below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood earlier. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)<sup>1</sup> defines the youth population as those people aged less than 15, while in other contexts they are primary-level students aged from approximately 6/7 to 11/12, or students who are not adolescents yet. “Young learners,” therefore, is a generic term that encompasses a wide range of learners who, unlike adults, share commonly accepted needs and rights as children but differ as learners in terms of their physical, psychological, social, emotional, conceptual, and cognitive development, as well as their literacy (Aitchison, 1997).

As for ELT, a very different set of terms describing children of different ages is used, especially with reference to specialized skills and teaching approaches (see Table 1). These labels may cause misunderstandings and make it difficult for ELT professionals to share knowledge and practices and avoid generalizations, as outlined by Enever and Moon (2010) who argue that “more precise descriptors are needed today, to ensure that age-appropriate approaches to teaching and learning are fully developed” (p. 2).

Table 1

*Terms used to describe learners in the ELT profession (adapted from Ellis, 2014)*

| Life stage   | Age range  | Terms commonly used in the ELT profession  | Proposed terms aligned to those commonly used in educational systems |
|--|--|--|--|
| Pre-schooler (also referred to as pre-primary, early years, nursery, kindergarten) | 2-5 years  | Kids; little ones/people/learners; very young learners; early starters; young learners | Early years/pre-primary  |
| Primary school pupil   | 6-10/11 years (often further broken down into blocks of years or stages) | Kids; young learners; primary; juniors; tweens   | Primary  |
| Secondary school pupil   | 11-14 years  | Kids; young learners; secondary; tweens; teens; early teens; teenagers; juniors        | Lower secondary  |
| Secondary school pupil   | 15-17 years  | Kids; young learners; young adults; seniors; teens; late teens; teenagers              | Upper secondary  |
| University/vocational student  | 18-25 years  | Adults; young adults   | University/further education   |

Data presented in this study (and derived from the ENRICH Project) cover a sample of young learners who are secondary school pupils aged between 11 and 13. This choice is due to the research objective of investigating learners’ language learning habits and preferences, as well as their educational history and their belonging to special groups of migrants or refugees, with the ultimate aim of comparing their voices with those of older adolescents (see Section 2.3).

## 2.2. Young learners’ voices

Nonetheless, although most learners of English around the world are children or adolescents, research on young language learners’ perceptions and views of teaching and learning strategies and the outcomes of early language teaching policies is still underdeveloped in comparison to other learner groups and research contexts. This may be due to the fact that studies involving young learners require important methodological and ethical considerations. Researchers should consider children’s vulnerability and their need for protection. Moreover, in the past, a common idea was that children were not able to participate in research because of their

<sup>1</sup> <https://data.oecd.org/pop/young-population.htm>



undeveloped cognitive, communicative or social skills (Mayall, 2000; Scott, 2000). Studies show instead that young learners are in fact capable of providing reliable evidence if approached in ways that engage and empower them, and of developing their awareness of self and language learning, as well as their ability to reflect and elaborate on these issues (Mihaljević Djigunović & Lopriore, 2011; Scott, 2000). Several researchers have highlighted the need for more studies on learner perspectives including Mihaljević Djigunović (2016), who calls for more studies on young learners' perspectives and perceptions of how classroom practices affect their learning process and willingness to interact. However, some exceptions can be reported, e.g., in Greene & Hogan, 2005; Pinter & Zandian, 2015; Sairanen & Kumpulainen, 2014, where young learners are observed as valuable and capable subjects and active social actors whose voices and views should be heard and considered, rather than being objects of research studies.

### **2.3. ELF and the ENRICH Project**

Moreover, research has shown that there is an urgent need to raise language teachers', teacher educators', educational policy-makers', and researchers' awareness of the current role of English as the most frequently employed means of international and intercultural communication, i.e., a global lingua franca (ELF), in educational and professional contexts (e.g., Bayyurt & Dewey, 2020; Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2015; Dewey & Patsko, 2018; Galloway, 2018; Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011; Llurda, 2004, 2018; Lopriore, 2016, 2017; Lopriore & Vettorel, 2016; Mauranen, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2011; Sifakis, 2019; Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2018). In such contexts, English is the language of choice among people who come from different language and cultural backgrounds and need to communicate. Mauranen (2018, p. 7) explains that ELF is a "non-local lingua franca" that can be used by anyone anywhere for any given purpose.

In the light of the above, the Erasmus+ "English as a Lingua Franca Practices for Inclusive Multilingual Classrooms (ENRICH)" Project (<http://enrichproject.eu/>; Cavalheiro et al., 2021) aimed at developing and implementing an innovative and free-of-charge online Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Course. Such an initiative empowers teachers to adapt their teaching practices in view of the role of ELF in today's multilingual and multicultural environments, thanks to a network of researchers from Greece, Italy, Norway, Portugal, and Turkey. Data analysed in the present research study have been collected within the framework of an intensive needs analysis study, carried out to sustain the design and to implement the Professional Development Course (PDC) "ENRICH." The 5-month online course was meant to develop participants' own understanding of the role of English as a lingua franca in multilingual classrooms through an innovative ELF-aware pedagogy (Sifakis, 2019; Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2018).

The in-depth needs analysis, carried out in five countries and investigating EL teachers' (over 600) as well as learners' (over 500) current habits and perceived needs. It aimed to investigate current EL teaching and learning practices, routines, attitudes, and beliefs. It also sought to identify both teachers' and learners' current teaching and learning needs in the diverse ELT educational contexts of the five countries, representing different foreign language curricula and teaching traditions. The countries have all been differently affected by recent migration flows and, consequently, by new scenarios in terms of multilingualism and multiculturalism. In order to develop the needs analysis, the ENRICH team adopted instruments and tools that would be able to investigate both teachers' and learners' current teaching and learning needs, including a growing multilingual population that brings new linguistic landscapes to the classroom. The types of tools used were two multiple choice questionnaires for ELTs and Adolescents (aged 14-17); and the Focus Groups for Young Learners (11-13). While the ENRICH research team decided that questionnaires could be used in English with the teachers, the learners' local language was chosen for the adolescents' questionnaire and the young learners' focus groups, as the most appropriate tool to facilitate their spontaneous responses. Data presented in this research study have been collected during the focus groups carried out in Italian, in 2019, in two local schools in Rome by the local ENRICH Unit at Roma Tre University<sup>2</sup>.

## **3. The research study**

### **3.1. Rationale, research questions, and context**

The following qualitative data analysis is based on a series of focus groups conducted within the ENRICH Project in five different countries. The presuppositions of the present study were that:

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<sup>2</sup> The ENRICH Italian partners—Lucilla Lopriore, Silvia Sperti, Valeria Fiasco and Alessandra Cannelli—worked in the local Unit at the University of Roma Tre.

- 1) the participant young learners' responses to the set of questions were going to challenge current teaching practices, thus unveiling views, metalinguistic abilities (Pinto, Titone & Trusso, 1999), beliefs, and daily routines;
- 2) the conversational approach adopted in the focus group would enhance participants' reactions and comments and would gradually lead to the involvement of all pupils in the exchange of attitudes and habits;
- 3) beliefs, needs, and views would be revealed in the discourse and in the language used by young learners in their responses within the interview guided by a trained interviewer who moderated the encounters.

These hypotheses generated two main research questions:

R.Q. 1 What are the trends in learners' attitudes, awareness, needs, experiences, and ownership of the English language? What, if any, are the dominant trends in their responses?

R.Q. 2 What implications for teacher education traditions and language policies do young learners' reactions and reflections provide, particularly with regard to inclusive and responsive teaching practices?

The focus group organization was guided by a protocol to be closely followed by the people who administered the focus groups in all five countries (see Appendix for full protocol). The total time was 20 minutes and two trained observers used specifically devised grids—with specific codes—to observe the interaction between the interviewer and the pupils. The interaction was not recorded due to privacy issues, but main responses were annotated and later reported through a common format to be analysed. The interviewer had the task of eliciting an open discussion on different topics, using stimulus questions and allowing learners to interact with their mates. The interviewer basically asked them to think back to their own experiences as learners and users of English from different perspectives.

There was a set of four topics that regarded themes and issues, defined in advance, during the needs analysis design (Cavalheiro et al., 2021):

- Knowledge & schemata on English language use and learning
- Attitudes & ELT awareness
- Out-of-school experience & personal skills
- Intercultural awareness & exposure to multilingualism.

This list of topics corresponded to a series of questions aimed to trigger personal responses and enhance reflections on learners' learning experiences (see Section 4.1).

### ***3.2. Young learners' profiles and data collection procedure***

Krueger (1994, p. 6) defines a focus group as "a carefully planned discussion, designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment." The aim of a focus group is to produce qualitative data that provide insights into the attitudes, perceptions, motivations, concerns and opinions of participants (Kingry et al., 1990; Krueger, 1994) while generating a collective consciousness (McElroy, 1997). Focus groups employ an interviewing technique, with cooperative discussion taking place under the guidance of a moderator. The moderator facilitates the group discussion in a non-directive and unbiased way, using pre-determined questions. A second moderator is often present, acting as note taker, observing group interactions, and monitoring the technical equipment, but not participating in the ongoing interaction.

In the last two decades, focus groups have been increasingly adopted in research studies involving children and young people. The majority of publications concerns health education and health psychology to explore children's views and perspectives on a variety of topics. Research methodologies have been developed to design the least intrusive tools to be preferred for young children. Hence, focus-group interviews should help them to express their ideas in a more comfortable atmosphere and to get inspired from one another. As a consequence, in focus-group interviewing the researcher not only controls the progress of the discussion but also gathers the participants' ideas resulting from their interaction. In this respect, "the researcher may thereby elicit a richer data set than if he or she is conducting individual interviews" (Nunan & Bailey, 2009, p. 315).

In this research study, as already mentioned in Section 1.3, the focus groups were organized in each country involved in the project and proved to be very successful as the overall design and the role of the interviewer easily stimulated learners' interventions and spontaneous exchanges. The number of learners was limited to 5, including multilingual learners, chosen by the classroom teacher according to the research protocol which was especially devised in order to facilitate and enhance communication on a series of questions covertly underlying issues and topics selected by the ENRICH team in the needs analysis design. One hundred young learners aged between 11 and 14, 20 from each of the five countries, 48% male and 52% female responded<sup>3</sup>.

The Italian local unit interviewed a total of 20 young learners, 12 male and eight female, all aged 13. Fifty percent of them were Italian while the other 50% were second-generation pupils (whose parents were of Bengali, Cape Verdean, Filipino, Nigerian, Romanian, and Russian origins). The author led the focus groups; two other researchers and teacher educators accurately reported their interventions and took notes without intervening and one interviewer asked questions following the sequence of questions from the protocol (see Appendix). The focus groups were carried out in four sessions in two local lower secondary schools using Italian.

As for the English learning context where participants operate on a daily basis, in Italian lower secondary schools, like those where the focus groups were carried out, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes take place three hours a week, with a total amount of 99 hours per year. At a primary level, pupils attend one hour of English classes in the first grade, two hours in the second grade, three hours in the third, fourth and fifth grades. The most common teaching methods used are traditional lessons, including exercises and group work. Teachers choose textbooks and teaching tools that are consistent with the national curriculum and the school's educational offer plan. As for assessment, the periodic and annual evaluation of pupils focuses on the learning process, their behaviour and their overall learning outcomes. These assessments should be consistent with the learning objectives established in the educational offer plan of each school. At the end of every term and every school year, the teacher assigns the final marks to each student.

Respondents were divided into small groups and the interviews were conducted in one of the school classrooms. Learners sat in a semicircle, with the observers at two different desks on both sides of the semicircle, and the interviewer stood in front of the semicircle and asked questions in Italian. No other students or teachers participated. Firstly, one of the observers introduced the project and the aims. Notes taken during the interviews were then accurately translated into English. The respondents' statements and answers to the researchers' questions could have been influenced by the school context and the implicit power hierarchies in this context. However, pupils who were involved in the focus groups generally appeared relaxed and at ease.

As mentioned above, English young learners responded to questions related to topics and issues identified by the ENRICH team (see Section 4.2), such as:

- learners' knowledge of the curriculum and of ELT,
- learners' understanding of multilingualism/intercultural communication/ELF,
- expectations for future uses of English
- exposure to/ use of English inside and outside the classroom
- learning strategies, preferences and skills awareness & development

These questions had the aim of assessing their awareness of the potential of using another language and their self-confidence in using the language.

The analysis of the outcome was a qualitative one. Specific aspects related to learners' awareness of ELT, their experiences, their knowledge of the role of English and about multilingualism, emerged and provided relevant inputs and hints for reflection. The freedom of the focus group format allowed learners' responses to be quite varied and provided good insight into learners' perception of their language learning experience. When, for example, asked about the first thing, image or sound that came to their mind when they thought of English, the young learners' responses were classified in terms of the learners' use of imagination, their expectations, background schemata and their use of English outside the school.

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<sup>3</sup> This study complies with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and European Union legislation on research ethics. Participants' privacy was fully protected and all responses given by young learners are totally anonymous and can only be used for research purposes within the ENRICH Project.

#### 4. Data analysis: discourse and meaning

##### 4.1. Data sampling and research method

The ENRICH team agreed on the idea of using focus groups with young learners since interviewing young learners in a relaxing environment and in a discursive mode would allow them to react personally as well as to interact with their mates. In order to define the protocol to be carried out by the focus group in each country and to reduce the risk of getting data that were not conducive, the research team collected background information about educational contexts and multilingual school population (and especially the presence of migrants and refugees); the professional profile of ELT teachers in multilingual classrooms; the number of ELT hours the learners had been exposed to, and if they also study a second foreign language; the status of multilingualism in their country and of exposure to English; the current system of integration of migrants/refugees and if there are separate systems; the current status of integration of refugees/migrants in the school/education system.

As suggested by the previous research questions (see Section 3.1) the main aims of the young learners' focus groups were to:

- 1) Record their needs and wants, in terms of what they actually wanted to learn in the English classroom and how;
- 2) Understand the way they used English (alongside other languages) in the classroom to communicate with their teacher and classmates, ICT use (apps, etc.) outside the classroom for real-life communicative purposes, and the way they expected they may do so in the future, e.g., for social, academic or professional purposes.

The researchers discussed these macro-objectives and created four sets of stimulus questions to encourage learners' replies and exchanges. At the end of this process, the ENRICH team agreed on the protocol to be used during the focus groups, which included the following four main questions to be asked by the interviewer:

- 1) When you think of English, what is the first thing / image / sound / that comes to your mind?
- 2) Is English one of your favourite subjects at school?
- 3) What is your favourite website / app / game among those that use predominantly English? Why?
- 4) In your class do you ever talk about English speaking peoples and cultures other than British, American, or Australian? How often and about what?

Data collected during the focus groups, thanks to the assistance of the two observers who took notes, were then translated into English and coded in specific grids meant to ensure complete and careful qualitative data processing. By coding data, specific units of analysis, such as statements, moves, and individual interventions, were tagged and stored for further investigation. As a first step, some categories were outlined according to the issues and the key themes behind the sets of questions that the interviewer asked during the focus group (see Table 2 below). This first data processing was useful to provide the basis for a qualitative data analysis of the structural features of the responses given by the young learners.

