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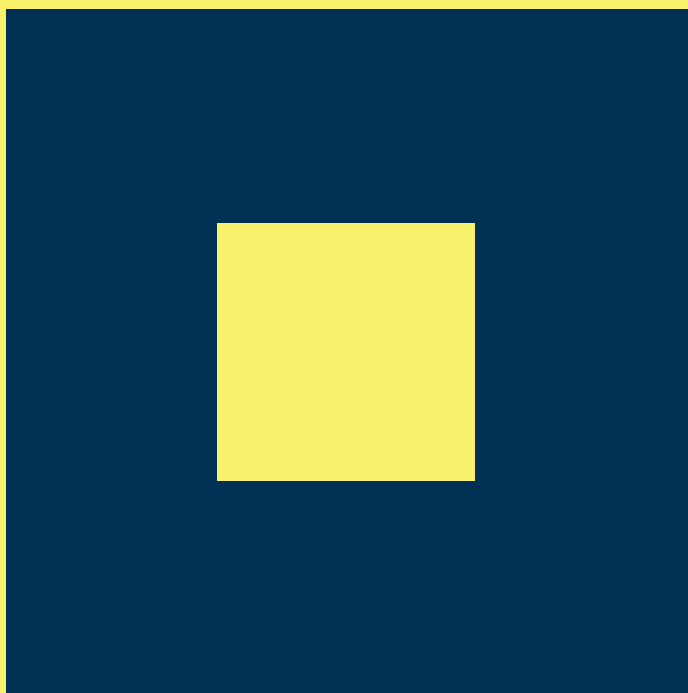
Educazione Linguistica.
Language Education

Vol. 15 – Num. 2
Luglio 2026

E-ISSN 2280-6792



Edizioni
Ca' Foscari



e-ISSN 2280-6792

EL.LE

Educazione Linguistica.
Language Education

Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Venice University Press

Fondazione Università Ca' Foscari

Dorsoduro 3246, 30123 Venezia

URL <http://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/it/edizioni/riviste/elle/>

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Scientific certification of the works published by Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Venice University Press: all articles published in this issue have received a favourable opinion by subject-matter experts, through an anonymous peer review process under the responsibility of the Scientific Committee of the journal. The evaluations were conducted in adherence to the scientific and editorial criteria established by Edizioni Ca' Foscari.



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Le grammatiche non verbali nell'educazione linguistica

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Abstract Language education has two main objectives: developing and consolidating communicative competence, on the one hand, and inducing metalinguistic reflection and cognitive growth, on the other. The former aspect has received sustained attention in recent decades, while the latter is little discussed. This is the third in a series of essays (*EL.LE* no. 2 and 3 in 2025, no. 1 in 2026) that will continue in upcoming issues, in which we reflect on how to integrate communicative and cognitive growth, considering reflection on language as a “cognitive lifesaver for liquid students”. In this essay, we focus on nonverbal grammars, with two research questions: a. How many and which mental grammars are there of nonverbal codes? How are they structured? How do they connect with the grammars of the language, on the one hand, and with those relating to social, cultural, and pragmatic use, on the other? b. What place should they have in the communicative and cognitive syllabi of language education? What teaching tools can be used to develop mastery of nonverbal codes and lead to reflection on them?

Keywords Language Education. Nonverbal codes. Teaching nonverbal grammars. Communicative competence. Gestures in Language Teaching.

Sommario 1 Introduzione. – 2 Prima domanda di ricerca: quali codici extralinguistici fanno parte della competenza comunicativa? – 3 Seconda domanda di ricerca: quale spazio hanno queste grammatiche nello sviluppo *comunicativo* e *cognitivo*?



Edizioni
Ca' Foscari



Peer review

Submitted 2026-04-19
Published 2026-07-14

Open access

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DOI 10.30687/ELLE/2280-6792/2026/02/000

1 Introduzione

L'educazione linguistica ha due facce, pur essendo un'unica medaglia, una comunicativa e una cognitiva: essa mira a

- a. *consolidare* la competenza comunicativa nelle lingue già padroneggiate, *crearla e svilupparla* in quelle in fase di acquisizione: è il nucleo dell'approccio comunicativo all'educazione linguistica, che include la L1, le lingue seconde, straniere e classiche. Nelle lingue seconde e straniere a fine Novecento il nucleo dei sillabi era la pragmatica e la morfosintassi veniva affidata a un'acquisizione quasi spontanea, soprattutto in inglese; nel nostro secolo il movimento *Focus on Form* ha riproposto la necessità di equilibrio tra l'attenzione agli atti pragmalinguistici e quella agli strumenti linguistici che li realizzano;¹
- b. *indurre e poi strutturare* la riflessione metalinguistica: è la dimensione cognitiva dell'educazione linguistica. Il *Focus on form* vede la grammatica come strumento per sorreggere la competenza comunicativa in lingue non native, noi cerchiamo di proporla come elemento fondamentale dello sviluppo cognitivo degli studenti: nel primo dei saggi di questa serie l'abbiamo definita e descritta come 'salvagente cognitivo per studenti liquidi' (Balboni 2025a).

Parlando di educazione 'linguistica' è quasi inevitabile che si tenda a focalizzare la lingua, cioè il codice verbale, ma nella realtà la comunicazione 'linguistica' orale integra sempre da un lato la lingua e dall'altro i codici non linguistici, che nel modello di competenza comunicativa (descritto in Balboni 2018 e integrato nel secondo saggio di questa serie su *EL.LE*, Balboni 2025b) abbiamo articolato in *cinesica*, *prossemica* e *oggettemica*.

Partendo da questa constatazione, le domande di ricerca cui vuole rispondere questo saggio sono due:

- a. relativamente alle *grammatiche dei codici non verbali* associati alla lingua nella comunicazione orale: quali sono? come si raccordano con le grammatiche della lingua, da un lato, e con quelle contestuali relative all'uso, dall'altro?
- b. relativamente all'*educazione linguistica*: quale spazio devono avere i codici non verbali nello sviluppo comunicativo e cognitivo? con quali strumenti didattici si può lavorare sulla

1 Due testi di riferimento essenziali per comprendere l'affermazione del *FonF movement* a inizio secolo sono Skehan 1998 e Robinson 2001; più recente, sulla stessa linea di pensiero, troviamo Rebuchat (2015); un'ampia sintesi in italiano, con un'ampia bibliografia di orientamento, è Della Putta, Ghia 2025, e una rilettura critica è in molti saggi di R. Ellis, tra i quali segnaliamo quello del 2016.

padronanza dei codici non verbali e condurre la riflessione sugli stessi?

Per non costringere il lettore a consultare saggi precedenti, riportiamo qui il modello teorico di competenza comunicativa richiamato sopra:

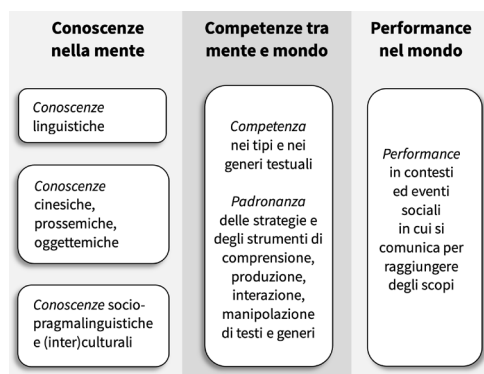


Figura 1 Il modello di competenza comunicativa

Il diagramma separa le *conoscenze* dalle *competenze* che le trasformano in *performance* (Balboni 2020): il focus di questo saggio è sulla seconda casella a sinistra, le *conoscenze* che la nostra mente ha sui codici non verbali. La grafica a caselle separate non deve indurre l'idea che queste grammatiche si comportino come monadi autonome e separate: le *conoscenze* presenti in ciascuna casella si accordano con quelle nelle altre due caselle per concretizzarsi in *competenze* (colonna centrale) e generare *performance*.

Il mondo reale è permeato di comunicazione non verbale, ad esempio i segnali del codice della strada, gli stilemi dei codici architettonici, i codici di colore nelle sale del triage in un pronto soccorso, e così via. Noi ci occupiamo solo dei codici non verbali che gli umani utilizzano, più o meno consapevolmente, quando intendono comunicare: sono i codici non verbali gestiti da *grammatiche*, cioè da sistemi di conoscenze immagazzinati nella mente umana.

Questi codici sono oggetto di un ampio studio semiotico e comunicativo, che ci limitiamo ad accennare in nota per fornire un contesto di approfondimento,² ma per questo saggio ci affidiamo alla

² Studi di respiro generale, che indichiamo tra i tanti a disposizione, sono: Manusov, Patterson 2006; Moore 2010; Lewis 2012; De Vito 2013; López Pérez et al. 2016; Burgoon et al. 2021; marcatamente semiotici sono: il secondo volume di Poytaos 2002; Wharton 2009; Danesi 2021; Beato, Pozzato 2026; sul rapporto tra linguaggi verbali e non verbali si può vedere Kravchenko 2006.

letteratura che osserva questi codici in prospettiva edulinguistica teorica (la prima domanda di ricerca) e operativa (la seconda domanda).

2 Prima domanda di ricerca: quali codici extralinguistici fanno parte della competenza comunicativa?

L'uso comunicativo del corpo è regolato da due codici, quello *cinesico* e quello *prossemico*; un terzo codice, quello *oggettemico*, considera gli oggetti intorno al corpo. Alcune fonti inseriscono anche la *cronemica* tra i codici non verbali, ma la cosa ci lascia perplessi, come vedremo.

2.1 Il corpo usato per comunicare: la cinesica

Nel diagramma e nelle righe introduttive a questo paragrafo abbiamo usato il termine *cinesica*, che si è affermato nell'uso e quindi non possiamo evitare, anche se esso si riferisce etimologicamente solo ai movimenti, alla gestualità. In realtà il corpo viene usato insieme alla comunicazione linguistica in modo più complesso:

a. gestualità

i movimenti di mani, braccia, testa accompagnano quasi sempre la lingua orale, sottolineandone alcuni aspetti: ad esempio, rendono viviva la struttura in un testo ('primo', 'secondo', 'terzo' indicati con le dita, mentre si argomenta o si narra) o la temporalità (i gesti che indicano il passato o il futuro, con la mano che va ad arco all'indietro o in avanti); in molti casi aumentano la forza pragmatica degli enunciati (i gesti di richiamo o espulsione, di assenso o dissenso, fame o sazietà, e così via).³

I gesti possono essere usati da soli, senza l'accompagnamento linguistico, ma la competenza comunicativa di chi li osserva interpreta comunque i gesti come enunciati, traduce i gesti in «vieni qui», «vai via», «stai zitto», ecc. (Kendon 2004);

3 La gestualità è l'elemento più studiato in tutto il settore dei linguaggi non verbali. Da un lato, ci sono molte banche dati, a cominciare dai dizionari mondiale dei gesti di Morris 1994 (in realtà una guida più che un dizionario vero e proprio), di Bäuml e Bäuml 1997 e di Caradec 2023, cui si affiancano dizionari nazionali, ad esempio per l'Italia: Caon 2010, Cavallo 2017 e Nobili 2023; ci sono anche visioni ampie di carattere semantico, come Müller e Posner 2004; McNeill 2005; Wharton 2009.

b. espressività

le espressioni del viso possono sottolineare quanto espresso dalla lingua (piacere/dispiacere, accordo/disaccordo, ecc.), ma in alcuni casi esse possono aggiungere informazioni non presenti nella lingua: basti pensare alle espressioni di dubbio e perplessità che cambiano le modalità di un enunciato: «Carlo ha detto che viene» è un'affermazione certa, dal punto di vista linguistico, ma le sopracciglia alzate e un finto sorriso informano con strumenti non linguistici che si hanno dubbi sull'effettiva venuta di Carlo.

Le espressioni godono di una vastissima letteratura sia di ricerca sia di divulgazione da parte di psicologi della comunicazione, di biologi, di neurologi, ma quasi sempre il focus è la natura delle emozioni veicolate dalle espressioni, quindi l'*informazione* involontaria e non la *comunicazione* intenzionale, che è quella di cui ci occupiamo;

c. postura

è spesso considerata parte della prossemica (ma non ci pare sia relativa alla 'prossimità' tra i parlanti) e altrettanto spesso studiata come espressione di un atteggiamento psicologico inconsapevole (ad esempio, le braccia conserte intese come atteggiamento di chiusura), oppure come strumento per chiarire i rapporti di forza negli interrogatori di polizia, per dominare il palcoscenico, per 'bucare' lo schermo, e così via.

Per noi invece la postura è oggetto di osservazione e di apprendimento in considerazione del suo ruolo nell'indicare formalità/informalità in un evento comunicativo. Come la gestualità e le espressioni, anche la postura è usata inconsapevolmente, tranne che da parte di esperti in comunicazione pubblica;

d. odori e rumori del corpo

la loro gestione è soggetta a grammatiche sociali rigidissime, che variano da cultura a cultura.

Di solito odori e rumori corporei *informano*, cioè non sono intenzionali ma comunque veicolano informazioni negative di tipo personale (stress, sudore, ecc.) o sociale (scarsa igiene, maleducazione, ecc.), ma in alcuni casi gli odori e i rumori corporali *comunicano*, sono cioè oggetto di una scelta comunicativa, ad esempio l'uso dei profumi per sostituire (o coprire, in alcune culture) l'odore naturale, oppure la provocazione adolescenziale con rutti o peti per indicare disprezzo delle convenzioni sociali.

Odori, rumori, sputi, starnuti costituiscono significativi punti critici nella comunicazione tra culture euro-americane e culture asiatiche e africane.

Gesti, espressioni, posture vengono percepiti come naturali, spontanei e – grande problema! – come universali, mentre cambiano da cultura a cultura e, come abbiamo anticipato, costituiscono punti critici nella comunicazione interculturale,⁴ essenziale nell'insegnamento delle lingue non native.

2.2 La distanza o il contatto tra i corpi che comunicano: la prossemica

La prossemica studia la prossimità tra i corpi delle persone che *partecipano* a un evento comunicativo, non necessariamente che *parlano* in quell'evento: ad esempio, nelle conferenze i ruoli di relatore e ascoltatore sono comunicati dalle rispettive posizioni e la loro interazione usa codici diversi: il relatore parla, gli ascoltatori usano codici non verbali, segnalano durante il discorso la loro (dis) approvazione con le espressioni e, a fine evento, applaudendo o fischiando.

La vicinanza e il contatto sono regolate da un meccanismo naturale di autodifesa gestito dall'amigdala: ogni animale, quindi anche l'uomo, vive al centro di una 'bolla prossemica' del raggio di circa un braccio, che non permette agli altri di afferrarlo o colpirlo e garantisce un minimo spazio di fuga. Il rispetto della bolla prossemica, cioè la possibilità di avvicinarsi molto o di toccare l'altro, è regolato da stringenti e complesse grammatiche sociali:

- a. il *contatto*, ad esempio, può avere diverse morfologie (abbraccio, bacio sulla guancia, mano sulla spalla, tenersi a braccetto o allacciare le mani, ecc.) ciascuna delle quali è permessa sulla base di genere, rapporto di amicizia o di affettività, ma anche come espressione di sostegno e vicinanza psicologica, non solo fisica, in momenti di difficoltà e di dolore; alcuni studi usano *aptica* (dal greco ἅπτω, 'toccare') per indicare quella parte della prossemica che implica un contatto fisico;
- b. la *distanza* frontale è legata in modo stretto al ruolo sociale e in buona parte si sintonizza sulla scelta tra *tu* e *lei* dal punto di vista linguistico: in un rapporto formale, segnato dal *lei*,

⁴ C'è una vastissima letteratura sui problemi interculturali legati ai codici extralinguistici, ed essi costituiscono una sezione *ad hoc* degli studi di comunicazione interculturale nel progetto mondiale *La comunicazione tra italiani e altri popoli*, in www.unive.it/crdl, cui sarà dedicato l'editoriale di questa rivista nel secondo numero del 2026.

da un tono di voce controllato, da scelte lessicali particolari, dalla sostituzione dell'imperativo con il condizionale o il congiuntivo, la distanza non può essere inferiore a quella di una bolla, un braccio teso; in molti paesi, ad esempio nelle parti d'Italia ed Europa segnate dal retaggio celtico, la distanza formale non è di una ma di entrambe le bolle prossemiche degli interlocutori, quindi un doppio braccio teso, un po' più di un metro.

La grammatica prossemica è percepita come naturale, come quella cinese, mentre in realtà cambia da cultura a cultura e costituisce un punto critico nella comunicazione interculturale. (Sul ruolo della cultura nella formazione della grammatica prossemica si veda Kulaksız 2015; sulla prossemica interculturale Sorokowska 2017).

2.3 L'uso comunicativo di oggetti durante la comunicazione orale: l'oggettemica

Di norma i partecipanti ad uno scambio comunicativo sono vestiti: l'abbigliamento da un lato *informa* sui gusti e l'atteggiamento di una persona, dall'altro *comunica* rispetto/dispetto, formalità/informalità, status sociale, ruolo sociale (si pensi alle uniformi, agli abiti religiosi, e così via); spesso sul risvolto di una giacca ci sono spille che indicano l'appartenenza a un club, a un partito, a un gruppo organizzato riconoscibile proprio dal simbolo: tutta questa materia, la *vestémique* di Roland Barthes, è molto studiata dal punto di vista semiotico e relazionale, notando soprattutto che è la prima cosa che si vede di un interlocutore e che quindi orienta la *expectancy grammar* su eventi e atteggiamenti a venire; nella letteratura edulinguistica e nei materiali didattici, tuttavia, la vestemica è assente.

Si comunica molto spesso attraverso oggetti: ad esempio, si possono utilizzare un mazzo di rose per comunicare passione; una bottiglia, una pianta, un libro per comunicare gratitudine a chi ci ha invitato a cena; un biglietto da visita per comunicare sia le coordinate logistiche sia il ruolo sociale (informando involontariamente anche sul gusto e la raffinatezza di chi lo ha scelto); ecc.

La grammatica oggettemica è specifica di ogni cultura, spesso di singoli strati sociali e di varietà regionali all'interno di una cultura: ad esempio, un regalo presentato con le migliori intenzioni e ben accetto nella cultura italiana generale può essere letto come un'offesa (regalare alcol a un islamico) o un malaugurio (regalare un orologio da polso a un cinese, un mazzo di fiori con il cellophane a un tedesco). Cambiano anche le regole che governano l'apertura del regalo: l'apertura immediata comunica entusiasmo, il rinvio dell'apertura vuol significare che non interessa l'oggetto nel pacchetto ma che

quello che si apprezza è il pensiero che ha guidato l'atto di regalare (non per nulla spesso si usa 'un pensierino' come sinonimo di 'regalo'); in Australia l'invitato a un barbecue 'regala' un contributo di carne, che deve essere cotta e offerta in quell'incontro anche se c'è già abbastanza cibo, allo stesso modo in cui molte culture prevedono che la bottiglia portata dall'ospite vada aperta e anche se c'è già vino in abbondanza.

2.4 Un problema generato dall'IA: la cronemica è un codice non-verbale?

E.T. Hall, che fondò gli studi sulla comunicazione interculturale con *The Hidden Language* (1959), definì *cronemica* la gestione del tempo nella comunicazione, contrapponendo la monocronia dei tedeschi, degli americani, dei cinesi (si discute di un tema alla volta; si fa una cosa alla volta) alla policronia dei popoli mediterranei o del sudest asiatico.

Paul Watzlawick, nel secondo Novecento, studiò la pragmatica della comunicazione, indicando cinque assiomi della comunicazione umana, il primo dei quali è divenuto famosissimo: «non si può non comunicare», in cui faceva notare, tra le altre cose, che perfino il tempo vuoto, il silenzio, ha un ruolo importante, ad esempio:

- a. il tempo di attesa, se uno degli interlocutori è in ritardo, comunica mancanza di serietà o di rispetto (ma non in tutte le culture, aggiungiamo noi);
- b. il tempo tra domanda e risposta, tra una battuta e la reazione, comunica imbarazzo (in realtà alcune culture estremo-orientali inseriscono una pausa come indicazione di rispetto: «la tua osservazione è così importante che non rispondo di getto, ci penso»);
- c. il tempo tra le parole, gli enunciati, la velocità di eloquio: il rallentamento del *foreigner talk* comunica attenzione, rispetto, l'estrema rapidità invece *informa* (non *comunica*, non è intenzionale) sull'egocentrismo comunicativo.

A nostro avviso la cronemica di Hall, di Watzlawick, degli studiosi di comunicazione non rientra nei *linguaggi* non verbali: tratta la *percezione* del tempo, ma questa è un tratto individuale, la *construction of personal time* teorizzata da Bruneau (2012): non solo le culture, ma anche le persone sono monocrone o policrone, sono più o meno pazienti, più o meno suscettibili. La *percezione* individuale non costituisce una grammatica, non è un codice condiviso come invece lo sono i linguaggi, verbali e non.

La cronemica contribuisce indubbiamente alla comunicazione, ma si situa all'interno della terza casella, quella sulle conoscenze

contestuali (sociali, pragmatiche, culturali) a sinistra nel modello di competenza comunicativa riportato in apertura a questo saggio e su cui torneremo nel quinto contributo di questa serie, *EL.LE* 3/2026.

La ragione di questo paragrafo va trovata nel fatto che, siccome partono dalla definizione di Wikipedia, «Chronemics is the study of the use of time in nonverbal communication», Google e l'IA (con) fondono *comunicazione* non verbale e *codici, linguaggi* non verbali⁵ e tale definizione viene poi amplificata da molti siti divulgativi, blog, ecc. rischiando di diventare una 'verità'. Da qui, la necessità che abbiamo sentito di precisare che la gestione del tempo non è un codice, una grammatica, un linguaggio.