In order to code the macro-features of the resulting transcripts, sections dealing with a specific topic and overlapping discourse strands were identified, especially when supporting or eliciting questions had been used to encourage the exchange of opinions and to close a set of questions before moving to another topic. Once the conversational structure had been defined (the alternation of moves among the interviewer and the interviewees), data were analysed according to individual statements with the aim of examining how and what they represent in the respective discourse strand. In this perspective, lexical features and vocabulary were examined, in terms of register as well as semantic fields, to identify common features and consequently regularities signalling a logic behind the statements of each speaker.

The qualitative data analysis was carried out on the elaborate notes taken from the responses given in Italian, also considering the role of grammar and syntactical features, especially the use of pronouns, adjectives and adverbs, modal and auxiliary verbs, and active versus passive phrases. These features might provide more information about personal beliefs and judgements, expectations and positioning, and attitude towards certain topics. Another important element that was considered consisted in the use of rhetorical figures (metaphors, similes, idioms, or sayings) that help to interpret and explain replies and comments, which in this case were particularly influenced by the limits of the protocol used and, thus, to be handled with care and attention.

#### 4.2. Themes and issues

As already pointed out, in the first part of the research project, mainly devoted to the design of tools and the creation of questionnaires, the team created a list of topics and issues to be turned into feasible questions for the focus groups:

- 1) Learners' knowledge of the curriculum and of ELT;
- 2) Learners' knowledge/understanding of ELT terms;
- 3) Learners' understanding of CEFR levels;
- 4) Understanding of multilingualism/intercultural communication/ELF;
- 5) Expectations for future uses of English, e.g., for social, academic or professional purposes;
- 6) Their exposure to/use of English: identification of contexts, of usefulness;
- 7) English outside the classroom for real-life communicative purposes;
- 8) Their "institutional learning" (i.e., learning in schools/centres): pros & cons;
- 9) Materials & Coursebooks: pros & cons;
- 10) Presence of non-native speakers, migrants, refugees: experience, pros & cons for language learning;
- 11) Intercultural awareness;
- 12) Learning preferences;
- 13) Development of learning strategies;
- 14) Skills awareness & development: listening, speaking, reading, writing, interacting, mediating;
- 15) Use of self-assessment.

This list of topics helped in the coding of data and in the analysis of statements at a later stage (see Section 5). As for the inner structure that composes the set of data, four main topics related to corresponding research objectives and to the previous list of themes were selected and taken into consideration. These were identified in the preliminary needs analysis of the ENRICH project and include: attitude to English teaching and learning; awareness of effective communication; self-awareness of their use of English; attitude towards accuracy; use of communication strategies; exposure to English and to other languages; intercultural awareness. The four question groups are represented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Categories and sets of questions used for designing and conducting the focus groups (Cavalheiro et al., 2021)*

| Focus group protocol | Main topic                              | Main question   | Research objectives   |
|----------------------|---|---|---|
| Question Group 1     | Knowledge/schemata                      | When you think of English, what is the first thing/image/sound that comes to your mind?   | The responses were classified in terms of the learners' use of imagination, their expectations and their use of English outside the school. |
| Question Group 2     | Attitudes/ELT awareness                 | Is English one of your favourite subjects at school?  | The responses were classified in terms of the learners' attitudes, needs and/or criticism of teaching practices.                            |
| Question Group 3     | Experience/skills                       | What is your favourite website/app/game among those that use predominantly English? Why?  | The responses were classified in terms of the learners' habits and self-awareness in the language classroom.                                |
| Question Group 4     | Intercultural awareness/multilingualism | In your class, do you ever talk about English speaking peoples and cultures other than British, American or Australian? How often and about what? | The responses were classified in terms of intercultural awareness and multiculturalism.   |

In all five countries, data were explored and investigated by way of a textual investigation of the replies that were reconstructed after the focus groups by the team of researchers in charge of the data collection. This methodology also offers the opportunity to carry out a comprehensive analysis meant to monitor and analyse learners' responses to the interview by following the set of topics given by the four protocol components, ranging from background schemata to intercultural awareness. In each of the four main components, the replies chosen for the analysis were those regarded as the most significant for signalling specific needs and occurring changes, where it is expected for participants to use more complex and articulated textual and rhetorical devices.

### **4.3. Data analysis and findings**

As mentioned before, the data analysis took into consideration the most relevant passages in the interactional processes occurring during each focus group. More precisely, special attention was devoted to questions geared at eliciting learners' positioning on English language learning and teaching practices, and to traces of changes and of a shift in perspective, e.g., through the use of lexis and of textual strategies that emerged in the participants' discourse. Data coded in specific grids, thus, granted a closer view of the language choices that had been made by the participants to express their beliefs, needs and opinions, and to relate them to the main topics raised by the set of questions employed by the interviewer.

In the following paragraphs data are presented according to the four question groups that were adopted during the interviews. The data analysis will reveal occurring changes and current behaviours among young learners in relation to English language learning and use.

#### **4.3.1. Question Group 1: Knowledge and schemata on using/learning English**

At the beginning of each focus group learners were asked:

- 1) *When you think of English, what is the first thing/image/sound that comes to your mind?*

After the first roundtable, the interviewer intervened with other supporting questions on the role and the function of learning English nowadays aimed at stimulating discussions about persisting schemata, such as:

- 2) *Do you think English will be useful to you in the future? Who do you think you are going to use it with mostly? Why will English be useful to you?*
- 3) *Do you ever use English outside of school? If yes, tell me when, how, with whom... In which situations outside school were you able to use English: any examples?*
- 4) *What do you do when you don't understand something when talking to other people in English? How do you solve such problems?*

Questions 2-4 relate to the main topic of the first question group (namely background knowledge and perceptions on English), in that they link the ideas and images that emerged in the replies to Question 1 to everyday experiences, as well as future projections of using English and the reasons why it is worth learning.

Moreover, when needed, the interviewer resorted to eliciting questions to better identify practices, needs and beliefs. These questions also provided access to other supporting information, such as the need for private supplementary courses or practices of translanguaging and code-mixing outside the school.

As shown in Table 3, vocabulary and lexical choices (e.g., *funny, useful, important; chat, videogames; play, laugh, solve*), as well as the use of modals (e.g., *can, must, will*), reveal young learners' attitudes, views and expectations about the use and the usefulness of English in their present and future. Sometimes the meaning was explicitly made clear, especially when referring to strategies and exposure (e.g., *If I don't understand something I say "can you repeat please"*), while in other cases vagueness and ambiguity emerged in relation to self-awareness and proficiency level (e.g., *Usually I don't have problems. I use English to make jokes and people usually laugh*).

In Table 3, replies to the first main question and corresponding supporting questions are presented according to the discourse categories identified in the processing of data. Extracts have been selected among

the complete dataset for their representativeness in terms of attitudes, awareness, needs, and experiences. Words in **bold** signal lexical, syntactical, rhetorical, and textual features examined in the data analysis.

Table 3

Set of key topics and extracts from the first question group

| Topics & issues   | Extracts  |
|---|---|
| 1.1 English language and associations participants make | <p>Main images and schemata used:</p> <p>(S1) <i>British or American flag</i></p> <p>(S2) <i>England or UK map</i></p> <p>(S3) <i>Big Ben and London monuments</i></p> <p>(S4) <i>American Football</i></p> <p>(S5) <b>School</b></p> <p>(S6) <b>A violin sound</b> (at the beginning is complicated then it is pleasant, you need practice)</p> <p>(S7) <b>The world, the planisphere</b></p> <p>(S8) <i>It is an international language. <b>The language.</b></i></p>   |
| 1.2 Usefulness of English in the future                 | <p>(S1) <b>Better work</b> in my future life</p> <p>(S2) Yes, to <b>travel</b>, to <b>study</b></p> <p>(S3) Yes, but <b>I already use it</b> to communicate with some Americans for some championships</p> <p>(S4) Useful because we are not alone, there are not only Italians</p> <p>(S5) Yes, because there are jobs that use English, where you <b>must</b> know English</p> <p>(S6) <b>If you can</b> speak English you <b>can</b> communicate with everyone</p> <p>(S7) Yes, <b>even if I won't</b> attend a foreign language high school, I have chosen to improve my English skills through the Cambridge qualifications <b>because</b> English is the most spoken language nowadays. <b>Anyway</b>, I like it!</p> <p>(S8) <b>It will</b> be useful for work and for travelling to America or England</p> <p>(S9) After University, I <b>would like</b> to move to England</p> <p>(S10) Yes, <b>because</b> English is <b>the most spoken</b> language nowadays, everyone speaks English <b>therefore</b> it is important if I go abroad</p> <p>(S11) Yes, I don't know specifically what I'll do in the future but I <b>think</b> that it <b>will</b> be <b>useful</b></p> <p>(S12) Yes, I <b>will</b> move to England <b>therefore</b> <b>if I can</b> speak English it's easier. It is <b>the most spoken</b> language in the world</p> <p>(S13) <b>It's important</b> to know other languages <b>therefore I think</b> that in the future it <b>will</b> be useful for work purposes</p> <p>(S14) <b>If I go abroad it will</b> be useful to communicate with other people. I <b>would</b> like to be a footballer and I <b>think</b> that it <b>would</b> be an <b>invaluable</b> experience to go to England to learn how they <b>play</b> and to work there</p> |
| 1.3 Use of English outside school                       | <p>(S1) Yes, after school <b>to do homework</b> and in the English private courses</p> <p>(S2) I also use it with my <b>brother</b> who studies and uses it</p> <p>(S3) Yes, during <b>my football training</b>, all my <b>sports terminology</b> is in English</p> <p>(S4) <b>To watch videos or listen to music</b></p> <p>(S5) Yes, my uncle speaks English</p> <p>(S6) Yes, I use English <b>on my own!</b></p> <p>(S7) <b>Just at school</b></p> <p>(S8) Yes, playing <b>videogames</b>.</p> <p>(S9) Yes, I <b>often write</b> English sentences and I have an English <b>penfriend</b> who lives in England</p> <p>(S10) Yes, I use English to give street directions to <b>tourists</b> (also to <b>non-English speakers</b>)</p> <p>(S11) <b>Not often. Sometimes</b> I use some English expressions or words to <b>make funny jokes with my friends</b> or my parents. <b>English gives the idea</b></p> <p>(S12) At home with <b>my parents</b> and using <b>video calling</b> with my cousins</p> <p>(S13) <b>I don't use English outside</b> school, but once a <b>tourist</b> asked my mother something and <b>she wasn't able</b> to answer, so I answered to the tourist</p> <p>(S14) Yes, I use English when I play with the <b>Play Station</b> system and online <b>videogames</b></p>  |

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|  | (S15) Yes, <b>Filipino</b> is a melting pot of many languages, English included. I use it with my <b>parents</b> and my <b>family</b>   |
|  | (S16) I attend a Cambridge course (KET) at school. Nowadays many English words are also used into Italian in different areas like <b>technology</b> , e.g., computers. <b>I set my iPhone</b> in English  |
|  | (S17) Yes, I do. My aunt speaks English for <b>work purposes</b> and sometimes I speak English with her   |
|  | (S18) Yes, last year I attended a Trinity course at school. <b>I use English with my Italian friends to make jokes and laugh.</b> We <b>make conversations in English</b> and we don't know how to say some words we use Italian, <b>therefore we speak Italian/English</b> |

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| 1.4 Strategies when you do not understand | (S1) I was in Amsterdam and I was buying a sandwich and I didn't know how to say it so <b>I used gestures</b>  |
|   | (S2) <b>Usually I don't</b> have problems but if I don't understand something <b>I use gestures.</b>   |
|   | (S3) If I don't understand something I say <b>"can you repeat please,"</b> while if I don't know how to say something I say <b>"I don't know"</b>  |
|   | (S4) During English oral tests if the teacher doesn't understand me <b>I explain the concept in Italian</b>  |
|   | (S5) <b>I use gestures</b> to communicate and otherwise I use <b>Google translator</b> because I don't engage myself into long conversations.  |
|   | (S6) <b>Usually I don't</b> have problems. I use English to make jokes and people usually laugh  |
|   | (S7) I use English with my parents and when I don't understand something my <b>parents explain in Bengali</b>  |
|   | (S8) <b>I use Google translator or I ask my parents</b>  |
|   | (S9) Also for me <b>when it is fast</b> but also when I speak to my brother, and if I don't know a word, <b>I use Italian or I use a dictionary</b>  |
|   | (S10) Yes, I also had problems <b>for the speed</b> but if I lacked the words <b>I used gestures to solve the problem</b>  |
|   | (S11) Yes, when I can't understand, as when I take a test, I may not understand so I ask <b>to speak more slowly</b> or <b>I look up in the dictionary</b>   |
|   | (S12) I also <b>ask for help</b> and try to <b>listen twice</b> to understand  |
|   | (S13) Yes, when <b>I play with PlayStation I chat with people using English</b> but sometimes they use strange words and I can't understand them. So I usually ask them <b>to repeat</b> but sometimes it doesn't work and <b>they find other ways</b> to let me understand what they mean |

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#### 4.3.2. Question Group 2: Attitudes and ELT awareness

After the first set of questions the interviewer asked learners:

- 5) *Is English one of your favourite subjects at school?*

Since the question was meant to encourage exchanges on personal attitudes and awareness of teaching practices, some supporting questions were needed, such as:

- 6) *What activity do you like doing best during your English lessons at school? Why?*  
 7) *What activity do you like doing least during your English lessons at school? Why?*  
 8) *What do you think is missing in your English lessons?*

This second set of questions was particularly complex and specific, and required a certain amount of consciousness, meta-cognitive processes and confidence from the young respondents. Here learners were asked to express and judge their self-awareness of language learning as well as their teachers' teaching practices and missing elements in their lessons. In all sessions some of them showed uncertainty and a feeling of awe towards their teachers. The interviewer helped and guided the exchange which, after the initial unease, turned out to be a constructive and critical exchange of opinions and suggestions, as the discourse strategies reveal. Such exchanges included the use of modal verbs (e.g., *would, would like, should, need*) and of basic textual cohesive devices (e.g., *I like group activities so I would like to do it more often*). English proved to not always be the students' favourite subject for different reasons (e.g., *I hated English because we changed many teachers*), and preferences in terms of language activities were extremely subjective but marked, showing a general



awareness of teaching practices, learning skills and acquisition processes (e.g., *the teacher gives us a text and we have to translate it all together. I like this type of activity; I don't like exercises during the English lesson; I know how to apply a grammar rule but I can't do it!; I like the teacher, she gives many things to do, she's strict; she makes it interesting, she uses Kahoot; we study formal...topics, well, we should get used to using English in practice; our teacher goes too fast and so some of us are left behind*).

In Table 4 replies to the second main question and corresponding supporting questions are presented according to the discourse categories identified in the processing of data. Extracts have been selected among the complete dataset for their representativeness in terms of attitudes, awareness, needs, and experiences. Words in **bold** signal lexical, syntactical, rhetorical, and textual features examined in the data analysis.