3 Seconda domanda di ricerca: quale spazio hanno queste grammatiche nello sviluppo comunicativo e cognitivo?

Allo stato attuale, la risposta è semplice:

- a. nella scuola, i linguaggi non verbali non hanno alcuno spazio, se non per rapidi cenni: non sono rilevanti né per le Indicazioni Nazionali (la versione moderna dei classici 'programmi' ministeriali) né per il *Quadro Comune Europeo* (che limita le competenze a quelle linguistiche, sociolinguistiche e pragmatiche, cioè la prima e la terza casella nello schema della competenza comunicativa riportato nell'introduzione), né per la manualistica didattica che vi dedica, talvolta, qualche cenno; non sono rilevanti neppure nella percezione di insegnanti e studenti, spesso ignari del fatto che questi linguaggi abbiano una morfologia, una sintassi, dei registri, delle varietà nel tempo e nello spazio, una diversificata forza pragmatica, che possano sostituire la lingua in molti atti linguistici, che possano invertire il significato di un enunciato

⁵ Tra questi siti, che l'IA utilizza per costruire le sue risposte, oltre a Wikipedia troviamo JSTOR, che si definisce *nonprofit library for the intellectually curious*, che spiega *Chronemics and the Nonverbal Language of Time* (<https://daily.jstor.org/chronemics-and-the-nonverbal-language-of-time/>); Powerspeak, sito di divulgazione comunicativa, che presenta *Chronemics: The Impact of Time on Nonverbal Communication* (<https://powerfulspeak.com/what-is-chronemics/>); un sito molto frequentato da insegnanti e studenti che vogliono perfezionare il loro inglese, 29+, che dà una lunga lista di fenomeni cronemici in *Time (Chronemics) in Nonverbal Communication Examples* (https://www.examples.com/english/time-chronemics-in-nonverbal-communication.html#google_vignette); una visione più complessa è quella di un famoso sito divulgativo di antropologia, Anthrolic, che scrive: «Chronemics, the study of the role time plays in communication, is a focal concept in the field of anthropology, where non-verbal communication and cultural norms converge» (https://anthrolic.com/chronemics#google_vignette).

- (dire «Paolo è proprio furbo» strizzando l'occhio significa che non è furbo, come un segno 'meno' in algebra);
- b. nella letteratura edulinguistica i linguaggi non verbali hanno più spazio che nella realtà delle classi, soprattutto negli studi sull'insegnamento di lingue seconde e straniere, dove la consapevolezza dei rischi comunicativi insiti nei linguaggi non verbali è alta;⁶ invece, nella ricerca sull'insegnamento della L1 (lingua materna o quanto meno lingua di istruzione), dove riflettere sui linguaggi che si possiedono e si usano quotidianamente sarebbe semplice, il tema è praticamente ignorato.

Dobbiamo quindi modificare la domanda del titolo: quale spazio *dovrebbero avere* queste grammatiche nello sviluppo *comunicativo* (lo sviluppo della competenza comunicativa) e *cognitivo* (la riflessione metalinguistica intesa a far maturare la capacità di creare categorie e di classificare oggetti)?

Iniziamo espandendo l'ultima parentesi, prima di entrare nel merito. Lo sviluppo cognitivo condotto attraverso la riflessione sulle grammatiche, linguistiche e non, opera su due piani: la categorizzazione e la classificazione:

a. la categorizzazione

Nella tradizione scolastiche, le categorie vengono trasmesse: l'insegnante e il manuale le elencano e le descrivono. Tuttavia, basterebbe scrivere alla lavagna 4 verbi, 4 nomi, 4 aggettivi e 4 connettivi e poi chiedere di creare degli insiemi, e gli studenti sarebbero in tal modo guidati a scoprire da soli le categorie di azioni, cose, qualità e parole che indicano relazioni (le etichette di 'verbo', 'nome' ecc. sono il punto d'arrivo, in questa logica: servono per capirsi, quindi sono utili, non sono più un'imposizione degli insegnanti).

6 Semplicemente per stimolare la riflessione riportiamo alcuni saggi in open access che spesso aggiungono poco o nulla alla nostra conoscenza dei codici extralinguistici, ma sono interessanti per la contestualizzazione territoriale lontana dall'Europa che li porta a tratteggiare il problema con tinte forti: il nigeriano Akinota 2014; Nigusie 2015, uno studioso che insegna in Etiopia e pubblica il saggio su una rivista indiana; i turchi Kulaksız 2015, che a differenza degli altri studi citati focalizza la prossemica, e Bekdemir e Altay (2025); l'indonesiana Sutrisna 2020, che include anche le espressioni del viso; gli iracheni Bedir e Daskan 2023; l'uzbeko Avaz Qizi 2024, interessante perché in un articolino di 4 pagine riporta 7 studi uzbeki sui linguaggi non verbali in glottodidattica; l'angolano Ferginan insieme agli indonesiani Ilma e Desvitasari (2025); molte anche le tesi di laurea disponibili online che confermano l'interesse dei non-occidentali per i linguaggi non verbali nella didattica (soprattutto) dell'inglese.

Riflettendo sui codici extralinguistici, guidare la creazione di categorie come gestualità, espressioni, posture, è un'attività cognitiva importante; all'interno della cinesica, ulteriori categorie possono essere individuate insieme, ad esempio quelle che riguardano

- le parti del corpo coinvolte: gesti con le mani, con le braccia, ecc.;
- l'atteggiamento che veicolano: gesti di scherno e offesa vs. gesti di affetto e con-passione; gesti sgarbati e volgari vs. gesti rispetto e formali; e così via;
- la natura semiotica: gesti che mimano l'azione (indicare che si ha sonno reclinando la testa sulle mani giunte, proporre una spaghetтата mimando il forchettone che li gira) vs. gesti senza connessione con l'azione significata («che cosa vuoi?» fatto con il palmo oscillante alto/basso e le dita raccolte; indicare l'alta qualità di un cibo ruotando l'indice sulla guancia – che in Francia significa mal di denti, ed è quindi segno di base mimica);
- la maggiore potenza semiotica dei codici linguistici, che possono descrivere ogni gesto, postura, oggetto comunicativo, rispetto ai codici non verbali che invece possono veicolare solo alcuni degli infiniti significati comunicati con la lingua.

La riflessione sul legame verbale/non-verbale si stabilisce facilmente chiedendo di accoppiare un'espressione linguistica a un gesto – con il risultato che dalla classe emergono espressioni linguistiche differenti, spesso di registro differente, sulle quali si può quindi riflettere, discutere, per arrivare a scegliere le migliori combinazioni gesto/lingua; oppure si possono fare 'dettati' cinesici. uno studente dice una frase e tutti i compagni devono esprimerne il significato con linguaggi non verbali, devono mimare quanto detto; si può far narrare una storia solo con i gesti,⁷ recuperando poi su YouTube la lezione di giganti del non-verbale come Jacques Tati, da guardare, tradurre in lingua verbale – e soprattutto studiare per scoprirne le tecniche semiotiche.

Sono attività di riflessione che sviluppano strumenti cognitivi, in realtà richiedono poco tempo e lasciano gli studenti sorpresi dalla scoperta di quale struttura codificata ci sia alla base degli 'spontaneissimi' e 'naturalissimi' gesti, espressioni, posture ecc.;

7 È un'attività che le Indicazioni Nazionali sconsigliano: alla voce «lettura», l'unica volta in cui si parla di linguaggi non verbali, dicono: «Molte scuole, per suscitare negli alunni il gusto per la lettura, hanno attivato da un po' di anni progetti che, per andare incontro alla sensibilità e ai modelli cognitivi degli alunni scommettono sull'animazione della lettura, sulla creazione di un clima ludico e piacevole, sulla traduzione teatrale o in immagini di un testo; in pratica nella *traduzione del linguaggio verbale in varie forme di linguaggi non verbali*. Con queste strategie si rischia, però, di legittimare proprio quegli elementi che in qualche modo sono la causa della marginalizzazione della lettura tra i giovani. Le Indicazioni, alla luce di questo rischio, individuano invece le risorse per un'educazione alla lettura all'interno del testo» (corsivo aggiunto).

b. la classificazione

Nella vita della scuola, la classificazione occupa molto del tempo di insegnamento della L1: stabilite le categorie, si classificano al loro interno le parole nell'analisi grammaticale, le relazioni in quella logica.

Lo stesso si può fare con i linguaggi non verbali, che tuttavia offrono una possibilità molto più motivante, più accattivante: stabilite le categorie e dedicato a ciascuna di esse un tabellone appeso alle pareti dell'aula, (o un file nella cloud condivisa dalla classe), gli studenti devono fare quante più foto (o video, da postare nella cloud di classe) di gesti, atteggiamenti, espressioni ecc. che rientrano in ogni categoria.

Vediamo ora come queste possibilità si realizzano nei vari contesti dell'educazione linguistica (tranne, ovviamente, le lingue classiche, che non ci sono giunte in dimensione orale).

3.1 Lingua materna (o lingua di istruzione)

Nell'insegnamento della lingua materna i linguaggi non verbali sono ignorati sia sul piano comunicativo sia come oggetto di riflessione e sono assenti nella ricerca glottodidattica (con la parziale eccezione di Veneziano 2014 e, *passim*, di Padoan 2017).

Tuttavia, proprio perché sono linguaggi semplici, limitati, e perché sono ben padroneggiati, sarebbero il terreno perfetto per proporre agli studenti una riflessione preliminare a quella sulla lingua verbale: si può, ad esempio, partire dall'abbigliamento per far capire le nozioni di *morfologia* (le varie forme di magliette, camicie, pantaloni, scarpe) e di *sintassi* (il modo di combinare i vari pezzi di abbigliamento, immancabilmente diversissime tra adulti come insegnanti e genitori e adolescenti e giovani: e proprio su queste differenze si può riflettere insieme).

Come ragionare su questi codici? Alcune attività, oltre a quelle di categorizzazione e classificazione viste sopra, possono essere:

- a. la traduzione in lingua il racconto non verbale di grandi mimi, cui abbiamo accennato parlando della categorizzazione, sopra;
- b. la visione di spezzoni di film annullando l'audio e cercando di cogliere il filo del discorso attraverso i linguaggi non verbali: è una grande sfida e quindi è motivante;
- c. il confronto tra film ambientati al Sud e al Nord, per cogliere la diversa gestualità e la differente prossemica della Penisola;
- d. il raffronto tra gli stili recitativi di grandi attori, che curano ogni dettaglio non verbale: Massimo Troisi e Roberto Benigni, ad esempio, recitano soprattutto con le mani e le espressioni,

- mentre Toni Servillo è quasi immobile: se gli studenti sono chiamati a dire quale stile preferiscono e, soprattutto, il perché della loro risposta lo sforzo cognitivo è alto;
- e. la drammatizzazione di piccole storie in classe o la didattica teatrale in doposcuola: con queste attività gli studenti scoprono che per recitare bisogna focalizzare anche la gestualità, la distanza dagli altri attori, e capiscono che costumi e oggetti di scena comunicano quanto le parole (Surkamp 2014 lega specificamente i linguaggi non verbali e la didattica teatrale a scuola, riportando una vasta bibliografia);
 - f. la simulazione videoregistrata di un'intervista, un dibattito televisivo, una lezione, un colloquio di lavoro, ecc., da preparare esercitando non solo il controllo della lingua (registri, scelte lessicali, tono, velocità, struttura basata su coordinazione o subordinazione, ecc.) ma anche quello della dimensione non verbale: definito il tipo di evento da simulare, tutti insieme si discute sull'abbigliamento, gli status symbols, la postura da adottare, la collocazione spaziale, il livello e registro di gestualità, ecc. La performance viene videoregistrata e discussa a caldo, riflettendo sia sul modo in cui si è argomentato il contenuto, sia sul modo in cui si è parlato, gesticolato, usato il viso, ecc. Per focalizzare i linguaggi non verbali, basta guardare il video anche per pochissimi minuti scelti a caso eliminando l'audio - l'esperienza ci dice che gli studenti sono sconvolti, più che semplicemente sorpresi, del modo in cui usano i linguaggi non verbali senza rendersene conto.

3.2 Lingue seconde e straniere

Mentre sul rapporto tra linguaggi non verbali e lingua materna la ricerca edulinguistica è quasi inesistente, c'è moltissima letteratura⁸ in ordine alle lingue seconde e straniere (contesti che in molti saggi sono confusi), applicata soprattutto all'insegnamento dell'inglese; ma a fronte di una ricerca teorica fertile, i manuali scolastici non danno

⁸ tra una bibliografia sterminata citiamo, oltre alle riflessioni di molti degli autori visti nelle note precedenti, la visione di insieme di Gullberg 2008 e 2013, di Poyatos 2002 e 2017, di Diadori 2024, tre autori che hanno dedicato una vita alla ricerca cinese; Busà 2015 tratta specificamente il tema dell'inserimento dei linguaggi non verbali nel sillabo di L2; De Iaco 2020 e Mentore, Russo 2024 possono orientare nella altrettanto sterminata bibliografia sul linguaggio non verbale degli insegnanti in classe, dove giudizi spesso non voluti emergono dalle espressioni del viso, dove la posizione dell'insegnante (tra i banchi o in cattedra, ferma o in continuo movimento, con le spalle alla classe mentre scrive alla lavagna, ecc.) e l'abbigliamento casual o formale sono fondamentali per la relazione insegnante/studenti.

spazio alla dimensione non verbale, se non per cenni occasionali (sulla marginalità della cinesica nella manualistica si veda Giovannini 2014).

In contesti di lingua *seconda* (la lingua insegnata nel paese dove essa è normalmente usata) la raccolta di foto o video fatti con il cellulare è semplice e porta in classe il materiale non verbale su cui ragionare ed eventualmente creare tabelloni da appendere alle pareti, vere e proprie grammatiche visive.

In contesti di lingua *straniera*, invece, la raccolta di informazioni è semplice per l'inglese americano, visto che le reti televisive di ogni paese sono inondate da serie e film statunitensi, mentre trovare serie e film in altre lingue è più difficile. Le serie televisive sono affidabili come esempi di cinesica e oggettemica ma non di prossemica, perché le distanze interpersonali sono spesso molto ridotte per poter avere due attori in un'inquadratura unica nello spazio ristretto dello schermo televisivo.

Nelle lingue seconde o straniere, il lavoro sui linguaggi non verbali è necessariamente *comparativo*, mette a confronto l'uso che ne fanno gli 'altri' con quelli propri dello studente: questo comporta la riflessione anzitutto sulla dimensione non verbale della propria madrelingua per poter costruire una mappa comparativa di gesti, espressioni, ecc. dell'altra lingua: il lavoro *cognitivo* quindi è garantito, perché si devono individuare le categorie da utilizzare e vi si devono poi classificare i singoli gesti, le singole espressioni, i tipi di regalo, e così via.

Uno strumento utile da usare in corsi di lingua seconda e straniera in Italia o di italiano all'estero è *La comunicazione tra italiani e altri popoli*, che compara una trentina di paesi con l'Italia e dedica la sezione 2 di ogni scheda nazionale ai linguaggi non verbali (è in accesso libero in www.unive.it/crdl e verrà descritto nel prossimo numero di questa rivista).

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Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency in EFL Oral Performance of Italian Learners with Specific Learning Difficulties Insights from the Neurodivergent Learner Corpus

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Abstract This study investigates the complexity, accuracy, and fluency of English oral productions by 32 Italian university students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs), using data from the developing Neurodivergent Learner Corpus. Results reveal performance patterns associated with the type of course attended (intensive vs. extensive) and the type of learning difficulty. Learners with multiple SpLDs exhibited greater processing demands, reflected in longer pauses, lower grammatical accuracy, but also more successful self-corrections. By contrast, students with dyslexia spoke more fluently and maintained better grammatical control, despite less efficient self-monitoring. Findings suggest that multiple SpLDs might impose broader processing challenges affecting both fluency and accuracy. While the results are not generalisable, the study indicates that L2 difficulties in SpLD learners go beyond reading and writing and highlights the need for further corpus-based research on language teaching and learning to neurodivergent learners.

Keywords Specific learning difficulties (SpLDs). Dyslexia. Learner corpus research. English as a foreign language (EFL). Instructed second language acquisition.

Sommario 1 Introduction. – 2 Literature Review. – 3 Method. – 4 Results. – 5 Discussion and Implications.



Peer review

Submitted 2026-04-03
Accepted 2026-05-23
Published 2026-07-14



Open access

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1 Introduction

In recent years, the intersection of Educational Linguistics and inclusive education has attracted growing attention, particularly concerning English language learners with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs), as they face distinct challenges in developing communicative competence.¹ While prior research has focused on L2 reading and writing difficulties in younger learner populations, less is known about how these learners perform in spoken English at the tertiary level, where linguistic and cognitive demands are intensified.

This study addresses a critical gap in the literature by examining complexity, accuracy and fluency (CAF) in the oral interlanguage of Italian-speaking English learners with SpLDs at the tertiary level. Drawing on data from the Neurodivergent Learner Corpus, a recently developed resource of transcribed and annotated oral productions, this research explores how different instructional formats and learner profiles shape L2 spoken performance. The study starts from the assumption that the CAF framework could provide new insights into the interlanguage of neurodivergent learners, as it captures not only the linguistic features but also the cognitive dynamics of L2 learner speech.

Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to more data-informed language pedagogy by informing tailored instructional strategies that address the specific needs of neurodivergent EFL learners.

2 Literature Review

This section provides an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of the study to be presented in Section 3, with a particular focus on the research gaps that the study seeks to address.

2.1 EFL Learners with SpLDs

In recent decades, interest in language education for learners with SpLDs has grown across medical, pedagogical, and linguistic domains, including Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Educational Linguistics. In particular, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is becoming an area of special interest, driven by both the global presence of English in educational curricula and the high prevalence of SpLDs in mainstream classes. In Italy, for example, around 6%

¹ Michele Daloiso authored Sections 2.1, 3, 4.2; Giulia Govoni authored Sections 2.2., 2.3, 4.1. Sections 1 and 5 was written by both the authors.

of students have a diagnosed SpLD (MIM 2024), and nearly 20,000 university students report such characteristics (ANVUR 2022).

Research in this area draws on two psycholinguistic models: the *Linguistic Coding Differences Hypothesis* (Sparks et al. 1989) and the *Orthographic Depth Hypothesis* (Katz, Feldman 1983). The former links interlanguage development to L1 abilities, suggesting that difficulties in phonology, morphosyntax, or pragmatics may transfer to L2, while the latter highlights differences in writing systems, with shallow orthographies like Italian favouring phonological decoding and deeper ones like English relying more on visual-orthographic processing. Accordingly, learners with phonological and lexical retrieval deficits are likely to face similar challenges in L2, which can be influenced by the features of the target language. For example, studies on Italian learners aged 9-14 report slower, less accurate English word reading (Palladino et al. 2013) as well as comprehension difficulties (Bonifacci et al. 2017).

Despite growing research in this area, some gaps remain. On the one hand, the linguistic profiles of Italian EFL learners with SpLDs are still underexplored. On the other hand, university students, who face higher academic demands, remain underrepresented in this research area, as most studies focus on younger learners and lack large-scale data across age group. Additionally, descriptions of learner errors usually draw on clinical studies of L1 acquisition, which may offer useful hypotheses but require empirical validation in L2 contexts. It is also worth noting that, while SpLDs are typically associated with literacy difficulties, SLA research (e.g., Nijakowska 2010; Cappelli, Noccetti 2023; Kormos, Smith 2023) suggests that they may extend to a broader range of EFL challenges, including oral communication. Therefore, a more comprehensive account of learners' oral interlanguage is needed alongside written skills.

2.2 L2 Oral Performance Analysis: the CAF Framework

In SLA research, L2 oral proficiency is commonly conceptualised through three core dimensions: complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF). Introduced in the 1970s as a means of quantifying oral competence, the CAF framework has evolved into a model encompassing linguistic, psycholinguistic, and cognitive aspects of performance. Within this framework, greater complexity and accuracy are typically associated with more advanced interlanguage, while fluency reflects more efficient access to linguistic knowledge (Michel 2017).

These three dimensions are recognised as distinct yet integral components for the comprehensive assessment of L2 oral proficiency. Importantly, each component may vary according to contextual

factors, such as task features or learner profiles. While a learner's focus on one dimension may temporarily constrain their performance in the others, the three are considered cognitively interdependent (Rausch 2016). Consequently, disaggregated analysis of the CAF dimensions is essential for capturing their unique contributions to interlanguage development.

Accuracy is generally considered the most clearly definable dimension (Thewissen, Anishchanka 2022), as it refers to conformity with target language norms (Bui, Skehan 2018). However, its analysis is methodologically complex, as error types and frequency depend on task design, learner focus, and proficiency (Skehan, Foster 2012). Therefore, both holistic and analytic measures have been proposed; the former provide an overall evaluation, considering error frequency and severity (Polio 1997), whereas the latter assess discrete features. This study adopts an analytic approach, examining self-corrections, error-free clauses, errors per 100 words, and target-like use of selected forms.

Fluency has been defined in various ways (Foster 2020). Definitions include factors such as the smoothness of speech under real-time constraints (Lennon 1990) and the use of compensation strategies to manage communication breakdowns (Tarone 1980). Interestingly, pauses and hesitations do not necessarily indicate disfluency, as they may support planning or discourse organisation (Dumont 2018). Following Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005), this study measures fluency through temporal variables (e.g., speech rate, pauses) and hesitation markers (e.g., repetitions, reformulations).

Complexity is the dimension that has generated greater debate, as it includes both cognitive and linguistic aspects.

Cognitive complexity is a relative and subjective notion. It refers to the relative difficulty with which language elements are processed during L2 performance and L2 learning, as determined in part by the learners' individual backgrounds (e.g. their aptitude, motivation, stage of L2 development, L1 background). Linguistic complexity is an important component of cognitive complexity (or difficulty), but it does not coincide with it. Linguistic complexity is an objective [property] given, independent from the learner, which refers to the intrinsic formal or semantic-functional properties of L2 elements (e.g. forms, meanings, and form-meaning mappings) or to properties of (sub-) systems of L2 elements. (Housen et al. 2012, 4)

Most SLA research has focused on linguistic complexity, typically operationalised as a quantitative measure of the number and variety of elements in a linguistic system, and the interrelations among them (Kuiken 2023). Common indices of linguistic complexity include

measures of grammatical structure (e.g., mean length of utterance, subordination and coordination indices) and lexical characteristics (e.g., lexical diversity, density, and sophistication). The current study adopts this approach by analysing both grammatical complexity (e.g., extent of subordination, diversity of verb forms, mean number of verb arguments) and lexical complexity (type-token ratio). However, interpretation of these metrics must be approached cautiously, as this traditional perspective on complexity does not fully capture phraseological, morphological, or developmental aspects (Ortega 2003).