Table 4  
Set of key topics and extracts from the second Question Group

| Topics & issues                 | Extracts   |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 2.1 English as favourite lesson | <p>(S1) My favourite subject is <b>physical education</b>, but also <b>theoretical subjects like English</b> and French</p> <p>(S2) No, science and mathematics</p> <p>(S3) It is <b>one of my favourite subjects</b>, even if I prefer Italian and Italian literature</p> <p>(S4) At the primary school, it wasn't because I didn't understand some words. <b>Now it's my second favourite subject</b> and I like it because it is easier than Italian, <b>it is funny</b> and it has a <b>beautiful</b> sound</p> <p>(S5) I like English, <b>even if it is not my favourite subject</b>. I like English words and English culture. It is <b>easier</b> than other foreign languages</p> <p>(S6) At the primary school I <b>hated</b> English because <b>we changed many teachers</b>. During the middle school I like it more than before</p> <p>(S7) My favourite subject is maths and <b>I would like to study it in English</b></p> <p>(S8) <b>It is one of my favourite subjects</b> because it is <b>easy</b> to understand. Through English I <b>can</b> communicate with other people</p>   |
| 2.2 Most favourite activity     | <p>(S1) The activity I like most is when at the end of the lesson we can <b>play with games</b> like Buzz and Pistolero</p> <p>(S2) The activity I like most is <b>listening</b> because we are not as good as the teacher, therefore I like <b>hearing the English sound</b> when the teacher reads. I like listening to the English accent and <b>listening activities</b> as well</p> <p>(S3) <b>Group activities</b> because they are funny</p> <p>(S4) The teacher gives us a text and we have to <b>translate</b> it all together. I like this type of activity</p> <p>(S5) <b>Topics related to culture</b> that are included in the coursebook or the teacher find them and give them us</p> <p>(S6) When I read I like the <b>English accent</b> and I would like to improve it. Then <b>I like grammar and doing grammar exercises</b>.</p> <p>(S7) The activity I like most is <b>writing sentences and correcting homework</b> by using the <b>interactive whiteboard</b></p> <p>(S8) The activity I like most is <b>listening, conversations and writing conversations</b></p> <p>(S9) The activity I like most is <b>learning new words</b></p> <p>(S10) The activity I like most is <b>writing English and listening</b></p> <p>(S11) I like <b>listening</b> while <b>it's hard for me</b> to pronounce some words</p> |
| 2.3 Least favourite activity    | <p>(S1) I don't like <b>exercises</b> during the English lesson. I don't want to do them</p> <p>(S2) I hate <b>irregular verbs</b></p> <p>(S3) When I don't like a given topic, like irregular verbs and <b>grammar rules</b> are very hard for me. I know how to apply a grammar rule but I can't do it!</p> <p>(S4) I can't understand some <b>grammar rules</b> even if the teacher explains them, it's hard for me</p> <p>(S5) My least favourite activity is <b>listening</b> because it's hard</p> <p>(S6) I find hard to learn <b>vocabulary</b> because we have to learn many words</p>  |

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|  | (S7) <i>For me the hardest activity is <b>listening</b></i>  |
|  | (S8) <i>For me the hardest activity is <b>reading</b></i>  |
| 2.4 What is missing during English lessons | (S1) <i>I like <b>group activities so I would like</b> to do it more often to speak with other classmates</i>  |
|  | (S2) <i>I like speaking and group activities. In the afternoon I attend a <b>Cambridge course</b> at school as well</i>  |
|  | (S3) <i>I like speaking activities but <b>I would suggest that I would like</b> to be engaged in a conversation starting from a given topic</i>  |
|  | (S4) <i><b>I like English lessons as they are</b></i>  |
|  | (S5) <i><b>No, I don't want to change anything, I like it all</b></i>  |
|  | (S6) <i><b>I like the teacher, she gives many things to do, she's strict</b></i>   |
|  | (S7) <i>I like reading comprehension because <b>you need to</b> understand and answer well, be precise</i>   |
|  | (S8) <i><b>Nothing to change</b>, I like the way teacher teaches, <b>she makes it interesting, she uses Kahoot</b></i>   |
|  | (S9) <i><b>I like it all, no changes</b></i>   |
|  | (S10) <i>We study formal... topics, <b>well we should get used to using</b> English in <b>practice... I mean</b>, they teach grammar, verbs, formal expressions but <b>I don't know...</b></i>   |
|  | (S11) <i>During the lesson, our teacher goes too fast and so some of us are left behind <b>and she is obsessed always with the same people</b>, you know, she always makes them correct our homework and she <b>takes for granted</b> that everyone is following and doing their homework, <b>always the same people</b>, she believes they are brilliant...</i> |

#### 4.3.3. Question Group 3: Personal experience and self-awareness of skills

The exchange then moved towards preferences and daily routines in terms of out-of-school language use. The interviewer asked:

(9) *What is your favourite website/app/game among those that use predominantly English? Why?*

And, when necessary and if not explicitly and spontaneously stated, some supporting questions were added:

(10) *When you engage with these websites/apps/games is your English different in any way from the English you use in class? How? Can you provide examples?*

(11) *How often do you use the app/this website/this game?*

(12) *How often do you use English when you use the app/a game/the website?*

(13) *Have you learnt any English using games? How? What?*

Even if the theme underlying this set of questions is familiar and recurring, some respondents needed eliciting questions to better express and define routines and personal skills. For example:

*Eliciting question: how many times a week?*

(S1): I watch more Italian videos, let's say 80% Italian 20% English.

*Eliciting question: do you watch TV series or films in English?*

(S2): No, I don't. I watch Narcos in Spanish. Sometimes I watch TV series in English and I use subtitles.

(S3): I watch films in English and I can understand them.

*Eliciting question: can you understand what they say?*

(S2): Yes, I do, more or less.

(S4): I don't use apps or videogames in English. I like watching videos on YouTube about English footballers.

*Eliciting question: Do you watch interviews?*

(S4): Yes, interviews or challenges among different footballers, freestylers.

*Eliciting question: can you understand what they say? Do you use subtitles?*

(S4): Yes, I can and I don't use subtitles.

*Eliciting question: can you understand the words of English songs?*

(S1): Yes, most of the times.

(S2): I like listening to English music. Then I like using apps, for example, one of them is a multimedia Japan comic, manga, and I read it in English. I seldom use videogames and I usually have no problems understanding the instructions and the rules.

*Eliciting question: when you use these videogames, are you engaged in conversations with the other players?*

(S1): Yes, it rarely happens, but when it happens it is easy to understand English conversation.

*Eliciting question: Do you think that the English used in these types of conversations is different from the English used at school?*

(S1): Yes, it is more fluent because I don't feel scared of making mistakes.

Answering this set of questions was relatively immediate and the interviewer only intervened when replies needed more details. Question Group 2 and Question Group 3 are to be considered as interrelated, and in a way the latter included control questions for the replies given in the former that were addressed in a more relaxed dimension. Vocabulary is related to the semantic fields of gaming and entertainment; text structures are basic, and replies are direct and immediate. Table 5 shows replies to the third main question and corresponding supporting questions are presented according to the discourse categories identified in the grids used to process data. Extracts have been selected among the complete dataset for their representativeness in terms of attitudes, awareness, needs, and experiences. Words in **bold** signal lexical, syntactical, rhetorical, and textual features examined in the data analysis.

Table 5

*Set of key topics and extracts from the third question group*

| Topics & issues                | Extracts   |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 3.1 Favourite website/app/game | (S1) <i>I don't remember the name but I use <b>an app written in English</b>, there are both images and words. I like listening <b>to English music</b></i>  |
|                                | (S2) <i><b>All videogames</b> are because they are in English and I learn specific terminology playing. I improved my words, ask teachers and <b>I learn by playing</b></i>  |
|                                | (S3) <i><b>Videogames and telephoning in English</b>. I learn a lot of <b>slang</b> that it is not traditional. I <b>improved a lot of pronunciation by watching TV series</b></i>   |
|                                | (S4) <i><b>PlayStation</b>: I can now speak with other people in English, for example. My English becomes <b>more fluid because I use terms that come from the game</b>, like "pushare." I interact in English while playing. <b>My pronunciation has improved</b></i>   |
|                                | (S5) <i><b>Books</b> in English make me improve because if I meet someone I can speak</i>  |
|                                | (S6) <i>I don't play a lot, I watch <b>films</b> but <b>I'm not sure I'm improving</b></i>   |
|                                | (S7) <i>I use any <b>apps</b> but I rather watch <b>English videos on YouTube</b></i>  |
|                                | (S8) <i>I use Fortnight</i>  |
|                                | (S9) <i>I don't use apps or videogames in English. I prefer watching <b>English TV series</b></i>  |
|                                | (S10) <i><b>I don't use videogames</b></i>   |
|                                | (S11) <i>I use an <b>app in English to create objects</b> but it's not a game and when don't understand some words I use <b>Google translator</b></i>  |
|                                | (S12) <i>I hardly ever use English videogames</i>  |
|                                | (S13) <i>I play a videogame in English and I follow an <b>English channel on YouTube</b> where they cook huge sandwiches, <b>it's amazing!</b> It is called Epic meal team.<br/>I like listening to <b>English music and English TV series</b> using <b>English subtitles</b> because sometimes I don't understand English words</i> |

#### 4.3.4 Question Group 4: Intercultural awareness and multilingualism

To conclude, the interviewer returned to learners' classroom experience and addressed the issues of standard models, exposure to other languages and cultures, and intercultural awareness by means of a set of questions that were specifically designed to collect useful data to this end, especially among multilingual and migrant learners. The starting question was:

(14) *In your class, do you ever talk about English speaking peoples and cultures other than British, American or Australian? How often and about what?*

Moreover, since groups of selected students included students from migrant backgrounds or second-generation pupils, some eliciting questions were used to explore side topics, such as:

(15) *Do you ever talk about your own culture(s)? (either in the English class or in any other class).*

The last set of questions aimed to verify both learners' intercultural awareness and exposure, and teachers' inclusive habits and sensitivity about the plurilingual and pluricultural dimension of their classrooms. Learners consciously answered without hesitation and gave details which confirm that coursebooks and teaching materials are not always updated to the socio-cultural changes that education is experiencing. This is due to global mobility and new linguistic landscapes; in contrast, intercultural competence is often still related to canonical literature or monocultural customs and traditions. Once again, learners' out-of-school experience is likely to bring diversity, plurality and new representations of life to the language classroom in the near future.

In Table 6, extracts from the replies given to the last main question and corresponding supporting questions are presented according to the discourse categories identified in the processing of data. Extracts have been selected among the complete dataset for their representativeness in terms of attitudes, awareness, needs, and experiences. Words in **bold** signal lexical, syntactical, rhetorical, and textual features examined in the data analysis:

Table 6

*Set of key topics and extracts from the fourth question group*

| Themes & issues  | Extracts  |
|--|---|
| 4.1 Exposure to cultures other than British, American or Australian in class | (S1) <b>Sometimes</b> during the English lessons <b>we focus on culture</b> when we read texts  |
|  | (S2) We dealt with <b>Romantic poets</b> in Italy, Byron and Shelley  |
|  | (S3) USA, Australia, <b>Romantic poets</b>  |
|  | (S4) Thanksgiving or New Zealand on our coursebook  |
|  | (S5) We have an <b>Estonian classmate</b> and he studied English in depth, in Estonia they speak English as well, so he is very good in English and his English skills are remarkable. So we help him in Italian.   |
|  | (S6) We read texts about <b>America</b> , but our book also includes texts about <b>Australia</b> . We did some tests about the American culture for example <b>thanksgiving, Christopher Columbus, the American flag and politics, American people</b>   |
|  | (S7) We explored the <b>American culture</b> . All these topics are included in our course book.  |
|  | (S8) Our course book includes other cultures like <b>Australia and other cultures</b> , but I don't remember the other ones! We haven't still dealt with them so I'm waiting to study them!   |
|  | (S9) <b>Our teacher doesn't like the USA</b> but when she has to explain the USA she does. <b>She likes India</b> .   |
|  | (S10) The teacher talks about the American culture <b>because she was in the USA</b>  |
|  | (S11) Now we are doing only grammar, during our second year we did grammar and <b>sometimes culture, such as texts, dialogues</b> and our teacher sometimes showed us <b>on the map some areas of England</b> but now she has said that now we have to focus on grammar and after, to relax, we will focus on culture, new words and lexis... |
|  | (S12) There is only a section on our book, <b>about the USA</b>   |
|  | (S13) Sometimes we talk about <b>Indian holidays and festivals</b>  |
|  | (S14) About the Caribbean   |
| 4.2 Reference to own culture at school                                       | (S1) All: No  |
|  | (S2) Yes, we did. We talked about <b>our traditions and our cultures</b> . What we do with our parents  |

- 
- (S3) We have never talked about the Italian culture, but sometimes we can do some exercises to talk about the **things we like most about our culture**, what we do in a personal way
- (S4) We often talk about foreign cultures like **Africa and Asia**
- (S5) Usually, I'm not asked to talk about my culture, but once during the **geography oral test** the teacher asked me to talk about my country
- (S6) We just do grammar, sometimes texts about the UK. One time we read something about the **Grand Canyon...**
- (S7) No, but we read texts about culture, e.g., thanksgiving. After reading the text we had to answer to some questions and in particular there was one asking whether **we have particular traditions or customs**
- 

## 5. Voices from the field: young learners' advice

The analysis of data deriving from the focus groups carried out with young learners, reveal that, first of all, learners are often more aware of teaching practices that are more effective for their learning than their teachers. The importance of responses received by asking learners' habits, perceptions and beliefs about their learning reveals how useful listening to learners' voices is in research studies, especially when a PDC is designed and implemented.

After being transcribed, the data were further examined and interpreted according to special grids where we identified elements related to the four main topics identified in the tool design throughout the participants' responses (see Section 4.1). This last phase of data coding helped in replying to the initial research questions and supporting the research hypotheses (see Section 3.1).

More precisely, the findings proved to be relevant in many respects. Firstly, young learners' attitude towards English, its use and its usefulness, is extremely positive. They are aware and satisfied with the role of English as a global language. This is also due to the fact that, despite their age, they have already experienced the importance of effective communication with other non-native speakers using English as a lingua franca, thanks to social networks and ICTs, and sometimes continue to do so on a daily basis. This also means being exposed to other languages and to the use of communication strategies involving mediation, code-mixing, translanguaging and, if needed, paralinguistic to enhance mutual intelligibility among participants involved in the interactions. However, the data also revealed a lack of awareness of other English cultures, other than British and American ones, and of World Englishes.

In terms of language acquisition, pupils show self-awareness of their use of English and a controversial approach to accuracy and being corrected by their teachers (e.g., *I hate irregular verbs; I feel anxious when I have to apply grammar rules, grammar rules that are hard for me; it's hard for me to pronounce some words*). In this respect, despite several decades of research studies in this area, it is problematic to formulate any conclusions about the topic of error correction and corrective feedback and its impact on language acquisition and development. This is especially evident in light of the so called "communicative revolution" in language teaching (Widdowson, 1978) where learners' success was related to communicative effectiveness rather than formal accuracy. Many researchers have investigated worldwide students' attitudes towards teachers' Corrective Feedback (CF) strategies (e.g., Lyster & Ranta, 1997); the timing of CF (e.g., Sheen & Ellis, 2011); and types of learners' errors that should be corrected (e.g., Calsiyao, 201; Couper, 2019; Hassan & Arslan, 2008; Katayama, 2007; Ustaci, 2014). The majority of these studies' findings proved that CF has made a great contribution to language learning as it facilitates learners in identifying and adjusting their behaviours (e.g., Ancker, 2000; Long, 1991) and making progress in language learning (e.g., Agustuna, Herlina & Faridah, 2019; Lyster, 2013; Saito & Lyster, 2012). In contrast, it could affect students' reactions and motivation in language learning negatively (Alqahtani & Al-enzi, 2011; Ellis, 2009). Moreover, very recently, a change in priorities for teachers of English as a language for international communication and alternative assessment have also been suggested (Newbold, 2017).