2.3 Research Gap

Since research on EFL learners with SpLDs typically addresses linguistic challenges in isolation rather than considering the interaction of complexity, accuracy, and fluency, integrating the CAF framework could provide a more comprehensive account of their L2 production.

Regarding complexity, SpLDs may affect both cognitive and linguistic domains. The well-known deficits in phonological short-term memory (Kastamoniti et al. 2018) can limit vocabulary acquisition, syntactic development, and lexical diversity. Moreover, difficulties in working memory and serial processing (Majerus, Cowan 2016) may further constrain the use of complex structures, resulting in less elaborated output.

Accuracy may also be compromised, as the memory limitations associated with SpLDs can hinder the internalisation of grammatical rules, leading to errors in morphology, word order, and lexical selection. Oral accuracy may likewise be affected by problems in lexical retrieval and grammatical encoding.

Finally, due to limited phonological memory and slower lexical access, L2 fluency may be disrupted by disfluencies (e.g., longer pauses, hesitations), which impede spontaneous speech. Overall, fluency in learners with SpLDs may reflect a continuous negotiation between linguistic competence, cognitive constraints, and situational factors.

3 Method

This section presents an overview of the research design that guided our study. Particular attention is given to the sample composition, the key variables under investigation, and the methodological approach adopted for data collection and analysis.

3.1 Research Aims and Rationale

The present study investigates the oral English proficiency of Italian university students with SpLDs by analysing interlanguage samples within the CAF framework, with the aim of examining performance differences between learners enrolled in an intensive instructional programme and those attending an extensive programme (see Section 3.3). As all participants were preparing for a B1-level English examination, the study provides insights into the extent to which targeted pedagogical interventions may support the oral L2 performance of learners with SpLDs.

In addition, the study explores the oral L2 features of learners with dyslexia and those presenting multiple SpLDs, contributing to a deeper understanding of the linguistic and cognitive processes involved in EFL acquisition among neurodivergent learners. Accordingly, the rationale of the study is not to compare learners with SpLDs against a presumed normative benchmark, but rather to investigate the specific dynamics of their interlanguage in order to better understand the internal coherence and variability of SpLD learner profiles.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. What are the CAF profiles of students participating in intensive and extensive instructional programmes?

RQ2. What are the CAF profiles observed among learners with dyslexia and among learners with multiple SpLDs?

RQ3. What CAF patterns characterize the oral production of learners with dyslexia and of those with multiple SpLDs across intensive and extensive instructional formats?

3.2 The Neurodivergent Learner Corpus

The interlanguage samples analysed in this study were selected from the Neurodivergent Learner Corpus, a project under development at the University of Parma coordinated by Michele Daloiso, which aims to implement an electronic corpus derived from the systematic collection of large volumes of spoken English productions by Italian-speaking young adults with SpLDs. The overarching goal of the project is to address current gaps in research on EFL teaching to learners with SpLDs (see 2.1), providing linguistic data that extend beyond the decoding of written text and focus on informants of an age group (young adults) that has been less frequently studied.

At the time of writing, the prototype version of the corpus consists of 409 transcribed and annotated oral productions, totalling 210,912 tokens and 3,956 types, with an average of 516 tokens per text (for detailed information on the corpus construction, see Daloiso, Genduso et al. 2026). The data were collected using clinical elicitation (Corder 1978), a method that employs tasks capable of eliciting a wide range of communicative features, including usages, errors, and strategies, without starting from fixed assumptions.

The tasks used to build the corpus vary in their objectives and input types to elicit different aspects of the interlanguage system (e.g. nouns, tense and aspect). The interlanguage samples examined in this research all pertain to the same task, which aims to gather information on learners' ability to describe a static scene by locating objects or people within space and detailing their physical characteristics. Specifically, the task involves an image depicting a restaurant where a murder has taken place. Learners were asked to describe the image and identify the alleged murderer, providing justification for their choice.

3.3 Instructional Context

The tasks were administered to learners with SpLDs enrolled in specific English language courses at the University of Parma. These courses, tailored to support this learner population, are offered in two formats: an extensive and an intensive programme. Upon enrolment, students complete a placement test to determine their initial proficiency and are assigned to the appropriate instructional track.

The extensive programme consists of ten units, each delivered over a two-week period, while the intensive programme comprises five units, also spanning two weeks each. Both formats aim to foster communicative competence in English at the B1 level. At the end of the course, all students complete the same oral exam, which evaluates their ability to engage in spontaneous conversation on familiar topics, describe experiences, express opinions, and narrate events.

Each teaching unit follows a five-stage structure:

1. **Let's Start:** this phase introduces the topic through visual and verbal cues, prompting learners to formulate hypotheses about the unit's content.
2. **Explore:** here the instructor focuses on listening comprehension through an audio passage in English followed by a related comprehension activity.
3. **Think:** this phase encourages metacognitive reflection on the strategies used during the learning activities.

4. **Your Turn:** this phase encourages L2 oral production through an oral task which requires the description of an image or video in English.
5. **Look Back:** here the instructor and the learners summarise the content covered in the unit and consolidate learning.

The task analysed in this study was administered during phase 4. Learners were shown an image in real time, given two minutes to observe it, and then asked to record an audio description to be uploaded on the course platform.

3.4 Participants

The study involved 32 Italian-speaking students with SpLDs, selected from a larger cohort of the 90 learners who completed the task between 2020 and 2024. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 52 (70% under 24) and included 23 females and 9 males, all of whom provided informed consent.

Participants were initially grouped by instructional programme (intensive vs extensive). Since only 16 out of 90 original learners were in the extensive track, matched pairs were created based on age, SpLD subtype, and degree programme, using data from the participants' language biographies. By the end of the programme, all participants reached B1 proficiency, although those in the extensive track required more time and support.

The sample was later analysed by SpLD subtype, distinguishing learners with dyslexia only from those with multiple SpLDs (dyslexia, dysgraphia, and/or dysorthography). Seven participants were excluded for this further analysis due to missing biographies, resulting in 11 learners in the dyslexia group and 14 in the multiple-SpLD group.

3.5 Data Preparation and Analysis

As a first step, the recorded performances were transcribed using the EUDICO Linguistic Annotator (ELAN, Version 6.9; Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, The Language Archive 2024), which offers a user-friendly platform for multimodal linguistic analysis, including multi-tier annotation, customisable schemes, and advanced playback control for detailed segment analysis.

In this study, the transcription followed the guidelines of the Trinity Lancaster Corpus (Gablasova et al. 2019) and included selected prosodic and paralinguistic features such as pauses and fillers. Learners' utterances were segmented into AS-units, defined

as “a single speaker’s utterance consisting of an independent clause or subclausal unit, together with any subordinate clause(s) associated with it” (Foster et al. 2000, 365).

Following transcription, the data were annotated to enrich the corpus with interpretive linguistic information. Annotation followed an adapted version of the University of Louvain framework (Granger et al. 2023), which included the following error types: phonetic, lexical, grammatical, and word order. Phonetic errors were classified into consonantal, vowel, combined (both types in a single word), and stress errors. Lexical errors included incorrect, redundant, or omitted use of nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, and connectors. Grammatical errors covered the misuse or omission of elements such as nouns, articles, verbs, adjectives, pronouns, and possessives, as well as misclassification of word class. Word order errors included typical learner mistakes such as post-nominal adjective placement (e.g., *a t-shirt red*), literal translations influenced by Italian syntax (e.g., *the table in yellow*), and omissions affecting sentence structure.

In the final stage of data preparation, individual participant data were organised into an Excel spreadsheet structured for statistical analysis.

As regards data analysis, the following dependent variables and indicators were analysed to assess the three CAF components [tab. 1].

Table 1 Indicators used to assess EFL fluency, accuracy and complexity

CAF component	Indicator	Definition
Fluency	<i>Speech rate</i>	Number of words per minute, excluding disfluencies.
	<i>Pause density</i>	Any silence lasting 700 milliseconds or more, calculated as total pause length divided by total speaking time.
	<i>Mean length of run</i>	Average number of syllables produced between pauses.
	<i>False starts</i>	Incomplete utterances that are abandoned or restarted.
	<i>Repetitions</i>	Immediate reiteration of a word or phrase.
	<i>Reformulations</i>	Self-repair involving the rephrasing or paraphrasing of a previously spoken item.
	<i>Replacements</i>	Substitution of a word or structure with an alternative during speech.

CAF component	Indicator	Definition
Accuracy	<i>Self-corrections</i>	Number of accurate self-corrections.
	<i>Error-free clauses</i>	Number of error-free clauses divided by the total number of clauses.
	<i>Error density</i>	Errors divided by the total number of words produced by the learner.
	<i>Lexical accuracy</i>	Number of lexical errors relative to total words produced (excluding disfluencies).
	<i>Verbal accuracy</i>	Proportion of target-like verbal morphology, calculated by dividing correct finite verbs by total verb phrases. ¹
	<i>Plural accuracy</i>	Correct plural forms divided by obligatory plural contexts. ²
Complexity	<i>Verb arguments per AS-unit</i>	Mean number of verb arguments per AS-unit, to capture complexity at the sentence level.
	<i>Verb arguments per verb phrase</i>	Mean number of verb arguments per verb phrase, to highlight the internal structure of verb phrases.
	<i>Subordination density</i>	Number of all subordinate clauses divided by total AS-units.
	<i>Accurate subordination density</i>	Number of correct subordinate clauses divided by total AS-units.
	<i>Verb form diversity</i>	Number of distinct verb forms divided by total verb phrases.
	<i>Lexical diversity</i>	Type-token ratio, i.e. the number of word types divided by the total number of word tokens.
1 To account for incomplete sentences lacking necessary verbs, such cases were included in the denominator.		
2 Overgeneralised plural forms were also included to capture non-standard usage.		

4 Results

This section reports the findings of our study, which should be interpreted descriptively, without implying statistical significance.

4.1 Findings by Intervention Programme

This section examines the oral performance outcomes of participants grouped by intervention programme. The first group (n = 16), referred to as the Intensive Group (InG), attended a 5-unit condensed course, while the second group (n = 16), referred to as the Extensive

Group (ExG), followed a 10-unit extensive course. Detailed statistical analysis is reported in Appendix 1.

4.1.1 Fluency

The analysis of temporal variables points to distinct fluency profiles across groups. InG learners showed a higher speech rate and lower pause density compared to ExG learners, alongside fewer pauses per unit. Mean length of run was slightly higher in the InG than in the ExG. These patterns suggest faster delivery and more continuous speech in the InG, contrasted with slower but potentially more segmented production in the ExG.

Hesitation phenomena further nuance this picture. While replacements were comparable, the InG displayed higher rates of self-corrections, reformulations, repetitions, and false starts. This may indicate more active online monitoring and repair, consistent with greater processing speed. Conversely, the lower frequency of such phenomena in the ExG may reflect a more cautious and pre-planned production style.

Overall, the data suggest a trade-off between speed and planning: InG learners appear to favour more automated production with frequent self-repairs, whereas ExG learners adopt a slower, more deliberate approach with fewer overt repairs. However, substantial within-group variability, as indicated by standard deviations (SDs), cautions against generalisation.

Such tendencies may relate to the timing of the task within the respective curricula, administered in Unit 2 of the intensive programme and Unit 4 of the extensive one, which could have influenced learners' readiness. Affective or sociocultural factors may also have contributed by shaping perceived communicative pressure or opportunities for planning, although these influences cannot be isolated in our dataset.

4.1.2 Accuracy

Linguistic accuracy revealed distinct patterns across groups. The ExG showed higher target-like use of tense and plural marking than the InG. Moreover, overgeneralisation was more frequent in the InG, alongside a slightly higher error rate.

Error frequency measures reinforced this trend, as the ExG produced fewer errors per 100 words and more error-free clauses than the InG, suggesting more stable integration of grammatical knowledge. Self-correction rates were similar, but more accurate in the ExG, indicating more effective monitoring.

Overall, the ExG displays a more consistent accuracy profile. Interestingly, these results align with accounts linking extended input exposure to more stable morphosyntactic representations (Ellis, Barkhuizen 2005). Moreover, lexical accuracy patterns are consistent with research suggesting distinct trajectories for lexical and grammatical development (Bui, Skehan 2018). Greater self-correction accuracy in the ExG may reflect enhanced metalinguistic awareness fostered by sustained exposure and feedback (Ellis et al. 2006; Lantolf, Thorne 2007).

However, these patterns must be interpreted cautiously, as high SDs and mean-median discrepancies indicate substantial internal variability. From an interlanguage perspective, such variability may reflect diverse learner profiles and strategies.

4.1.3 Complexity

Linguistic complexity also revealed distinct patterns across groups. The mean number of verb arguments per AS-unit was higher in the InG than in the ExG, suggesting greater clause-level elaboration. By contrast, verb arguments per verb phrase were comparable, which indicates similar internal syntactic density.

Lexical and morphological range were slightly higher in the InG, as shown by verb form diversity and lexical diversity. At the discourse level, however, the ExG produced more AS-units, while the InG showed higher subordination and greater subordinate clause accuracy.

Overall, these results point to different complexity profiles. The higher clause-level elaboration and subordination in the InG support the idea that intensive practice fosters syntactic complexity even over shorter periods (Ellis, Barkhuizen 2005). However, similar verb phrase density suggests stability in internal structure across conditions. The ExG's higher number of AS-units indicates broader discourse expansion, whereas the InG's denser subordination reflects more compact syntactic embedding.

The lower subordinate clause accuracy observed in the ExG is consistent with the trade-off between complexity and control (Kuiken, Vedder 2008): producing more complex structures may come at the expense of precision, particularly under higher cognitive load or specific instructional conditions. By contrast, the slightly higher lexical diversity in the InG may reflect either greater vocabulary development or differences in initial proficiency.

However, descriptive results for the complexity measures revealed substantial internal variability, with SDs frequently large relative to the means. In several cases (most notably accurate subordination) the median was considerably lower than the mean, indicating skewed

distributions driven by a few higher-performing learners. The InG demonstrated higher average subordination and lexical diversity, yet both groups displayed diverse complexity profiles, which could reflect learners' individual strengths and different strategies for producing complex language.

4.2 Findings by SpLD Subtype

This section discusses the potential impact of SpLD types on L2 oral production. The sample was subdivided into two groups based on diagnostic profiles: the first group ($n = 11$) comprised learners diagnosed with dyslexia (hereafter DysG), while the second group ($n = 14$) consisted of learners with multiple learning difficulties (i.e., diagnosed with at least two of the following: dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dysorthography; hereafter MixG). Learners with unspecified SpLD diagnoses were excluded from this analysis. Detailed statistical descriptions are provided in Appendix 2.

4.2.1 Fluency

The analysis of pausing behaviour revealed only limited differences between groups. The DysG produced slightly more pauses than the MixG, which is in line with findings that adults with dyslexia show more disruptions in spontaneous speech (Pérez-Litago et al. 2025). Speech rate was marginally higher in the DysG than in the MixG, while pause density was higher in the MixG, suggesting greater time devoted to pausing.

Hesitation phenomena showed broadly similar distributions. False starts were comparable, while repetitions, replacements, and self-corrections were slightly higher in the MixG, suggesting greater reliance on compensatory strategies. Reformulations were nearly identical, which indicates similar monitoring behaviours.

Overall, both groups displayed elevated pausing and hesitation, which are consistent with the well-known cognitive demands associated with SpLDs. The faster speech rate in the DysG may reflect a compensatory focus on message delivery, whereas the MixG's higher pause density and repair phenomena may be caused by increased processing load due to co-occurring difficulties. Comparable reformulation and self-correction rates suggest similar levels of metalinguistic awareness.

These findings align with previous research showing reduced fluency in dyslexic speakers (Wiseheart, Altmann 2018) but also extend this pattern to multiple SpLD profiles. However, one should consider that group averages are influenced by higher-performing

individuals, pointing to heterogeneous strategies in managing speech production.

4.2.2 Accuracy

Accuracy measures revealed partly overlapping but distinct profiles. While target-like tense use was comparable across groups, the DysG showed higher plural accuracy than the MixG, suggesting more consistent morphosyntactic control. However, the higher SD in the DysG indicates greater variability, which is in line with evidence that inflectional marking is particularly vulnerable in this population (Helland, Kaasa 2005). Lexical accuracy was low and similar in both groups.

Error density further differentiates the groups: DysG learners showed more stable grammatical control, as they produced fewer errors and more error-free clauses. In contrast, self-correction patterns point to stronger monitoring in MixG learners, who showed greater accuracy. Nonetheless, both groups remained below 50% success, indicating that self-monitoring skills are still developing.

Overall, these findings suggest a trade-off between grammatical control and monitoring. The DysG appears to achieve greater accuracy in production, whereas the MixG shows more effective self-monitoring. This pattern is consistent with accounts of cognitive constraints in L2 learners with SpLDs, as phonological memory limitations affect inflectional control (Daloiso 2017), while working-memory constraints impact lexical retrieval (Gathercole, Baddeley 1990).

However, these patterns should be interpreted with caution, given the substantial within-group variability discussed above.

4.2.3 Complexity

Linguistic complexity revealed partly divergent patterns across groups. The MixG showed slightly greater clause-level elaboration, producing more verb arguments per AS-unit than the DysG. However, argument complexity at the verb-phrase level was comparable, suggesting similar internal organisation of predicates.

Lexical and morphological range was marginally higher in the DysG, as indicated by greater type-token ratio, as well as a higher number of AS-units. By contrast, the MixG produced more subordinate clauses, showing a tendency toward greater syntactic embedding. Interestingly, despite producing fewer subordinate clauses, the DysG showed higher accuracy, indicating more stable syntactic control. This pattern is consistent with previous findings on dyslexic learners' L2 performance (Pérez-Litago et al. 2025; Helland,

Kaasa 2005); it also highlights the trade-off between complexity and control, as increased syntactic elaboration may come at the expense of accuracy under processing constraints.

Overall, the MixG appears to favour more elaborated but less controlled constructions, whereas the DysG produces somewhat less complex output with greater accuracy in the structures attempted. These tendencies may reflect different processing demands during real-time production.

5 Discussion and Implications

This study examined CAF patterns in the EFL oral performance of Italian-speaking university learners, considering both instructional type and SpLD subtype. Although results are not generalisable and no causal claims can be made, the findings suggest tentative trends that may inform future research.

RQ1. What are the CAF profiles of students participating in intensive and extensive instructional programmes?

Our findings point to a fluency-accuracy trade-off. The InG produced faster speech with fewer pauses but more false starts and self-corrections, showing less controlled output and lower grammatical accuracy. By contrast, the ExG showed greater accuracy with fewer errors and more error-free clauses, but longer pauses and less frequent repair, suggesting more deliberate production. One tentative interpretation is that intensive exposure may favour fluency gains, whereas extensive exposure supports accuracy and control. In terms of complexity, the InG displayed greater syntactic and lexical elaboration but lower subordination accuracy, while the ExG showed more controlled use of complex structures. These patterns suggest that instructional format may shape how learners allocate their resources across CAF dimensions.

RQ2. What are the CAF profiles observed among learners with dyslexia and among learners with multiple SpLDs?

Distinct profiles emerged across subtypes. MixG learners showed greater processing load, reflected in more frequent and longer pauses, increased self-corrections, and lower accuracy in morphology and subordination. By contrast, DysG learners produced faster and more accurate speech, though with less successful self-monitoring. This may suggest that multiple SpLDs impose greater cognitive demands, affecting both fluency and accuracy, whereas dyslexic learners may prioritise fluent production while maintaining relatively stable grammatical control. Variation within groups may reflect individual differences in cognitive and strategic profiles.

RQ3. What CAF patterns characterize the oral production of learners with dyslexia and of those with multiple SpLDs across intensive and extensive instructional formats?

Across both instructional conditions, DysG learners tended to prioritise fluency, producing faster speech with fewer pauses and relatively stable accuracy, but less effective self-monitoring. MixG learners showed less fluent production but more frequent and successful self-correction, indicating stronger monitoring skills. This suggests a potential interaction between learner profile and instructional format: extensive exposure may particularly support accuracy and monitoring in MixG learners, while DysG learners' fluency appears more stable across conditions, with more limited gains in control. Overall, CAF patterns appear to reflect a dynamic interplay between cognitive constraints and instructional factors.

Existing research on SpLDs rarely applies the CAF framework to L2 oral performance. This study addresses that gap, offering new insights into an underexplored area. While the CAF framework typically highlights trade-offs among its three dimensions, findings here suggest that, for learners with SpLDs, these trade-offs could be shaped not only by interlanguage development but also by cognitive constraints specific to this population. The InG demonstrated greater fluency and syntactic complexity but lower accuracy, whereas the ExG produced more accurate yet less fluent and structurally complex speech. These findings suggest that different types of instructional exposure may influence the interplay among fluency, accuracy, and complexity in distinct ways. Future research using a pre-test/post-test design could provide empirical evidence to examine this possibility more directly.

Distinct CAF patterns between learners with dyslexia and those with multiple SpLDs further suggest the impact of cognitive profiles on oral performance. Dyslexic learners produced faster, more consistent speech, while those with multiple SpLDs showed increased pausing and hesitation, likely due to greater working memory demands that hinder simultaneous control of accuracy and complexity.

Pedagogically, these results emphasise the need for flexible, differentiated instruction that addresses specific cognitive challenges in L2 acquisition among learners with SpLDs. In light of the present findings, and subject to confirmation through studies with larger samples, conducting a needs analysis prior to instructional planning appears important, as different learner profiles may require tailored pedagogical accommodations. In our sample, learners with dyslexia tended to prioritize meaning over form, showing relatively fewer difficulties with fluency but greater challenges in accuracy and, occasionally, complexity. For these learners, intensive instruction that emphasizes strategies for monitoring and self-correcting speech

production may be particularly beneficial. In contrast, learners with multiple SpLD profiles, who experience a broader range of difficulties, including challenges related to fluency, might benefit more from extensive instructional programmes that provide targeted support for L2 oral production planning, monitoring, and self-assessment.