To sum up, the final coding of data and the corresponding analysis revealed meaningful results in terms of learners' needs, perceptions and attitudes towards English language use and learning at a time of change. The correspondence between the initial research topics and issues (see Section 4.2) and the main categories identified for the coding and the analysis of data (see Section 4.1) can be summarized as follows in Table 7.

Table 7  
Main findings from the data analysis of the focus groups

| Key issues in question groups                  | Notes on categories   |
|--|---|
| Imagination & schemata on English language     | English language related to school, learning, global communication, nativeness (UK, USA), standards:<br>e.g., <i>I like English. It is the most spoken language nowadays.</i>   |
| Expectations & representations                 | English language related to work, study, intercultural communication:<br>e.g., <i>Yes, I will move to England therefore If I can speak English it's easier. It is the most spoken language in the world.</i>                              |
| Use of English outside the classroom           | ELF & accommodation strategies; Habits: social media, apps, videogames, web:<br>e.g., <i>I use it to give street directions to tourists and they understand me. I use English when I play with the PlayStation and online videogames.</i> |
| Attitudes to learning English                  | Positive and responsive:<br>e.g., <i>It's my second favourite subject and I like it because it is easier than Italian, it is funny and it has a beautiful sound.</i>  |
| Use of communication strategies                | Frequent and conscious:<br>e.g., <i>If I don't understand something I use gestures.</i>   |
| Criticism of teaching practices & methods      | Boring and demanding tasks; need for more interaction, spoken language, group activities:<br>e.g., <i>I like group activity so I would like to do it more often to speak with other classmates.</i>                                       |
| Self-awareness & language use                  | Signals of self-confidence, search of authenticity:<br>e.g., <i>I can understand English TV series with English subtitles. I interact in English while playing. My pronunciation has improved.</i>  |
| Multiculturalism & exposure to other languages | Limited and not satisfying:<br>e.g., <i>Sometimes we talk about Indian holidays and festivals. But it doesn't happen so often...</i>  |

The findings that emerged from the focus groups carried out with young learners were used to plan the ENRICH CPD Course. They show current beliefs and attitudes towards learning and using the English language at an earlier stage of language acquisition. Children and young learners are inevitably influenced by the global changes occurring and affecting their daily life: migrant flows, recent developments in technology, virtual realities and easier and speedier access to knowledge and news, multilingualism, and plurality of English. All these aspects have considerable pedagogical implications and learners' voices, as they are authentic, critical and realistic, cannot be neglected; they have therefore become extremely relevant in terms of suggesting innovations in teacher education and language policies. Hence, as concerns innovations in teacher education and professional development of ELTs, the research approach presented in this study (and applied in the ENRICH project) had the aim of gathering information from learners about the current status and opinions about ELT. As a result, they contributed to developing the internal structure of the CPD Course and may be seen as a considerable improvement to the field that should be encouraged for further studies.

## 6. Conclusions

The initial hypotheses of the study were mostly confirmed by the results of the data analysis, as the participant learners' responses to the sets of questions, aimed at eliciting their reactions and comments on learning practices and self-awareness on their role as users of English and other languages, confirmed that learners' voices are as relevant and significant as those of their teachers in implementing high-quality continuous professional development. The data analysis succeeded in answering the initial research questions and unveiled common and firm beliefs about the participants' role as learners at school and users outside the classroom. The discursive approach that was adopted during the focus groups stimulated interventions and exchanges, and enhanced participants' self-awareness and a progressive cooperative interactional process that led to the involvement of each speaker in the conversation, guided by the interviewer.

The analysis of the data unveiled how learners not only actively position themselves in relation to innovation as the integration of the out-of-the-school experience in their classrooms confirms, but also suggest innovative approaches and solutions when asked to reflect on teaching practices and habits.

Lastly, the choice of using a data analysis based on specific grids and discursive categories proved to be a powerful tool in investigating learners' language choices in an unusual communicative dimension such as that which is inevitably offered by focus groups. Their discursive strategies unveil participants' perceptions and needs, as well as insights for teachers and trainers, with respect to the current role of English and the new challenges that it is raising in terms of teacher education and of language policies. In fact, in the light of these results (referring to the pre-pandemic period) and after the dramatic experience of the total closure of schools in 2020-2021, it is highly possible that today's responses to the same questions would be even more thoughtful and conscious in terms of educational innovation. As the latest data show (COE, 2020<sup>4</sup>; Indire, 2021<sup>5</sup>), the pandemic forced learners to switch to an online mode of learning where digital-integrated teaching became a complement, and not a substitute, of face-to-face lessons. The sudden transition to technology, virtual teaching spaces and contents that are adapted to distance learning have seriously affected learners' perceptions and self-awareness of their learning processes, especially at a time of crisis when teaching/learning challenges (as well as opportunities) inevitably entailed the overlapping of their own in- and out-of-the school experience.

To conclude, the study highlighted learners' overall understanding and awareness of new communicative processes involving the new international function of English and its different instantiations (first of all, ELF), as well as the expanding role of non-native speakers. Pupils are aware of being learners as well as social agents (CEFR, 2020<sup>6</sup>) and successful communicators by accepting, and adopting forms of translanguaging, communication, mediation and accommodation strategies in daily conversations. They provide their teachers with useful suggestions and indications in terms of the importance of authenticity of tools and tasks in the English classroom; the level of learning satisfaction; the daily out-of-school experience; the use of ICTs and social media; the exposure to other languages and cultures; and learners' awareness of school and family expectations.

All this suggests the urgent need for a widespread reflective teacher education where new instantiations of English(es) are embedded throughout the course components and learners' language experiences are valued in classroom life. It goes without saying that language policies should endorse the successful implementation of this kind of innovations, thus promoting and sustaining learners' voices, suggestions and support with the aim of translating these innovations into successful and sustainable classroom practices.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/making-the-right-to-education-a-reality-in-times-of-covid-19-a-roadmap/16809fee7b>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.indire.it/en/2022/02/03/the-report-on-the-impact-of-the-pandemic-on-teaching-is-online/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching/16809ea0d4>

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## Appendix

### YOUNG LEARNERS' FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

*Place:* class or comfortable school room without other students, and preferably with no teachers, possibly sitting in circles or around a table; provide white paper, pencils etc.

*Participants:*

- 5 students (chosen by classroom teacher, 3 preferably multilingual of different native languages)
- 2 trained observers who will use a specific grid with criteria
- 1 trained interviewer

*Content:* 4 sets of questions

#### Question Group 1

*Main Question:* When you think of English, what is the first thing / image / sound / that comes to your mind?

*Supporting Questions:*

1. Do you think English will be useful to you in the future? Who do you think you are going to use it with mostly? Why will English be useful to you?
2. Do you ever use English outside the school? If yes, tell me when, how, with whom ... In which situations outside school were you able to use English effectively? Give some examples.
3. What do you do when you don't understand something when talking to other people in English? How do you resolve such problems?
4. If someone doesn't completely understand what you are saying, how do you help him/her understand?

### Question Group 2

*Main Question:* Is English one of your favourite subjects at school?

*Supporting Questions:*

1. Why? Why not?
2. What do you think is missing in your English lessons?
3. What makes English an enjoyable subject at school?
4. What activity do you like doing best during your English lessons at school? Why?
5. What do you like doing least during your English lessons at school? Why?
6. Is English in any way different from other subjects? If yes, can you provide an example?
7. Why do you learn English?
8. Do you think you need to practise English beyond the English classes? How? Why?

### Question Group 3

*Main Question:* What is your favourite website / app / game among those that use predominantly English? Why?

*Supporting Questions:*

1. When you engage with these websites / apps / games is your English in any way different from the English you use in class? How? Can you provide examples?
2. How often do you use this app / website/ game?
3. How often do you use English when you use the app /game/ website?
4. Have you learnt any English using games? How? What?

### Question Group 4

*Main Question:* In your class do you ever talk about English speaking peoples and cultures other than British, American or Australian? How often and about what?

*Supporting Question:*

1. Do you ever talk about your own culture(s)? (either in the English class or in any other class).

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**Reseña: Pascual y Cabo, Diego, & Torres, Julio (Eds.) (2022).  
*Aproximaciones al estudio del español como lengua de herencia.*  
Routledge.**

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Book review

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**ABSTRACT**

**ES** El libro reseñado es una compilación de estudios realizados sobre la adquisición y la enseñanza del español como lengua de herencia. A través de 19 capítulos y un epílogo, se presenta una visión general sobre los avances realizados en el campo de estudio y se proponen nuevas rutas de investigación.

**Palabras clave:** ADQUISICIÓN, ENSEÑANZA, ESPAÑOL COMO LENGUA DE HERENCIA

**EN** The book under review is a compilation of studies carried out on the acquisition and teaching of Spanish as a Heritage Language. Through 19 chapters and an epilogue, an overview of the progress achieved in the field of study is presented and new routes for research are proposed.

**Keywords:** ACQUISITION, TEACHING, SPANISH HERITAGE LANGUAGE

**IT** Il libro recensito qui è costituito da una serie di studi dedicati al processo di acquisizione e di insegnamento della lingua spagnola come lingua ereditaria. Attraverso i 19 capitoli e l'epilogo, viene presentata una panoramica dei progressi compiuti nel campo e vengono proposti nuovi percorsi di ricerca.

**Parole chiave:** ACQUISIZIONE, INSEGNAMENTO, SPAGNOLO COME LINGUA EREDITARIA

## 1. Introducción

La migración de hispanos hacia los Estados Unidos puede denominarse una realidad constante y permanente, la cual caracteriza al país. Sin embargo, para muchos representa un simple flujo de personas de un lugar a otro, excluyendo la riqueza cultural, ideológica y lingüística que aporta. Por ende, la comunidad hispana crece estableciendo al español dentro de una sociedad que reconoce al inglés como la lengua de prestigio. No obstante, el español, además de expandirse en múltiples contextos, también lo hace a través de generaciones de inmigrantes. De ahí que cada vez más académicos se interesan por efectuar estudios sobre el español como lengua de herencia, los cuales, han incrementado durante los últimos 20 años (Ortega, 2020).

Este libro, *Aproximaciones al estudio del español como lengua de herencia*, editado por Diego Pascual y Cabo y Julio Torres, se suma al campo con estudios recientes sobre la adquisición y la enseñanza del español como lengua de herencia (ELH) en los Estados Unidos. Merece la pena sugerir este libro para aquellos estudiosos sobre el tema, actuales y futuros instructores de ELH.

El libro se integra de 19 capítulos y un epílogo, escritos por personas expertas en el área y distribuidos en 3 secciones: enfoques lingüísticos (1-5), perspectivas pedagógicas (6-14) y aspectos programáticos (15-19). Comienza con una introducción que describe al hablante de ELH, explica la evolución del campo del EHL y expone de manera general el contenido de los capítulos. Entre algunas de las novedades que ofrece el libro, destacan las propuestas de estudio y las preguntas de reflexión al final de cada capítulo.

## 2. Aproximaciones lingüísticas al español como lengua de herencia

El primer capítulo, “La fonética y fonología del español como lengua de herencia”, presenta una síntesis de los trabajos realizados sobre la producción y percepción de las vocales, las consonantes y la prosodia en los hablantes de ELH. Por ello, Rajiv Rao y Mark Amengual presentan algunos fenómenos fonológicos de producción o percepción (realización de las oclusivas sordas /p,t,k/ y sonoras /b,d,g/, vibrantes /r/ y /r/, entonación de oraciones declarativas e interrogativas), junto con las variables extralingüísticas (dominancia y proficiencia, tiempo de exposición al español, generación de inmigrantes) que influyen en la producción de sonidos de estos sistemas. Aparte, se comparan los datos obtenidos de los hablantes de ELH, con datos de hablantes monolingües de español o de hablantes de español como L2, para determinar los factores que intervienen en la transferencia fonológica en el ELH. Resultan relevantes sus recomendaciones para futuras investigaciones, por ejemplo, realizar estudios en el campo de la percepción.

En el segundo capítulo, Naomi L. Shin y Desireé Ramírez-Urbaneja presentan “La morfosintaxis del español como lengua de herencia durante la niñez”, enfocándose en el ritmo de adquisición y la influencia del inglés; además de compararla con la de niños y niñas monolingües. Para ello, las autoras analizan una serie de investigaciones que abordan temas sobre el género, la marcación diferencial del objeto, la morfología verbal, la influencia interlingüística y la alternancia de código. Cabe destacar que examinan los fenómenos morfosintácticos categóricos y variables más característicos de los hablantes de ELH como, por ejemplo, las preposiciones colgadas, el orden sujeto-verbo en interrogativas y declarativas, los pronombres de sujeto, etc. a fin de determinar la edad en la que presentan una mayor o menor influencia del inglés. Además, expresan el efecto que tiene la cantidad de *input* obtenido por los niños en la adquisición de la morfosintaxis. Al final, las autoras señalan algunas futuras líneas de investigación como continuar el estudio del ritmo de adquisición de la concordancia de género, así como también el de la alternancia de código en la infancia.

El tercer capítulo, “Consideraciones sobre algunos aspectos de la morfosintaxis del español como lengua de herencia en adultos”, es escrito por Diego Pascual y Silvina Montrul. En este capítulo, los autores describen a grandes rasgos las características lingüísticas de los hablantes de LH y reafirman la idea de que la morfosintaxis es la más vulnerable en las lenguas de herencia. Los autores analizan la morfología nominal de tres propiedades del español: la concordancia de género y número, el marcador diferencial de objeto directo y los sujetos dativos con verbos psicológicos del tipo gustar/encantar. Así mismo, mencionan algunos de los orígenes y causas que ocasionan la variabilidad como, por ejemplo, la adquisición a edad temprana o tardía de la lengua, la falta de escolaridad, la atrición y el tipo de input (bilingüe o monolingüe), entre otros.

El siguiente capítulo titulado “El conocimiento léxico de los hablantes de herencia”, está redactado por Eve Zyzik. La autora parte del análisis de la competencia léxica, planteándose si los hablantes de ELH poseen un vocabulario amplio o limitado. Sin embargo, subraya que la metodología empleada en la recolección de los datos impacta en la determinación del tamaño del lexicón de los hablantes de ELH. Por ende, presenta cinco métodos de recolección de datos (el test de fluidez verbal, la encuesta de disponibilidad léxica, la prueba de decisión léxica, la tarea de juicio de aceptabilidad y la producción espontánea), junto con sus alcances.

El último capítulo de esta primera sección se ocupa de un área poco explotada en las investigaciones sobre el ELH, a saber: la pragmática. Elisa Gironzetti incita a continuar contribuyendo en este campo, pues indica que hasta el momento los estudios existentes se enfocan en los aspectos pragmáticos de las formas de tratamiento, los marcadores discursivos, la cortesía y los actos de habla, los cuales explica en el capítulo. Además, propone su estudio e integración en la enseñanza del ELH desde una perspectiva multimodal, a fin de entender la comunicación e interacción de los hablantes de ELH.

### **3. Aproximaciones innovadoras a la enseñanza del español como lengua de herencia**

En el capítulo seis, los autores Julio Torres y Melisa Baralt describen y ejemplifican el enfoque pedagógico por tareas, junto con la metodología necesaria para su establecimiento en el aula. El esquema tripartito mencionado consta de una fase previa a la tarea, una fase de realización de la tarea y una fase posterior, las cuales permiten conocer tanto sus objetivos como la función que tienen los docentes y estudiantes en cada una de ellas. Al finalizar el capítulo, los autores dan una serie de recomendaciones pedagógicas a considerar en la elaboración de este tipo de tareas para estudiantes de ELH.

El séptimo capítulo, “La literacidad múltiple en el aprendizaje del español como lengua de herencia”, ha sido realizado por María Luisa Parra Velasco. La autora expone los alcances que se obtienen a través de la implementación de los ambientes educativos de aprendizaje por diseño (AD) y de literacidad múltiple (LM) en la instrucción del ELH. Menciona que este tipo de pedagogía requiere la integración de la diversidad cultural y la variación lingüística (multiliteracidad) en la instrucción, para desarrollar las habilidades funcionales (describir, narrar, explicar y argumentar) del estudiantado latinx en el aula. La autora comparte algunos ejemplos de actividades (pp. 103-105) que integran estos principios.

El siguiente capítulo titulado “Translanguaging thinking y el español como lengua de herencia”, de Josh Prada, expone las conceptualizaciones sobre el translanguaging para así entender las dimensiones que implica la adopción de una pedagogía translingual en la enseñanza del ELH. Asimismo, incluye aquellos juicios cognitivos y sociales que marginalizan a las prácticas translinguales de los hablantes de ELH; pues, como bien señala el autor, se omite la función que tienen en el acto comunicativo. Principalmente, este capítulo ofrece una reflexión sobre la estigmatización referente a la acción de translenguar, con el objetivo de exhortar a los docentes al desarrollo de currículos sociolingüísticamente inclusivos y no prescriptivos en la enseñanza del ELH.

En el capítulo 9, “La traducción en la enseñanza del español como lengua de herencia”, la autora Laura Gasca Jiménez evalúa el uso de la traducción en la enseñanza de lenguas. La autora, aparte de exponer el carácter comunicativo, valor profesional y pedagógico que refleja en los hablantes de ELH, sugiere que debiese figurar como estrategia plurilingüe y destreza en la pedagogía de las lenguas de herencia. Gasca Jiménez concluye proponiendo la integración de la traducción en la enseñanza del ELH y el empleo del enfoque por tareas de traducción para su ejecución. La autora también ofrece una serie de sugerencias pedagógicas sobre el uso de la traducción en el aula, por ejemplo, la incorporación de actividades, tareas y proyectos auténticos de traducción escritos u orales.

En el décimo capítulo, la autora Valeria Valencia-Zamudio expone las ideologías lingüísticas negativas que enfrentan los repatriados y hablantes del español como lengua de herencia, al regresar a su país de origen. Según la autora, los estigmas generados en relación con su lengua de herencia repercuten no solo en su seguridad lingüística al expresarse, sino también en su autopercepción lingüística y en su interacción con otros hablantes de la lengua. La autora propone la creación de talleres para migrantes repatriados, en los que mediante el uso de una pedagogía crítica, se reflexione sobre las diferentes variedades del español y así mitigar sus inseguridades lingüísticas.

Amàlia Llombart-Huesca en “Conciencia metalingüística en la enseñanza del español como lengua de herencia” explica cómo se ha limitado el desarrollo del conocimiento metalingüístico de los estudiantes de ELH, por el empleo de prácticas normativistas, el encuadramiento en el marco de la adquisición de segundas lenguas y el uso de una definición basada en un enfoque lingüístico y no psicolingüístico. Recalca el reconocimiento de su conocimiento implícito y epilingüístico, pues contribuyen al desarrollo de su conciencia fonológica y morfológica durante el proceso de adquisición de la lectoescritura. Resulta importante mencionar la necesidad de efectuar investigaciones con estudiantes de ELH de secundaria y universidad.

En el capítulo doce, denominado “Herramientas sociales en la clase de español como lengua de herencia”, las autoras, Idoia Elola, Ana Padial y Paola Guerrero-Rodríguez demuestran la importancia de las herramientas sociales para el desarrollo de la multialfabetización, toda vez que permiten al estudiante de ELH diseñar nuevas formas de significado, ya sea de modo oral, escrito, visual, etc. Ellas dan una serie de

recomendaciones pedagógicas para la realización de actividades (historias digitales) que integren a las herramientas sociales (Facebook, Twitter); por ejemplo, el empleo de un marco teórico sociocultural (teoría de la actividad), como también los marcos pedagógicos del enfoque por tareas o el del aprendizaje por diseño.

En el capítulo trece, Francisca Aguiló y Andrew Lynch reflexionan sobre las posibles aportaciones que realizaría la inserción de la literatura estadounidense en el aula de español como lengua de herencia. Resulta particularmente interesante que los autores citen los libros de texto de ELH que adjuntan textos producidos por US latinx, al igual que sus propuestas concretas sobre otro tipo de textos a implementar (poesía, teatro, cómics). Sugieren su inclusión en clases de nivel básico e intermedio, ya que el cruce lingüístico expuesto en las obras hace que el estudiante de ELH reexamine su identidad sociolingüística y los límites lingüísticos de la(s) lengua(s). Además, propone empezar a trabajar con textos multilingües y después con monolingües en el aula.

En el siguiente capítulo, Rosy Lima de Padilla propone la incorporación de la escritura creativa en la enseñanza del español como lengua de herencia, pues permite que el estudiante de ELH exprese sus experiencias lingüísticas y su identidad, aparte de estimular su conocimiento crítico del lenguaje. La autora parte del análisis y discusión de textos que empleen variación lingüística (poesía) previos a la escritura. Plantea algunas actividades de iniciación a la escritura creativa, como imitar reescribiendo otros textos, aparte de incorporar una etapa de reflexión y otra de revisión. Ella esquematiza, en la página 20, la implementación de estas actividades.

#### **4. Aproximaciones programáticas al español como lengua de herencia**

El capítulo quince, “El entrenamiento de instructores en programas de español como lengua de herencia”, escrito por Damián Vergara Wilson y Sarah Schulman, describen la figura de los TAs (asistentes de enseñanza) como instructores de ELH. Subrayan que su proceso de enseñanza varía en cada uno de ellos, debido a lo que Vygotsky denomina *perezhivanie* (sus experiencias emocionales, psicológicas y físicas). Explican el desarrollo de su competencia en la enseñanza en los programas de ELH, mediante una pirámide de relaciones dialécticas donde intervienen directores, docentes y estudiantes, advirtiendo de que deben entender concretamente lo que es un programa de ELH. Los autores muestran también la importancia que tiene la voz del alumnado, tanto en el diseño de los programas como en el entrenamiento docente.

Gleen Martínez en “El español para fines específicos y los programas de herencia” propone una posible convergencia entre el español para fines específicos (EFE) y el español como lengua de herencia (ELH). Debido a que el EFE y el ELH han desarrollado por separado sus propios enfoques pedagógicos, orientaciones motivacionales, aspectos curriculares e ideologías. No obstante, algunos estudios citados sobre profesionistas hispanos afirman un vínculo importante entre EFE y ELH, producto de sus deseos culturales, profesionales, de aprendizaje y de reconexión con el idioma. Al final, el autor da algunas ideas para un ELH para fines específicos, en particular, el uso de un enfoque que satisfaga además de sus necesidades, sus deseos y metas.

El capítulo diecisiete, titulado “La investigación-acción para maestros de hablantes de herencia”, está escrito por Elizabeth M. Kissling. Este capítulo se centra en explicar el proceso y el impacto que genera el desarrollo de proyectos de investigación-acción (IA) en la formación docente de profesorado de ELH, como en la creación de recursos para el ELH. La autora señala que su naturaleza cíclica (observación, reflexión y planificación) y recursiva ayuda a mejorar la calidad de la educación. Comparte su experiencia como mentora en algunos de los proyectos de IA, identificando tres retos a los que se exponen los instructores: tiempo, preparación y motivación.

Silvia Marijuan presenta en “Los hablantes de herencia del español en los community colleges” una reflexión sobre las características de los CCs (community colleges) y del estudiantado latinx e incluye recomendaciones pedagógicas sobre la enseñanza del ELH en CCs. Señala que se debe entender el sistema de los CCs y considerar las motivaciones y desafíos del estudiantado, para diseñar un programa de ELH apto para los CCs. Comenta que los programas deben articularse, a fin de que ofrezcan créditos transferibles y contribuyan a que el estudiantado latinx se gradúe. Destaca la idea de brindar cursos funcionales, por lo que ofrece algunas prácticas pedagógicas, como la tutoría de otros hablantes de herencia o el servicio comunitario.

En el antepenúltimo capítulo, Ellen J. Serafini analiza el aprendizaje-servicio en la enseñanza del español como lengua de herencia, toda vez que este, al generar conciencia crítica lingüística (herramienta de resistencia social) de las funciones socioafectivas y sociopolíticas del lenguaje, empodera al estudiante de ELH y a su comunidad con conocimientos lingüísticos, culturales y sociales, aparte de facilitar un cambio social. Dentro de los huecos conceptuales y metodológicos en los trabajos investigativos, señala la medición del impacto en la comunidad o del desarrollo de la conciencia crítica lingüística, por lo que recomienda el uso de una pedagogía híbrida en la integración del aprendizaje-servicio en la enseñanza del ELH.



El capítulo final, “Epílogo. El contexto sociopolítico y el español como lengua de herencia”, está escrito por Lourdes Ortega. Este epílogo continúa contribuyendo al conocimiento del español de LH, mediante la correlación de las ideas de la autora y las aportaciones realizadas por los autores que integran la obra. Destaca la importancia del contexto sociopolítico para entender las asimetrías que hay en torno a la LH, los procesos (estigmatización, iconicidad, racialización y experiencia de inmigración) y consecuencias de la minorización contra la LH y sus hablantes. Comenta que, en las investigaciones que abordan temas lingüísticos o de desarrollo, pasa desapercibida la inseguridad lingüística de los hablantes de LH, al igual que la heterogeneidad de sus perfiles biográficos, la cual difiere de la heterogeneidad lingüística que todos reconocen en sus estudios. Por último, hace hincapié en continuar investigando en este campo de adquisición y de enseñanza del español como LH.

La experiencia de las personas expertas plasmada en cada uno de los capítulos va más allá de una explicación teórica o metodológica. Como lector se agradece cada una de las ejemplificaciones que ofrecen, pues ayudan a entender las contextualizaciones realizadas en los estudios. Sin lugar a duda, es un libro formativo e instructivo que contribuirá a la formación de agentes que promuevan el cambio en la percepción del ELH, así como a la de sus hablantes.

## Referencias

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| <b>IT</b> | <b>Julio César Medina López</b> insegna spagnolo presso la Sam Houston State University. Attualmente sta facendo un dottorato in Linguistica Spagnola presso la University of Houston. Le sue aree di ricerca sono la competenza lessicale, la pedagogia, la sociolinguistica, la fonetica e fonologia per i parlanti di lingua spagnola come lingua ereditaria e per gli studenti di spagnolo come seconda lingua. |

**Recensione: Torresan, Paolo (2022). *Un alfabeto di 73 lettere. Strategie per la didattica linguistica*. Pearson Academy.**

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Book review

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**ABSTRACT**

**IT** La presente recensione punta a fornire una descrizione e una valutazione critica del volume di Paolo Torresan *Un Alfabeto di 73 Lettere. Strategie per la Didattica Linguistica*. Nella prima sezione vengono delineati l'argomento e la struttura del lavoro, descrivendone brevemente le tre parti che lo compongono. Nella seconda sezione vengono approfonditi i contenuti delle singole parti e i rispettivi capitoli. Nella terza sezione si individuano i possibili fruitori del libro ed infine, nella quarta e ultima sezione, si tenta una valutazione in prospettiva critica, sottolineandone i punti di forza ed eventuali criticità.

**Parole chiave:** DIDATTICA DELLE LINGUE, METODO VS. APPROCCIO, POST-METODO, STRATEGIE DI INSEGNAMENTO E APPRENDIMENTO

**EN** This review aims to describe and critically evaluate the volume *Un Alfabeto di 73 Lettere. Strategie per la Didattica Linguistica*, by Paolo Torresan. The work's topic and structure are outlined in the first section, where book's three parts are briefly described. The second section delves into the contents and chapters of each part of the book. In the third section, potential readers of the book are identified. Finally, in the fourth and last section of the book, a critical evaluation is attempted, highlighting strengths and possible critical points.

**Keywords:** SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING, METHOD VS APPROACH, POST-METHOD, TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

**ES** La presente reseña ofrece una descripción y una valoración crítica del libro de Paolo Torresan *Un Alfabeto di 73 Lettere. Strategie per la Didattica Linguistica*. En la primera sección, se presenta el tema y la estructura del trabajo, describiendo brevemente las tres partes que lo componen. En la segunda sección, se desarrollan los contenidos de las partes individuales y sus respectivos capítulos. En la tercera sección, se identifican los posibles usuarios del libro y finalmente, en la cuarta y última sección, se propone una evaluación en perspectiva crítica, destacando sus fortalezas y los puntos críticos.

**Palabras clave:** ENSEÑANZA DE LENGUAS, MÉTODO VS. ENFOQUE, POST-MÉTODO, ESTRATEGIAS DE ENSEÑANZA Y APRENDIZAJE

## 1. Introduzione

Il volume, *Un Alfabeto di 73 Lettere. Strategie per la Didattica Linguistica* di Paolo Torresan, costituisce uno strumento utile per una riformulazione e un aggiornamento dell'insegnamento delle lingue. Il volume è composto da tre parti per un totale di otto capitoli, e tratta molteplici aspetti teorici e pratici di glottodidattica. In particolare, come si desume dal titolo, quelli relativi alle strategie di apprendimento e insegnamento. Come viene affermato da Letizia Cingagnotto nella prefazione, “delle numerose ‘strategie’ proposte dal volume emerge il ‘filo rosso’ dell’approccio orientato all’azione, delineato dal Volume Complementare del Quadro Comune Europeo di Riferimento per le lingue del 2020” (p. 7). Il Quadro Comune vede gli apprendenti come attori sociali e la lingua come mezzo di comunicazione, non solo come insieme di regole formali.

La prima parte (Capitoli 1 e 2) è sostanzialmente storica e teorica. Viene riassunta in maniera esaustiva e chiara, anche per coloro che non sono propriamente esperti del tema, la storia del concetto di *metodo* nella didattica delle lingue. Nella parte seconda (Capitoli 3 e 4) vengono definiti i concetti di *strategia* e *approccio*. Viene proposta una classificazione delle varie strategie e si presentano alcuni principi base nella progettazione di corsi, lezioni e attività. La terza parte infine (Capitoli 5, 6, 7 e 8), la più applicativa, è dedicata a presentare concretamente diversi tipi di strategie e attività utili da mettere in pratica in classe.