Taken together, our results underscore the importance of adopting a balanced perspective when assessing learners with SpLDs. Although fluency issues may be the most immediately noticeable, instructors should also consider accuracy and complexity within the CAF framework to more fully capture learners' underlying L2 competence and progress.

For a correct interpretation of the findings, readers should consider that the present study is based on a relatively small, although carefully matched, sample. This inevitably limits the statistical power of the analyses and may not fully capture the variability within the broader SpLD population. Future research should therefore seek to increase the robustness of the findings by involving larger samples and more normally distributed data.

Further studies could also expand the pedagogical implications emerging from the present research. In particular, longitudinal designs would help investigate how CAF dimensions evolve over time in relation to learners' cognitive profiles and different forms of instructional exposure. Moreover, the integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches may provide deeper insights into learners' strategies, experiences and perceptions, thereby supporting the development of more targeted and inclusive instructional practices. Finally, future research might examine the impact of different task types on CAF performance, with the aim of informing more task-sensitive approaches to language teaching and assessment.

Appendix 1 Statistical Analysis by Intervention Programme

Table 1 Descriptives of variables related to the fluency dimension between intervention programme

	Intervention Programme	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Pause density	Extensive	0.302	0.280	0.171	0.0476	0.560
	Intensive	0.269	0.213	0.159	0.0629	0.575
Speech rate	Extensive	69.803	57.197	30.410	30.5202	149.643
	Intensive	73.123	76.474	22.003	31.3725	105.169
Number of pauses	Extensive	39.750	38.000	21.807	10	79
	Intensive	35.438	29.000	25.414	6	99
Replacements	Extensive	1.250	1.000	1.390	0	4
	Intensive	1.500	1.000	1.265	0	4
False starts	Extensive	7.063	5.000	5.272	1	18
	Intensive	8.875	8.500	5.045	1	21
Reformulations	Extensive	2.625	2.000	1.668	0	6
	Intensive	5.000	4.000	4.211	0	14
Number of self-corrections	Extensive	4.313	3.500	2.938	0	11
	Intensive	6.875	6.000	4.703	0	17
MLR	Extensive	8.247	4.381	9.500	1.2394	38.091
	Intensive	8.856	6.896	6.757	1.9100	26.778
Repetitions	Extensive	5.500	4.000	5.598	0	20
	Intensive	8.750	7.500	5.335	3	23

Table 2 Descriptives of variables related to the accuracy dimension between intervention programme

	Intervention Programme	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Self-correction density	Extensive	0.1153	0.1000	0.0878	0.00000	0.308
	Intensive	0.1080	0.1152	0.0639	0.00000	0.211
Accurate self-correction density	Extensive	0.4596	0.3667	0.3337	0.00000	1.000
	Intensive	0.3764	0.3333	0.2656	0.00000	0.857
Error-free clauses	Extensive	0.2306	0.2550	0.1537	0.00000	0.500
	Intensive	0.1588	0.1800	0.1549	0.00000	0.620
Error density	Extensive	0.2451	0.2066	0.1183	0.08012	0.455
	Intensive	0.3434	0.3372	0.1132	0.15017	0.586
Lexical accuracy	Extensive	0.0831	0.0960	0.0434	0.00794	0.158
	Intensive	0.1069	0.1054	0.0450	0.03101	0.167
Verbal accuracy	Extensive	0.7688	0.8400	0.1964	0.23000	1.000
	Intensive	0.6794	0.7350	0.2432	0.00000	0.930

	Intervention Programme	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Plural accuracy	Extensive	0.7636	0.9087	0.2800	0.28571	1.000
	Intensive	0.6147	0.6667	0.2792	0.00000	1.000

Table 3 Descriptives of variables related to the complexity dimension between intervention programme

	Intervention Programme	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Subordination density	Extensive	0.132	0.1043	0.127	0.0000	0.400
	Intensive	0.281	0.2250	0.170	0.0714	0.714
Accurate subordination density	Extensive	0.175	0.0000	0.250	0.0000	0.667
	Intensive	0.278	0.0500	0.365	0.0000	1.000
Total AS-units	Extensive	17.000	16.0000	6.938	7	30
	Intensive	14.563	14.5000	5.796	5	26
TTR	Extensive	2.208	2.1502	0.287	1.6098	2.619
	Intensive	2.447	2.4779	0.470	1.3571	3.529
Verb form diversity	Extensive	0.420	0.4037	0.141	0.1538	0.714
	Intensive	0.456	0.4393	0.109	0.3125	0.647
Average VA for VP	Extensive	1.906	2.0000	0.259	1.3750	2.308
	Intensive	1.856	1.8062	0.561	1.0000	3.071
Average VA for AS unit	Extensive	2.333	2.2792	0.450	1.3750	3.000
	Intensive	2.741	2.6389	0.978	1.2632	5.111

Appendix 2 Statistical Analysis by SpLDs Subtype

Table 4 Descriptives for variables related to the fluency dimension between SpLD types

	SpLD_Type	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Pause density	Dyslexia	0.260	0.214	0.145	0.0750	0.560
	Mixed SpLDs	0.291	0.237	0.178	0.0476	0.541
Speech rate	Dyslexia	74.125	58.868	34.015	36.0377	149.643
	Mixed SpLDs	72.588	70.809	19.129	49.8113	103.059
Replacements	Dyslexia	1.273	1	1.489	0	4
	Mixed SpLDs	1.643	1.500	1.277	0	4
False starts	Dyslexia	7.545	6	6.299	1	21
	Mixed SpLDs	8.214	8.000	4.336	1	18
Reformulations	Dyslexia	3.727	3	3.797	0	14
	Mixed SpLDs	3.857	3.500	2.248	0	9
Number of self-corrections	Dyslexia	5.455	4	4.824	0	16
	Mixed SpLDs	6.000	6.000	2.449	1	10
MLR	Dyslexia	10.412	4.184	11.813	1.8250	38.091
	Mixed SpLDs	7.863	5.824	5.731	2.7500	21.500
Repetitions	Dyslexia	5.727	4	4.901	0	18
	Mixed SpLDs	7.929	6.500	6.330	1	23

Table 5 Descriptives of variables related to the accuracy dimension between SpLD types

	SpLD_Type	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Self-correction density	Dyslexia	0.1232	0.0952	0.1006	0.00000	0.308
	Mixed SpLDs	0.1123	0.1010	0.0544	0.04762	0.240
Accurate self-correction density	Dyslexia	0.3754	0.3125	0.3483	0.00000	1.000
	Mixed SpLDs	0.4910	0.3842	0.2255	0.00000	0.750
Error-free clauses	Dyslexia	0.2327	0.2000	0.1661	0.00000	0.500
	Mixed SpLDs	0.1443	0.1300	0.1284	0.00000	0.400
Error density	Dyslexia	0.2590	0.2211	0.1397	0.08012	0.455
	Mixed SpLDs	0.3188	0.3241	0.1217	0.13636	0.586
Lexical accuracy	Dyslexia	0.0861	0.0988	0.0515	0.00794	0.158
	Mixed SpLDs	0.1083	0.1016	0.0398	0.03810	0.167
Verbal accuracy	Dyslexia	0.7155	0.7700	0.2221	0.23000	1.000
	Mixed SpLDs	0.7050	0.8100	0.2470	0.00000	0.920
Plural accuracy	Dyslexia	0.7076	0.8889	0.3544	0.00000	1.000
	Mixed SpLDs	0.6422	0.6458	0.2747	0.28571	1.000

Table 6 Descriptives for variables related to the complexity dimension between SpLD types

	SpLD_Type	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Subordination density	Dyslexia	0.173	0.158	0.131	0.000	0.364
	Mixed SpLDs	0.204	0.177	0.153	0.000	0.500
Accurate subordination density	Dyslexia	0.247	0.000	0.333	0.000	1.000
	Mixed SpLDs	0.174	0.000	0.256	0.000	0.667
Total AS-units	Dyslexia	16.455	15	6.089	10	30
	Mixed SpLDs	16.000	16.500	4.756	9	26
TTR	Dyslexia	2.328	2.414	0.267	2.000	2.705
	Mixed SpLDs	2.480	2.508	0.426	1.946	3.529
Verb form diversity	Dyslexia	0.421	0.450	0.121	0.154	0.538
	Mixed SpLDs	0.416	0.383	0.118	0.267	0.714
Average VA for VP	Dyslexia	1.849	2.000	0.393	1.000	2.333
	Mixed SpLDs	1.911	1.876	0.398	1.000	2.875
Average VA for AS unit	Dyslexia	2.372	2.167	0.705	1.375	3.636
	Mixed SpLDs	2.602	2.404	0.902	1.263	5.111

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Strumenti e processi della glottodidattica aumentata L'impatto dell'IA tra modelli teorici e sperimentazione nel contesto del russo L2/LS

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Abstract This study proposes an 'augmented language teaching' paradigm, examining the pedagogical potential of AI in foreign language teaching. Grounded in the CEFR Companion Volume (2020) and DigCompEdu, it distinguishes between general-purpose LLMs and vertical educational platforms. Using Russian L2/FL as a primary case study, the paper analyses AI-supported practices for linguistic mediation, production, and personalised learning. By addressing both opportunities and challenges, the study adopts a *human-in-the-loop* approach, reaffirming the teacher's central role as a strategic mediator and designer of AI-enhanced learning processes.

Keywords Artificial intelligence (AI). Augmented language teaching. Russian as a foreign language. Linguistic mediation. Teacher digital competence. CEFR.

Sommario 1 Introduzione. – 2 Quadro teorico. – 3 Strumenti IA per la didattica. – 4 Applicazioni pratiche dei modelli e delle piattaforme IA nella didattica di LS e L2. – 5 Criticità e limiti. – 6 Conclusioni e prospettive future.



Peer review

Submitted 2026-03-05
Accepted 2026-05-08
Published 2026-07-14

Open access

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1 Introduzione

Negli ultimi anni, l'Intelligenza Artificiale (IA) ha assunto un ruolo centrale nel dibattito sulla didattica delle lingue straniere. Questo ha innescato una «rivoluzione silenziosa» (Katelhön 2025) che sta ridefinendo strumenti, pratiche e competenze richieste ai docenti. La diffusione dei modelli linguistici di grandi dimensioni (*Large Language Models*, LLM) e delle piattaforme educative verticali ha aperto nuove possibilità per personalizzare l'apprendimento e la mediazione linguistica. Tuttavia, sorgono interrogativi importanti di natura pedagogica, etica e metodologica (Aljohani 2025).

Nel contesto dell'educazione linguistica contemporanea, questi sviluppi si allineano alle indicazioni del Consiglio d'Europa (2020), che attribuisce un ruolo centrale alla mediazione come competenza fondamentale per l'apprendente plurilingue. La letteratura più recente sottolinea come l'IA possa essere un catalizzatore per «approcci plurali e proposte pedagogiche innovative» (Ciaramita 2025), a condizione che l'integrazione tecnologica sia supportata da una solida formazione glottodidattica. In questo senso, il quadro *DigCompEdu* (Redecker 2017) resta il riferimento per definire la competenza digitale del docente, vista non come una semplice abilità tecnica, ma come una capacità progettuale e critica (Diadori 2022).