Le basi teoriche a cui l'autore fa riferimento sono diverse: da Bloom, a Prabhu, a Nunan, a Kumaravadivelu, fino ad arrivare agli ideatori del *Lexical Approach* (Lewis, 1993, 1997; Willis, 1990) e alle sue applicazioni per l'italiano (Cardona, 2004, 2005). Secondo la prefazione, se il linguaggio rappresenta il pensiero, le strategie proposte da Torresan contribuiscono, se appropriatamente utilizzate in classe, a “far vedere” i processi di apprendimento e insegnamento. Ciò permette di creare un'atmosfera più entusiastica e dunque più favorevole per gli apprendenti aumentandone la motivazione e la partecipazione.

Conclude il lavoro un glossario esplicativo dedicato ai termini tecnici utilizzati nel volume. Ciò contribuisce a rendere il volume facilmente fruibile anche ai non specialisti.

## 2. Contenuti singoli capitoli

La prima parte (Capitoli 1 e 2), come già accennato, rappresenta una sorta di introduzione storico-teorica. Nel primo capitolo viene riassunta l'evoluzione del metodo nell'insegnamento linguistico, distinguendo i concetti di *metodo* e *approccio*; successivamente viene illustrato il rapporto gerarchico dall'approccio al metodo (Anthony, 1963). In base a tale modello, l'approccio rappresenta il livello massimo di astrazione, che si concretizza nelle proposte didattiche dei vari metodi. L'autore sottolinea poi che nel post metodo il concetto di approccio è cambiato: “il nuovo concetto di approccio non ha bisogno di “incarnarsi”, di cristallizzarsi cioè in una formula chiusa (un metodo): vale piuttosto come schema aperto a cui gli insegnanti si ispirano per confezionare loro stessi una serie di tecniche” (p. 15). L'autore sembra dunque riferirsi al metodo come a un modello a cui rifarsi piuttosto che a un insieme di procedure da seguire con precisione.

Successivamente viene introdotto il concetto di “post-metodo”, concepito come una vera e propria filosofia “che nutre ogni sospetto verso ogni possibile formula” (p. 16); l'autore evidenzia come esso si ponga in esplicito contrasto con la nozione stessa di “metodo”, proponendo una distinzione sempre meno rigida tra teoria e pratica. Il lavoro spartiacque, riguardo al post-metodo, viene individuato dall'autore in Prabhu (1990).

Nel secondo capitolo invece viene presentata una serie di proposte che possono ricadere nel “post-metodo”:

- il *Dogme Approach* (un approccio comunicativo che scoraggia l'utilizzo di libri di testo e punta sulla conversazione tra insegnante e apprendenti);
- l'approccio di H.D. Brown (secondo il quale chi parla una L2 sviluppa anche un nuovo modo di pensare e agire);
- il *Principled Communicative Approach* di Dörnyei (il cui scopo è l'efficacia comunicativa; si basa sul principio di *learning by using*, sull'utilizzo di materiali autentici e si focalizza sul significato anziché sulla forma);
- l'approccio neurolinguistico (si basa sull'acquisizione di una competenza implicita, simile a quella dei bambini, sull'insegnamento *project-based*, su strategie didattiche interattive in situazioni autentiche e sul *learning by doing*);
- l'approccio globale (parte da una visione, appunto, globale, prima di focalizzarsi sui dettagli e suggerisce di lavorare su *pattern* invece che su regole);

- l'approccio di E. Macaro (che punta a incentivare la comunicazione orale sia dai livelli più bassi e privilegia lo sviluppo di abilità alla didattica delle competenze linguistiche).

Per ognuno di questi, e in base alle caratteristiche peculiari di ognuno, nella summenzionata tabella vengono citate le basi teoriche, l'approccio verso gli apprendenti (ad es. il ruolo dell'autonomia, la gestione dell'ansia, ecc.), il ruolo di alcune componenti del linguaggio (ad esempio la grammatica), il ruolo e l'atteggiamento dell'insegnante, ecc. Il volume concepisce l'insegnante come soggetto estremamente flessibile, non legato strettamente ad una teoria e/o ad un metodo specifici. Come si può leggere in quarta di copertina,

tra le qualità che distinguono l'insegnante vi è la capacità di adattare materiali e tecniche in funzione della classe che ha davanti. Per fare questo è importante saper riconoscere e manipolare elementi minimi, qui chiamati "strategie", dando forma ad attività via via diverse ed efficaci per allenare diverse competenze (...). La descrizione di ogni strategia è preceduta da una stringa che accenna alle funzioni alle quali essa si accompagna ed è arricchita da attività pratiche a cui ispirarsi (...) l'idea alla base del volume è che anziché aderire a un preciso metodo didattico, sia possibile attingere a diversi metodi creandosene uno proprio: ogni insegnante può trovare nel testo uno stimolo a crearsi un proprio stile sia nell'insegnamento in senso stretto che nel modo di "vivere" nel gruppo-classe".

Risulta dunque chiaro come l'autore voglia incoraggiare gli insegnanti non solo a raggiungere una padronanza delle strategie proposte, rese molto chiare dalla stringa di descrizione delle funzioni, ma a raggiungere una propria autonomia nell'adattare e manipolare le strategie proposte, oltre a crearne di nuove. Ciò viene anche riassunto nella prefazione di Castagnotto: "nell'era del "post-metodo" in cui ci troviamo, non è dunque possibile adottare un unico approccio didattico" (p. 7).

Dopo aver presentato, nella prima parte, diversi modelli teorici e riflessioni interessanti, nella seconda (Capitoli 3 e 4) viene definito il concetto di strategia e i principi teorici da tenere presente nella progettazione di una didattica basata su di esse. L'autore dà una definizione di *strategia* nel Capitolo 3: "Chiamiamo "strategia didattica" un piano d'azione che l'insegnante escogita per ottimizzare l'apprendimento. Esso può riflettere il comportamento spontaneo di uno studente (strategia di apprendimento) o dipendere da decisioni che pertengono al docente (strategie d'aula)" (p. 44). Citando la fondamentale ricerca di Oxford (1990), l'autore fa notare come gli studenti più strategici sono sempre quelli più rapidi nell'apprendimento. Per aiutare i meno veloci, è necessario: "1. Stimolare un atteggiamento esplorativo; 2. ampliare il ventaglio di strategie di apprendimento a disposizione; 3. affinare la competenza metacognitiva, ovvero la capacità di riflettere sul proprio modo di imparare" (p. 45). Il Capitolo 4 è dedicato agli aspetti di progettazione. Prima viene delineato il profilo dell'insegnante strategico, sottolineandone la creatività e l'autonomia; in seguito si entra nella fase più propriamente dedicata al processo di progettazione, durante il quale, secondo l'autore, i parametri che orientano l'insegnante (e che nel capitolo in oggetto vengono definite) sono l'accettabilità, la coerenza intrinseca, estrinseca e interna, la coesione interna ed esterna, l'efficacia, l'armonia, la chiarezza, l'accessibilità, il controllo ed infine il valore aggiunto.

La terza parte (Capitoli 5-8) è dedicata ad un dettagliato compendio delle strategie didattiche ed è la parte più consistente del libro. Per questo motivo, i lettori e le lettrici che si aspettano di ricevere suggerimenti strettamente applicativi e pratici, non resteranno delusi/e. Vengono forniti ulteriori spunti tramite la descrizione e classificazione delle strategie didattiche presentate. Anche gli aspetti psicologici, psicolinguistici e neurolinguistici vengono tenuti in conto e possibilmente utilizzati come giustificazione teorica delle attività suggerite. Le differenze cross linguistiche, cioè la distanza tra L1 e L2, e le differenze culturali, forse non vengono prese molto in considerazione rispetto ad altri lavori di questo tipo, a dimostrazione che le strategie suggerite dall'autore mirano ad avere un valore "univoco", cioè ad essere applicabili e adattabili ad ogni tipologia di apprendenti. L'autore suddivide le strategie presentate secondo diverse tipologie:

- 1) strategie generative di comportamenti negli studenti, suddivise in strategie cognitive, linguistiche, metacognitive, regolative, dinamiche e a mediazione sociale; le prime tre "riecheggiano le note HOTS (*Higher Order Thinking Skills*) e LOTS (*Lower Order Thinking Skills*) di Bloom (Bloom *et al.* 1956)" (prefazione, p. 8); le strategie regolative riguardano "il complesso di azioni che agiscono sulla sfera emotiva, sollecitando emozioni positive ai fini

- dell'apprendimento” (p. 207); le strategie dinamiche e a mediazione sociale riguardano uno dei quattro *modes of communication* del Volume Complementare del QCER: la *mediation*;
- 2) strategie relative alla gestione di materiali e risorse, riguardanti la selezione dei materiali ed eventualmente le loro modifiche;
  - 3) strategie relative alla comunicazione del docente, che forniscono preziosi suggerimenti sul modo con cui l'insegnante può comunicare con i discenti, in modo da stimolarne la motivazione e la capacità di lavorare in modo autonomo;
  - 4) strategie applicate alla prestazione degli studenti, che riguardano la verifica e la valutazione, una parte essenziale del lavoro dell'insegnante: vengono dati suggerimenti per verificare se e quanto gli apprendenti hanno assimilato.

Ognuna di queste categorie è divisa in numerose sottocategorie per ognuna delle quali vengono presentati corrispondenti esempi di attività, su cui non ci si può dilungare in questa sede ma che possono coprire tutti i bisogni che un insegnante si può trovare a dover soddisfare in un percorso didattico. Come già menzionato, i destinatari, in particolar modo studenti e insegnanti, potranno cogliere sia riferimenti teorici legati alle pratiche didattiche, sia suggerimenti concreti, esposti in maniera ben strutturata.

Concludiamo questo paragrafo con due esempi di strategie. La prima (strategia 69) fa parte della sezione dedicata alle strategie relative alla comunicazione del docente; la seconda (strategia 48) è compresa tra quelle alla gestione di risorse e materiali.

La strategia 69 è chiamata “Raccontare storie” e riguarda il modo di presentare storie e stimolarne la creazione (favole, aneddoti, lunghi racconti, fino ai monologhi del *Total Physical Response*). In particolare, si possono rielaborare in classe storie note sfruttando la gestualità e il tono di voce; infine vengono proposti due diversi modi di creare un racconto improvvisato, tecnica che l'autore considera poco sfruttata in classe. Come per ogni sezione o strategia, il capitolo propone interessanti suggerimenti bibliografici di approfondimento. La parte dedicata a questa strategia comprende anche paragrafi dedicati all'uso delle immagini, all'anticipazione del lessico, fornire glosse, ecc. Si sottolinea inoltre che questa strategia fa parte del Capitolo 8, dedicato interamente alla comunicazione del docente: affronta aspetti come il controllo del parlato, della comunicazione non verbale, su come suscitare un certo impatto emotivo sugli studenti e su come motivare le proprie scelte didattiche.

La strategia 48, intitolata “Gestire l'accessibilità dei testi”, contiene invece una serie di suggerimenti che mirano a facilitare la comprensione. Ad esempio, il docente può agire sull'impaginazione del testo (lettura a zig zag o a gimcana). Oppure il docente può proporre una lettura “a blocchi”, invitando gli studenti a porre particolare attenzione a determinate parole. Altra tecnica può essere quella di indicare le domande di comprensione a lato del capoverso, anziché alla fine del test.

Quelli sopra citati sono solo due degli innumerevoli suggerimenti pratici disseminati nel libro. Nel prossimo paragrafo si individueranno i possibili destinatari del lavoro.

### 3. Destinatari

I destinatari del lavoro in esame non sono solo insegnanti di italiano L2, ma anche linguisti e insegnanti di lingue in generale, oltre che studenti e appassionati di problematiche glottodidattiche, che vengono guidati alla scoperta di 73 strategie didattiche estremamente utili per stimolare determinati comportamenti nei discenti, per ricavare spunti su come usare materiali e risorse, sulla gestione della classe e sulla valutazione. L'inquadramento teorico delle prime due parti del libro consente di fornire buone basi a chi si interessa di educazione linguistica, oltre a fornire numerosi spunti per successivi approfondimenti. Nella terza parte invece, la vasta gamma di strategie presentate costituisce un bagaglio di strumenti per la didattica delle lingue in generale e dell'italiano in particolare (va notato che l'autore in alcuni casi adatta certe strategie e attività originariamente proposte, dai loro ideatori, per la lingua inglese). Da tutto ciò ogni insegnante di lingua può trarre ispirazione sia per conseguire gli obiettivi linguistici specifici di ogni corso, sia per aumentare la motivazione e fornire adeguati feedback agli apprendenti.

Da una prospettiva prettamente pratica, il valore del volume è dato in particolare dalla diretta applicabilità, sia dal punto di vista degli insegnanti che degli apprendenti, delle strategie proposte. Sia

insegnanti che discenti possono diventare più consapevoli dei processi che vengono innestati nel percorso di apprendimento di una lingua e nell'applicazione di determinate strategie.

#### 4. Conclusioni

Gli scopi fondamentali del volume possono considerarsi indubbiamente raggiunti, sia dal punto di vista teorico che da quello pratico. I temi principali affrontati nel libro forniscono un prezioso supporto non solo per chi insegna italiano come L2, ma per chiunque sia interessato a tematiche e metodologie glottodidattiche.

Il quadro teorico viene introdotto in maniera estremamente chiara, fornendo anche spunti importanti per chi volesse approfondire il campo in oggetto, mentre la parte più squisitamente pratica presenta numerose attività applicabili in vari contesti, stimolando anche chi lavora sul campo a prendere spunto per sviluppare nuove varianti “personali” delle attività e tecniche presentate. Le diverse parti del libro possono sia fungere da base di partenza per nuove ricerche sul campo dell'acquisizione linguistica e della metodologia didattica, che da “manuale per l'insegnante” da cui si potranno trarre spunti per adattare le diverse attività ai più svariati contesti educativi.

Come già accennato, il valore pratico del volume sta nella grande varietà delle strategie e attività proposte e nella loro semplicità applicativa. Ciò rende il lavoro estremamente “flessibile” e di grande utilità sia per gli insegnanti che per gli apprendenti. Un unico appunto può riguardare il fatto che la bibliografia è disponibile solo inquadrando il codice QR nell'indice con la *myapp* della Casa Editrice Pearson. Forse una sezione nel volume dedicata interamente alla bibliografia sarebbe stata una scelta migliore e avrebbe contribuito a rendere il volume più agevole da utilizzare, specialmente nel caso di insegnanti non particolarmente a loro agio con le nuove tecnologie digitali.

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**ABSTRACT**

**EN** *Corpus Linguistics for Online Communication: A Guide for Research*, published by Routledge, is a practical handbook for corpus-based online communication research. This volume introduces corpus-based online communication research methods for a variety of research topics with empirical case studies. The volume blends theoretical progress with practical application, making it a useful resource for researchers and scholars in online communication and related fields.

**Key words:** CORPUS LINGUISTICS, ONLINE COMMUNICATION, APPLIED LINGUISTICS

**ES** *Corpus Linguistics for Online Communication: A Guide for Research*, publicado por Routledge, es un manual práctico para la investigación de la comunicación en línea basada en corpus. Este volumen presenta métodos de investigación de comunicación en línea basados en corpus para una variedad de temas de investigación con estudios de caso empíricos. El volumen combina progreso teórico con aplicación práctica, lo que lo convierte en un recurso útil para quienes estudian e investigan la comunicación en línea y otros campos relacionados.

**Palabras clave:** LINGÜÍSTICA DE CORPUS, COMUNICACIÓN EN LÍNEA, LINGÜÍSTICA APLICADA

**IT** *Corpus Linguistics for Online Communication: A Guide for Research*, pubblicato da Routledge, è un manuale pratico per la ricerca sulla comunicazione online basata su corpora. Il volume presenta metodi di ricerca della comunicazione online basati su corpora, fornendo casi di studio empirici su vari argomenti di ricerca. Il volume combina sviluppo teorico ad applicazioni pratiche, costituendo una risorsa utile per ricercatori e studiosi nel campo della comunicazione online e negli ambiti correlati.

**Parole chiave:** LINGUISTICA DEI CORPORA, COMUNICAZIONE ONLINE, LINGUISTICA APPLICATA



Since the introduction of the World Wide Web in the 1990s, online communication as a unique form of language transmission has become a vital part of people's everyday lives. In language studies, corpus approaches enhance the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods, rendering research outcomes more observable and reproducible. However, few internet communication-related corpora exist at present and typically contain obsolete, unrepresentative data, serving as a sub-corpus of the general large-scale and balanced corpus. In the interim, despite the fact that some researchers have acknowledged and utilized corpora in online communication studies, they have confronted the challenge of usually employing the "name" rather than the "nature" of a corpus. The "nature" of corpus linguistics is the study of language in a diachronic or synchronic manner using linguistic theory as a guide, probability and statistics as a method, and language data as the object of study. Nonetheless, a number of existing studies only focus on the "name" of the corpus: they have completed the production of the corpus but have not adopted the appropriate analytical processes to use the produced corpus in several dimensions, thus delivering only simple data suggestions. Moreover, these studies usually interpret their data without the oversight of linguistic research paradigms and fail to achieve a better synthesis of rationalism and empiricism, which reflects the "nature" of corpus linguistics. Therefore, Luke Curtis Collins' *Corpus Linguistics for Online Communication: A Research Guide* fills a void in the field by providing a guide to the application of corpus linguistics to online communication study, ensuring that related research is conducted with a solid theoretical foundation in linguistics and a sound methodology.

*Corpus Linguistics for Online Communication: A Guide for Research* is part of the Routledge Corpus Linguistics Guides series. The volume offers an instructional and practical guide to conducting research on various forms of online communication using corpus linguistics methodologies by providing practical tasks, and utilizing original data derived from online interactions. The volume is divided into four sections with nine chapters. The first section, comprised of Chapters 1-3, presents the theoretical foundations of corpus linguistics to newcomers to the discipline. Chapter 1 clarifies the meaning of corpus by means of examples from general and special corpora, multilingual corpora, ephemeral corpora, and multimodal corpora. Chapter 2 gives a synopsis of corpus design, construction, and extraction methods. The basics of corpus analysis are presented in Chapter 3. The author describes language features that can be queried using corpus analysis, such as tokenization, N-grams, lemmatization, part-of-speech tagging, collection, semantic categorization, images, and register, before introducing measures for quantifying language features, including frequency, keyness, dispersion, and statistical measures such as T-score, mutual information (MI), chi-squared, log-likelihood (LL), and effect size. For each subject mentioned in Chapter 3, the author provides a clear and extensive definition as well as several examples, making this chapter quite helpful for those who are new to this field.

In Chapter 4, the second section, the author presents three online communication research topics that are compatible with corpus methodology. The first topic is online communication's structural properties: Due to its heteroglossic nature, online communication language has distinct structures stemming from written and spoken language. Taking tweets as an example, using wordlist statistics, Zappavigna (2012, p.27) shows that compared to standard language, Twitter language features more @ symbols, http indications, #topic tags, and RT (retweet) abbreviations than standard language. Therefore, the corpus research approach can be applied to the linguistic structure characteristics of the online communication activities of varied media.

The second topic is the communicative function of online communication. Given that the network facilitates information flow between users, the communicative function is one of the most fundamental and essential aspects of online communication. For this topic, the author especially underlines that *graphicons*, the types of graphical devices most commonly seen in online contexts, which include emoji as well as stickers, GIFs, images and videos, are undermining the function of traditional characters. Thus, corpora can be used with other linguistic theories to examine the contextual structural interconnections or interpersonal functions of graphicons. For example, Skovholt et al. (2014) used a corpus of 1,600 business emails for retrieval and analysis, which pragmatically revealed that in business online communication, the graphic expression :- ) is used to express a positive attitude after signing to soften the tone following indicative discourses, and to strengthen the tone following emotional discourses.

The third topic is identity, group, and power in online communication: Extensive liberalization of online communication leads to online disinhibition, which enables scholars to study how individuals manipulate language for self-sculpting or other purposes. In this context, a combination of corpus analysis and sociolinguistics would be beneficial. Hardaker and McGlashan (2016), for instance, collected misogynistic and sexually assaulting comments from social media after a British lady launched a feminist petition, and decided if each commentator represented criminal behavior by calculating its politeness index. As a result, the corpus method can be used to examine antisocial online communication activities such as flaming and trolling.

Chapters 5-8, the third section, demonstrates practical applications of corpus analysis in online communication research, with each of the four chapters containing an empirical case study based on corpus analysis. The research focus of Chapter 5 is internet business communication. The author constructs a corpus consisting of images and texts collected from a company's Facebook page and then investigates the corpus from four perspectives: visuals, non-standard language qualities, keywords, and social actions. Results indicate that the company's Facebook page postings make considerable use of advertising language and regional accents to develop its brand image and attract target customers.

Chapter 6 focuses on online education. The author investigates the acquisition of technical terminology by learners in a massive online open course (MOOC) using the collocation network to illustrate the term "social face." By comparing the collocations used by MOOC learners with those in the British National Corpus (BNC) and Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), the author demonstrates that the MOOC learners are still in the early stages of learning and do not have a complete understanding of the technical term.

The research topic of Chapter 7 is network news. The author generates a corpus of articles on the public health topic of super-gonorrhoea from the *Daily Mail* and *The Guardian*, then utilizes the UCREL Semantic Analysis System (USAS) to identify and categorize the semantic categories of reader comments. According to the results, the audience groups for the two media are notably different, as are their emphasis on comment focus and comment approach.

The research topic of Chapter 8 is a dating app. The personal data and profiles of Tinder users are gathered to construct a corpus. According to the 3-grams parameter, the combination of three words that regularly appears derived from the corpus, users' descriptions in the "Brief Introduction" column serve three pragmatic functions: self-definition, establishing anticipated relationship parameters, and encouraging others to connect. In this section, the author elaborates on the application of the corpus methodology in online communication research by using case examples covering a broad range of issues. The research techniques and results are described in detail and with clarity, providing a guide for readers to conduct similar research.

The fourth section, Chapter 9, explores the methodological challenges of corpus linguistics in general and suggests ways to apply corpus-based methods to online communication research. The author asserts that future corpus-based online communication research will be characterized by greater reflexivity and transparency, as well as increased emphasis on research ethics. Moreover, as network resources continue to expand, online communication must adapt to fulfill the demand for decentralization, nondiscrimination, bottom-up design, universality, and consensus, which will become crucial study fields for online communication in corpus approaches in the future.

Beginning with theory and proceeding to case analysis, the volume's straightforward and logical organization shows beginners the core technique for doing online communication research in corpus approaches. In addition to listing corpus research fundamentals and essential keywords, this volume presents open access corpora and corpus tools for readers to practice. Moreover, the volume includes reflective questions following each chapter's topic to assist readers to reflect on the chapter's material and broaden their research horizons.

In addition, the author weaves the following two perspectives throughout the volume: first, multimodal corpus analysis plays a crucial role in the study of online communication. Text in online communication is frequently supplemented by multimedia elements such as images and videos for audio-visual supplements, or even the other way around, with text serving as supplemental explanations for multimedia assets. After coding, multimodal corpus analysis helps quantify the relationship between different subjects in online communication and disclose how it affects the audience in this instance. Second, moral ethics must constantly be considered during the corpus gathering process. The author emphasizes that particular themes or types of information within the field of online communication research are frequently extremely sensitive, and that researchers must respect public privacy, seek consent, anonymize, assess potential harm, and complete essential evaluations.

In addition to the numerous positives, it is important to note that the corpus utilized in chapter 8 is not especially representative. The Tinder user profile corpus has fewer than 10,000 words, which may result in ambiguous quantitative results. Even though the size of the corpus is not the most crucial criterion, a corpus must be specified and produced in accordance with the study topic. Before collecting data in Chapter 8, the author sets the diverse genders and sexual orientations of users as variables. However, according to the data obtained by questionnaire, there are no responders of non-binary gender, and heterosexuality and homosexuality are the most prevalent sexual orientations, with fewer bisexuals, pansexuals, and asexuals.

Therefore, to improve the capacity of the corpus and make it more exhaustive, it is important to broaden the scope of the survey questionnaire.

Nevertheless, the limitation does not affect the volume's value. Overall, a corpus provides large and diverse database for online communication research, hence, making it more scientific and empirical. *Corpus Linguistics for Online Communication: A Guide for Research* is a helpful handbook for scholars performing online communication research through the corpus approach. This volume offers a concise and lucid guide to corpus linguistics and online communication study and provides inspiration for potential readers. As a result, they may use corpora in their future studies to produce more driving or interesting results with online data.

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**ABSTRACT**

- IT** *Educazione e Politica Linguistica. Teoria e Pratica* analizza i vari aspetti linguistici che costituiscono la politica, la consapevolezza e l'educazione linguistica. Il volume affronta questioni teoriche, analizza casi studio e presenta i risultati di due progetti attuati dal gruppo di ricerca dell'autore. L'obiettivo è di riflettere sull'importanza della consapevolezza linguistica come primo elemento per un'educazione linguistica e una politica efficaci.
- Parole chiave:** EDUCAZIONE LINGUISTICA, POLITICA LINGUISTICA, CONSAPEVOLEZZA LINGUISTICA, DIRITTI LINGUISTICI
- EN** *Educazione e Politica Linguistica. Teoria e Pratica (Language Education and Policy. Theory and Practice)* explores the various linguistic aspects that make up language policy, awareness, and education. The volume addresses theoretical issues, analyzes case studies, and presents the results of two projects implemented by the author's research group. The aim is to reflect on the importance of language awareness as the first element for effective language education and policy.
- Keywords:** LANGUAGE EDUCATION, LANGUAGE POLICY, LANGUAGE AWARENESS, LANGUAGE RIGHTS
- ES** *Educazione e Politica Linguistica. Teoria e Pratica* analiza los diversos aspectos lingüísticos que conforman la política, la conciencia y la educación lingüísticas. El volumen aborda cuestiones teóricas, analiza estudios de caso y presenta los resultados de dos proyectos implementados por el grupo de investigación del autor. El objetivo es reflexionar sobre la importancia de la conciencia lingüística como elemento principal para una educación y una política lingüísticas eficaces.
- Palabras clave:** EDUCACIÓN LINGÜÍSTICA, POLÍTICA LINGÜÍSTICA, CONCIENCIA LINGÜÍSTICA, DERECHOS LINGÜÍSTICOS

Il volume *Educazione e Politica Linguistica. Teoria e Pratica* di Matteo Santipolo, affronta il tema della stretta relazione che intercorre tra la politica linguistica e l'educazione linguistica e le implicazioni che esse chiamano in causa. Il volume espone alcuni casi studio internazionali, ma si concentra sulla situazione italiana, in particolare la regione Veneto nella quale sono stati proposti progetti di educazione e pianificazione linguistica. Il Veneto è una regione interessante da questo punto di vista perché luogo di immigrazione, risultando così un importante laboratorio in cui sperimentare percorsi di educazione linguistica adeguati al contesto.

Si può suddividere l'opera in tre parti: una prima sezione che illustra concetti più teorici come l'acquisizione e la consapevolezza linguistica, il ruolo odierno nella politica linguistica, la complessità del concetto di *diritto linguistico* e la questione dell'identità linguistica in contesto migratorio; una seconda parte si può intravedere nei capitoli che affrontano la tematica della varietà linguistica e le sue implicazioni nell'educazione linguistica; la terza parte, infine, illustra due esempi di intervento didattico a due livelli differenti del sistema scolastico. Chiude il libro un capitolo che opera una riflessione più filosofica a proposito delle implicazioni della consapevolezza plurilingue sulle scelte di politica linguistica individuale nell'ambito della produzione letteraria.

Il volume si apre con un'osservazione circa le molte dimensioni che assume la consapevolezza linguistica. Essa ha un ruolo fondamentale nel processo di acquisizione e di conseguenza diventa importante nell'educazione linguistica intesa nel suo senso più ampio, comprendente la formazione del personale, la didattica e le metodologie e la politica linguistica in senso lato. La consapevolezza è importante anche rispetto all'identità plurilingue in quanto avere coscienza di sé e della propria identità permette di comprendere e interpretare la pluralità. Anche la didattica chiama in causa la consapevolezza nella misura in cui essa dovrebbe costituire l'obiettivo primario dell'educazione linguistica; in stretta relazione con la didattica, la consapevolezza linguistica riguarda anche la competenza grammaticale se intesa come consapevolezza metalinguistica. Risulta importante, nel processo di apprendimento anche la coscienza rispetto alla valutazione, che deve essere vista come un momento formativo e di crescita, eliminando la dimensione di giudizio. Il percorso di educazione linguistica deve portare alla piena autonomia dell'apprendente rispetto al proprio modo di imparare; per questo motivo l'educazione linguistica deve essere vista in senso olistico, orientata cioè al pieno sviluppo umano, mantenendo al centro del suo operato la consapevolezza linguistica.

Il secondo capitolo analizza il ruolo della politica linguistica e i vari attori chiamati in causa da essa. La pianificazione linguistica agisce su aspetti (*status* e *corpus*) che si posizionano su due assi del linguaggio: l'asse sintagmatico e l'asse paradigmatico. Lo *status* è l'intervento relativo alla regolamentazione normativa di diritti linguistici di un determinato gruppo e dalla promozione della stessa, in questo caso si agisce sull'asse paradigmatico; il *corpus* invece riguarda in particolar modo la forma e i tratti della lingua.

A questo proposito, tra i vari casi riportati, può essere utile ripercorrere a titolo di esempio la scelta operata dal Kazakistan. La lingua kazaka è stata scritta, durante la sua storia, in molti alfabeti diversi (arabo, latino e cirillico) legati ai vari momenti storici dal paese; nel 2017 il presidente ha chiesto al parlamento di avviare una politica volta alla sostituzione dell'alfabeto cirillico con quello latino. Questa scelta *top-down* trova giustificazione nell'idea di rafforzare il senso di appartenenza nazionale, dare un'immagine più moderna del paese e facilitare l'accesso della popolazione alle tecnologie e alla lingua inglese. L'obiettivo non è tanto l'esclusione del russo dal repertorio plurilingue, bensì quello di consolidare una situazione già esistente. Si può ipotizzare che questo tipo di operazione, sebbene si tratti soprattutto di *corpus planning*, probabilmente avrà ricadute anche sullo *status*; infatti, la distinzione tra i due campi di intervento non è netta e spesso gli interventi di pianificazione riguardano tanto lo *status* quanto il *corpus*. All'interno della pianificazione linguistica, un ruolo determinante è giocato dall'educazione linguistica: essa si basa sia sullo *status* sia sul *corpus*, ma influisce su essi e a sua volta ne viene influenzata perché le scelte relative al mondo educativo ricadono sia sui percorsi formativi del personale docente e delle nuove generazioni, sia sulla lingua stessa, mettendo in moto uno scambio reciproco tra *status*, *corpus* e *acquisition planning*. Nel volume è ulteriormente sottolineato il ruolo di coloro che non agiscono direttamente su queste dimensioni, ma le possono ciononostante condizionare: si tratta dei promotori linguistici, i quali possono essere primari (ad esempio, per quanto riguarda l'italiano, la Società Dante Alighieri o gli Istituti Italiani di Cultura) o derivati (ad esempio, il gruppo rock dei Måneskin).

Il terzo capitolo affronta la questione dei diritti e dei doveri linguistici. Per tal fine, viene operata una riflessione rispetto al termine *diritto*, che viene definito come comprendente sia i diritti che i doveri degli individui; Santipolo distingue tre tipologie di diritti linguistici rifacendosi alle definizioni di Poggeschi (2010), secondo cui esistono tre tipologie di diritti linguistici. Diritti di prima specie, che si riferiscono ai diritti fondamentali e della tutela della lingua dominante in un dato contesto; qualora i diritti di prima specie siano

molto forti, possono tramutarsi in diritti di seconda specie, ovvero al riconoscimento anche minimo dato dal fatto che esistono tutele per le minoranze. Vi sono poi i diritti di terza specie rivolti al riconoscimento di diritti agli stranieri. Rispetto a questi ultimi le azioni di pianificazione linguistica devono concentrarsi sul mantenimento della lingua immigrata (secondo la distinzione operata da Bagna, Barni, & Vedovelli 2007) e sull'apprendimento della lingua ufficiale del paese, in modo tale da rispettare un diritto e mettere nelle condizioni gli individui di assolvere un dovere. Rispetto a quanto detto a proposito di lingua e identità e di lingua come prodotto per antonomasia della cultura, l'autore propone di rivedere il concetto di *ius culturae* e trasformarlo in *ius linguarum*, visto come il diritto di preservare la propria lingua madre, ma allo stesso tempo il dovere e l'opportunità tutelata di apprendere la lingua del paese di arrivo, al fine di portare a termine il processo di comprensione della nuova realtà linguistica e culturale.

Il quarto capitolo si concentra sulla descrizione macrosociolinguistica degli immigrati in Veneto. Il Veneto è caratterizzato da una complessa situazione sociolinguistica, nella quale si identificano repertori che vanno dall'italiano standard fino al dialetto, con presenze di lingue minoritarie storiche e recenti; proprio il dialetto risulta ancora molto usato e sembra che italiano dialetto tendano a convivere anche in contesti formali. Questo fenomeno fa sì che il dialetto diventi strumento di socializzazione importante per gli immigrati, siano essi italiani trapiantati o stranieri; si possono dunque individuare due tipi di *semidialettofonia* (intesa come una parziale competenza in dialetto di un alloglotto): semidialettofonia primaria o di ritorno, relativa ai veneti non dialettofoni nativi e una semidialettofonia secondaria esplicitata dai non veneti. Quest'ultima si può suddividere in altre due categorie, la semidialettofonia secondaria interna, caratteristica dei non veneti italo-foni, e la semidialettofonia secondaria esterna, propria dei non veneti e non italo-foni provenienti dall'estero. Questo comportamento linguistico appare come una risposta a una necessità sociale, oltre che comunicativa: sembra che la semidialettofonia sia una scelta non solo legata a una migliore comunicazione, ma atta a ridurre la distanza tra sé e la comunità di accoglienza. Di conseguenza, la realtà nella quale un immigrato si trova a vivere chiama in causa questioni tanto identitarie, quanto linguistiche. D'altra parte, la definizione stessa dell'identità è legata a stretto giro alla dimensione linguistica, ed è sulla costruzione e decostruzione dell'identità che Santipolo identifica comportamenti diversi rispetto agli immigrati di prima e di seconda generazione. Per ciò che concerne la prima generazione, il processo di incontro con la nuova realtà culturale provoca spesso un percorso traumatico di decostruzione e ricostruzione della propria identità, dando vita a un "limbo identitario", come viene definito dallo stesso autore, che si esprime con una competenza linguistica insicura. In questo caso, la semidialettofonia potrebbe non significare una rimodulazione dell'identità, ma sarebbe da considerare come una strategia comunicativa. Coloro che appartengono alla seconda generazione (intesa come coloro che o sono nati fuori dall'Italia ma hanno raggiunto il paese prima del terzo anno di vita, o sono nati in Italia da genitori stranieri) presentano una semidialettofonia più simile a quella primaria, tuttavia si possono ravvisare due aspetti che la distanziano da essa: i ragazzi di seconda generazione sono semi-italofoni per quanto riguarda la *Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency* (CALP), ed essa è, auspicabilmente, in costante miglioramento; inoltre, per quanto riguarda l'identità sono in gioco più aspetti che rendono la loro situazione complessa e nella quale incidono fattori sia sociali che personali. Per queste ragioni Santipolo afferma che il mondo educativo dovrà fare fronte e rispondere alla questione identitaria posta dalle persone immigrate, pensando all'educazione linguistica come il luogo in cui considerare la lingua strumento di sviluppo e affermazione dell'identità singola e collettiva.

Il quinto capitolo si concentra sulla variazione dell'italiano e sul modello di lingua necessario da proporre in classe. La lingua non è un elemento monolitico, sempre uguale nel tempo e nello spazio, ma di fronte ai naturali cambiamenti si creano due schieramenti opposti: coloro che percepiscono nell'innovazione il segnale di un degrado linguistico e, inevitabilmente, sociale e coloro che si fanno promotori di tali mutamenti intravedendone un segnale di vitalità linguistica e, appunto, culturale. Se il fine dell'educazione linguistica è fornire tutti gli strumenti necessari ad agire in modo libero e consapevole, una strategia possibile sembra essere quella della *Classi a Modelli Variabili* (CMV) che identifica come obiettivi le esigenze comunicative degli apprendenti. Il modello CMV fonda il suo funzionamento sul principio per il quale la variabilità linguistica fornisce la possibilità di scegliere tra diverse forme che si traducono in potenzialità comunicative, pragmatiche ed espressive. Questo tipo di orientamento è tanto più importante se si guarda alla situazione della scuola italiana in merito al livello linguistico degli studenti, per i quali si può parlare di *analfabetismo ristretto*. Ma proprio grazie a un'adeguata educazione linguistica il parlante può diventare capace di gestire tutti i registri e i repertori di una lingua e, quindi, capace di agire all'interno della società.

Il sesto capitolo mette in luce l'importanza della questione della varietà nell'ambito della glottodidattica dell'inglese. L'inglese è una lingua policentrica, il cui cambiamento è influenzato da cause

glottoendogenetiche e glottoesogenetiche: esso è parlato non solo dai nativi, ma anche da non nativi in un rapporto dei primi rispetto ai secondi di 1 a 5. Questi ultimi, oramai, hanno un ruolo preponderante nel mutamento linguistico, e ne deriva una realtà sociolinguistica molto complessa che non può più essere ignorata in un corso di inglese. Di conseguenza si rende necessaria una riflessione su quale varietà insegnare ai non nativi e la questione non è di poco peso, se si considera la summenzionata dimensione globale della variazione di questa lingua. Occorre ragionare sulla varietà-modello tenendo presente tutti gli elementi in gioco nella variazione: tra il *continuum* dei parlanti nativi e quello dei parlanti non nativi si possono distinguere tre tipologie di inglese: *English*, *English as a lingua franca* e *English as an International Language*. In riferimento a ciascuna di esse, sarà importante lavorare sulle competenze relative alla pronuncia, al lessico, e alla cultura e pragmatica (allontanandosi da una visione statica *Britain-centered*). A questo proposito è opportuno sensibilizzare gli insegnanti rispetto a questa realtà; se si guarda all'Italia, si può notare un profilo molto variegato delle figure che insegnano la lingua straniera. Infatti, solo nella scuola di I e II grado operano docenti con competenze linguistiche e glottodidattiche, mentre nella scuola dell'infanzia e primaria si tratta di docenti che hanno un livello di lingua pari al B2 e non sempre posseggono competenze specifiche nell'insegnamento di una lingua straniera. L'autore auspica un cambiamento nella concezione della figura professionale del docente di lingua che tenga più in considerazione le competenze sociolinguistiche e glottodidattiche.

Il capitolo sette si concentra sull'analisi della variazione come risorsa, cercando di superare l'idea di varietà come problema. Come si è potuto constatare, la variabilità linguistica solleva molte problematiche, tra cui appunto la scelta di quale varietà-modello insegnare. Se da un lato sembra condivisa la scelta di proporre la varietà standard di una determinata lingua, dall'altro si pone il problema dell'efficacia comunicativa intesa in senso glottodidattico. D'altra parte, la varietà risulta difficile da gestire sia per gli insegnanti che per gli studenti. I primi possono avere poche competenze meta-sociolinguistiche o la complessità del repertorio sociolinguistico può essere un ostacolo difficile da superare, oppure ancora può risultare difficile recuperare materiale autentico e adattarlo al livello della classe; allo stesso modo gli apprendenti possono trovare troppo complessa la gestione di questi input, a un grado tale da portare a una demotivazione. Si presenta dunque il problema di come la varietà possa essere presentata. A questo proposito si può pensare a un modello basato su tre concetti: *coscienza*, *consapevolezza* e *competenza sociolinguistica*, secondo una scala crescente di difficoltà. Per quanto riguarda la L1 il grado di competenza sociolinguistica è fondamentale al fine di ottenere la piena consapevolezza nelle scelte linguistiche, mentre nel caso delle lingue straniere sarà necessario trovare un equilibrio tra obiettivi raggiungibili e obiettivi impossibili. La scuola infatti ha il compito di offrire modelli sociolinguistici formativi e spendibili nell'agire quotidiano, per perseguire questo scopo è importante che i modelli scelti rispondano davvero alle esigenze educative degli apprendenti.

L'ottavo capitolo propone la questione dell'apprendimento linguistico in età precoce e della formazione del personale docente. Per fare ciò porta come esempio un progetto concreto di educazione linguistica all'interno di un percorso universitario. Si tratta del corso di inglese all'interno del Corso di Laurea in Scienze dell'educazione e della formazione dell'Università di Padova, nella sede di Rovigo. L'insegnamento dell'inglese non trovava uno spazio adeguato: le ore di insegnamento linguistico si erano ridotte nel corso degli anni e non era prevista una formazione glottodidattica; nell'anno accademico 2019/'20 è stata fatta un'operazione di ristrutturazione del corso al fine di venire incontro ai nuovi bisogni educativi degli studenti universitari. Il corso è stato pertanto rimodellato con lo scopo di migliorare il livello linguistico e dare competenze di base rispetto alle metodologie e alle tecniche didattiche di una lingua straniera. Inoltre, uno degli obiettivi del corso era sviluppare consapevolezza a proposito del bilinguismo precoce. Il corso prevede dunque un monte ore dedicato all'approfondimento delle conoscenze di lingua inglese e una parte dedicata alla didattica. Il cambiamento ha portato una maggiore partecipazione degli studenti sia in termini quantitativi che qualitativi, allo stesso modo, il rendimento finale degli studenti ha subito un incremento.

Nel capitolo seguente, il nono, si affronta di nuovo la questione della pianificazione linguistica in ambito educativo utilizzando la descrizione di un progetto per ragazzi di origine straniera, di prima o seconda generazione, che frequentano gli istituti tecnico-professionali nella provincia di Rovigo (*Servie PO.Li.S "Potenziamento della lingua dello studio"* realizzato con il finanziamento del Rotary Club di Rovigo e la collaborazione della Società Dante Alighieri, comitato di Rovigo). Il progetto si poneva tre obiettivi: la sensibilizzazione delle famiglie e degli apprendenti coinvolti, il miglioramento delle competenze linguistico-disciplinari degli allievi, e la sensibilizzazione dei docenti, soprattutto delle materie scientifiche, rispetto al loro ruolo di educatori linguistici. Per quanto riguarda il lavoro portato avanti con gli allievi e le allieve, gli incontri (per un totale di 30 ore) si sono concentrati sullo sviluppo della CALP in modo tale da fornire loro strumenti utili per gestire la lingua in specifiche situazioni comunicative (ad es., la stesura di una relazione). Per il

personale docente, si è scelto di organizzare un ciclo di seminari incentrati sulla glottodidattica e la lingua dello studio, con l'obiettivo di sviluppare la consapevolezza circa il loro ruolo all'interno del percorso educativo-linguistico. Era prevista una valutazione da parte degli insegnanti tesa a osservare un eventuale cambiamento rispetto alla partecipazione, alla consapevolezza di sé e alla gestione del lavoro in aula. È stata chiesta una valutazione simile anche ai ragazzi e da entrambe si è potuto evincere un sensibile miglioramento su tutti e tre gli aspetti.

Il decimo capitolo riflette sulle scelte di politica linguistica individuale nell'ambito della produzione letteraria. Nel caso della letteratura, la scelta di quale lingua utilizzare per raccontare una determinata storia porta con sé risvolti di natura politica, intesa in senso lato. Il bilinguismo letterario infatti può diventare a tutti gli effetti una *diglossia letteraria* se la discriminante della lingua da adottata risiede nella tematica scelta o nei destinatari che si vogliono raggiungere. Inoltre, la letteratura contribuisce alla modificazione della varietà standard di molte lingue, agendo sia sul *corpus* che sullo *status* di una determinata lingua o varietà. Di conseguenza, coloro che scelgono di scrivere in una determinata lingua possono diventare agenti del cambiamento linguistico.

Il volume è rivolto soprattutto a studenti e ricercatori interessati alle questioni di politica, pianificazione ed educazione linguistica; tuttavia l'impianto e la trattazione serrata ma divulgativa rendono l'opera un punto di riferimento per chiunque sia interessato alle tematiche trattate. Inoltre, i dati presentati e le riflessioni operate potrebbero essere utili a chi si occupa a livello professionale di gestione di percorsi educativi a livello primario, secondario e universitario. In particolare, i capitoli riguardanti la questione della varietà-modello della lingua inglese mettono in luce problematiche reali, offrendo una riflessione che potrebbe essere utile a docenti o dirigenti scolastici. La questione della varietà e del posto che essa dovrebbe occupare nella didattica non è un tema nuovo, ma qui trova giustificazione perché viene posta, ancora una volta, nel solco delle scelte consapevoli che possono essere fatte tanto dai docenti quanto dai discenti.

L'opera infatti ha il pregio di fornire una riflessione informata sull'importanza della consapevolezza linguistica e del suo profondo legame con l'educazione e la politica. Pertanto, le considerazioni a proposito della varietà linguistica rilevano una dimensione importante, spesso ignorata, nelle scelte educative di un paese. Le esperienze riportate sono perciò molto utili a osservare esempi concreti di un modello di educazione linguistica capace di rispondere ai bisogni di un territorio.

Il volume, che è una raccolta organizzata di precedenti articoli rielaborati comparsi su riviste di settore, offre contenuti stimolanti da più punti di vista e dà un sentito contributo al dibattito sulle politiche linguistiche, per il quale c'è ancora poca attenzione in Italia, paese di riferimento dell'autore. La prospettiva adottata risulta originale proprio grazie alla consapevolezza linguistica, che diventa la lente attraverso cui leggere i casi studio presentati e le esperienze descritte.

### Riferimenti bibliografici

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