In questo contesto, l'IA non deve essere vista come un semplice automatismo per produrre *input*. Deve essere considerata un potenziale mediatore cognitivo e linguistico la cui efficacia dipende strettamente dalle scelte didattiche dell'insegnante. Questa prospettiva è particolarmente rilevante nell'insegnamento del russo come lingua straniera (LS) o seconda (L2). Questa area presenta una complessità morfologica e culturale che richiede un'attenta mediazione per evitare i rischi di una delega cognitiva acritica (Kessler 2018).

Il presente contributo analizza le potenzialità degli strumenti di IA nella didattica del russo LS/L2, distinguendo tra modelli generalisti e piattaforme verticali. L'obiettivo è duplice: fornire un inquadramento teorico che colleghi IA e competenze del docente e presentare applicazioni didattiche concrete, calibrate sui livelli del QCER. L'articolo adotta un approccio *human-in-the-loop*, riconoscendo nel docente il «regista» (Holec 1981) dell'interazione tra apprendente e tecnologia, responsabile della dimensione educativa e inclusiva del processo.

2 Quadro teorico

2.1 Intelligenza Artificiale e CALL nella didattica delle lingue

Con lo sviluppo delle tecnologie digitali, il campo dell'apprendimento linguistico assistito dal computer (*computer-assisted language learning*, CALL) non è rimasto immutato. Inizialmente limitato a semplici esercizi ripetitivi (*drill practice*), oggi include sistemi dotati di intelligenza artificiale capaci di dialogare con chi impara. Mentre un tempo i software proponevano solo frasi da completare o regole da memorizzare, ora permettono esperienze linguistiche fluide e su misura. Cambia così la natura stessa degli strumenti: non più oggetti statici ma entità reattive, in grado di rispondere, correggere, generare *feedback* e modificarsi durante l'interazione in tempo reale. Tale trasformazione segna uno spostamento profondo nel modo di concepire la tecnologia nell'insegnamento, come osservato in diversi studi recenti. Piuttosto che sostituire l'insegnante, questi ambienti ampliano le possibilità di pratica autonoma e significativa (Stockwell 2012; Aljohani 2025).

Recenti ricerche hanno analizzato quanto le app con intelligenza artificiale possano essere utili nell'insegnamento linguistico, mostrando risultati incoraggianti nel potenziare abilità chiave. Nonostante ciò, emerge da alcune indagini preliminari (Al-Obaydi et al. 2025) che i modelli linguistici avanzati sostengono in modo misurabile lo sviluppo del lessico, della comprensione testuale, della produzione scritta, dell'ascolto e dell'espressione orale (*core language skills*). Da parte loro, revisioni ampie dei dati disponibili (Aljohani 2025) indicano che la presenza dell'IA rende gli spazi d'apprendimento più reattivi e stimolanti, tuttavia richiedono una pianificazione accurata per non limitarsi a usare la tecnologia senza criterio; effetti secondari positivi includono un aumento nella partecipazione attiva e minore tensione durante le attività (Bekdas 2025).

Nelle situazioni dove si impara una lingua, l'intelligenza artificiale compare spesso sotto forma di *chatbot* che dialogano, programmi che correggono errori in autonomia oppure motori capaci di produrre testi su richiesta – come accade con ChatGPT o altri modelli analoghi LLM. A volte questi sistemi offrono risposte a quesiti posti dagli studenti, altre volte creano esercizi costruiti sulle loro necessità specifiche. Grazie a essi, chi studia può praticare più frequentemente, persino senza avere qualcuno davanti con cui parlare faccia a faccia; ciò aiuta nel gestire quel senso di tensione comune all'inizio dell'apprendimento. Ma non basta inserirli così come sono: i vantaggi dell'intelligenza artificiale emergono soltanto se vengono usati dentro compiti pensati con criterio didattico e guidati da un insegnante

presente, capace di riflettere criticamente sull'uso fatto. (Peña-Acuña, Durão 2024).

A offrire un apporto chiave allo studio concettuale dell'integrazione tra IA e CALL sono Xu, Chen e Zhang (2024), i quali analizzano la relazione fra persone e tecnologie intelligenti come uno spazio dinamico dove si modula insieme l'apprendimento delle lingue, influenzando così il senso di padronanza del discente. In questa prospettiva emergono tre diverse forme d'interazione:

1. *AI-directed*: docente come facilitatore e guida l'interazione;
2. *AI/teacher-codirected*: docente e intelligenza artificiale progettano insieme l'attività;
3. *AI/teacher/learner-codirected*: l'apprendimento prende forma quando studente, insegnante e intelligenza artificiale decidono insieme il percorso (apprendimento triadico). Il ruolo dello studente non si limita a ricevere, ma contribuisce nel dare senso ai contenuti attraverso interazioni condivise. Xu, Chen e Zhang (2024) osservano che questa costruzione avviene grazie alla partecipazione dinamica dei tre attori principali.

Questa varietà di approcci mette in luce un aspetto fondamentale: l'intelligenza artificiale non elimina il ruolo dell'insegnante, piuttosto ne potenzia gli strumenti quando resta lui a guidare il percorso formativo e a portarne la responsabilità (Han et al. 2023). A riguardo, studi recenti segnalano due problemi rilevanti: da una parte, si può generare una dipendenza cognitiva, con conseguente calo nell'impegno dello studente qualora l'AI operi senza intervento umano (Kessler 2018); dall'altra, emergono dubbi morali e mancanza di chiarezza nell'utilizzo dei modelli linguistici avanzati, specie per quanto riguarda distorsioni (*bias*) linguistiche o culturali incorporate nei sistemi (Yan et al. 2024).

Alla fine, funzionano meglio gli strumenti d'intelligenza artificiale quando non si limitano alla tecnologia usata, ma vengono inseriti dentro compiti (*task*) ben strutturati e accompagnati chiaramente dall'insegnante. Una scelta di questo genere va d'accordo con i punti di vista costruttivisti e socioculturali riguardo all'apprendimento linguistico (Lantolf, Thorne 2006), dove conta molto un'interazione ricca, plasmata da contesti sociali e culturali specifici. Dal momento che il quadro esiste, l'uso dell'IA aiuta a produrre testi reali, stimola ragionamenti sul linguaggio stesso e permette adattamenti nei percorsi didattici in linea col QCER, mantenendo al centro la guida attiva e il controllo del docente.

2.2 QCER, mediazione linguistica e competenza digitale del docente

Oggi, il QCER (Quadro Comune Europeo di Riferimento per le lingue) del 2001 – insieme al suo aggiornamento nel 2020 (Volume Complementare) – funge da riferimento essenziale nell’insegnamento delle lingue straniere. Nonostante la sua origine datata, resta centrale nella definizione di traguardi didattici e profili linguistici dai livelli A1 a C2. Invece di restringersi alle abilità tradizionali, la versione recente inserisce esplicitamente la mediazione linguistica e interculturale. Questa competenza va oltre la conversione testuale: richiede attiva riorganizzazione dei contenuti. Chi apprende deve mediare tra persone con diversa padronanza della lingua, modificando registro e stile secondo la situazione. A tal fine, utilizza anche risorse cognitive e conoscenze socioculturali per costruire intesa. Soprattutto in ambienti digitali, questa funzione trova nuove possibilità concrete. Strumenti basati sull’intelligenza artificiale, infatti, possono regolare automaticamente la difficoltà del testo proposto, offrendo supporto durante il processo di *scaffolding* linguistico. Parallelamente, aiutano gli studenti a negoziare significati in presenza di differenze linguistiche e culturali marcate. Tuttavia, l’efficacia dipende dall’allineamento tra tecnologia e processi reali d’apprendimento (Council of Europe 2020).

Anche il termine mediazione aiuta a vedere l’insegnante non come trasmettitore, bensì come guida attiva nell’uso delle risorse digitali. Piuttosto che limitarsi ad applicare software per automatismi ripetitivi, serve pensare esperienze d’apprendimento dove intelligenza artificiale e ambienti virtuali sostengono lo sviluppo reale di abilità comunicative, grazie a scelte didattiche ben calibrate. Così, quel processo collega strumenti tecnologici ed esperienza formativa profonda, facendo sì che chi impara affronti materiali digitali con spirito critico, intenzionalità, mirando a padronanze avanzate. Questa visione ha ricevuto nuova enfasi negli ultimi studi, descritta talvolta come cambiamento graduale ma radicale, «rivoluzione silenziosa» (Katelhön 2025), nel quale l’intelligenza artificiale stimola pratiche educative rinnovate, puntando soprattutto sulla crescita professionale dei docenti (Ciaramita 2025).

Secondo Redecker (2017) nel quadro *DigCompEdu*, la competenza digitale degli insegnanti comprende sei aree fondamentali. A differenza di modelli più semplicistici, questa struttura si basa su livelli progressivi di padronanza. Ogni dimensione riguarda un ambito specifico dell’uso tecnologico nell’insegnamento. Sebbene non siano gerarchiche, le aree spesso si influenzano a vicenda nella pratica quotidiana. In aggiunta alle capacità tecniche, include anche scelte pedagogiche consapevoli. L’integrazione delle risorse digitali avviene con attenzione ai contesti reali delle classi:

- a. gestione e organizzazione dell'apprendimento digitale;
- b. pianificazione e progettazione di attività: pianificare significa organizzare passaggi prima di agire; disegnare un percorso chiaro aiuta a muoversi con sicurezza;
- c. valutazione digitale;
- d. facilitazione della collaborazione;
- e. sviluppo della competenza digitale degli studenti;
- f. Promuovere pratiche inclusive. Questo punto richiede attenzione ai dettagli concreti. Quando ci si concentra sul linguaggio, emerge un quadro chiaro: chi insegna deve scegliere strumenti digitali adatti, anche basati su intelligenza artificiale, tenendo conto degli scopi comunicativi, del livello QCER dei discenti e delle forme di supporto utili a favorire un apprendimento reale. Secondo Diadori (2022), questo non è solo uso consapevole della tecnologia; piuttosto, riguarda una padronanza educativa avanzata che combina sapere digitale e metodo didattico per costruire percorsi formativi mirati.

Recenti ricerche indicano che insegnanti capaci nell'uso della lingua e nel maneggio delle tecnologie riescono a sfruttare meglio gli strumenti con intelligenza artificiale. Piattaforme personalizzate, insieme a sistemi per correggere errori in modo automatico (*automatic corrective feedback*), offrono attività adatte al livello dei discenti, suggeriscono miglioramenti specifici oppure stimolano il pensiero critico sulla lingua stessa (Cinganotto, Montanucci 2025). Pur tuttavia, tutto ciò funziona solamente se chi guida l'apprendimento sa coordinare i momenti didattici, controlla ciò che produce l'intelligenza artificiale e interviene nei punti cruciali: solo così si evita che lo studio diventi superficiale o che ci si affidi troppo agli strumenti digitali (Kessler 2018; Peña-Acuña, Durão 2024).

Da non sottovalutare è il modo in cui si può modulare l'apprendimento su misura. Attraverso gli strumenti digitali, chi insegna riesce a calibrare le proposte formative rispetto a capacità diverse, modalità di pensiero individuali e background vari, aprendo spazi per partecipazione attiva e impegno consapevole. Immaginando un'aula reale o virtuale, applicazioni basate sull'intelligenza artificiale offrono situazioni di dialogo simulato oppure affiancano nella composizione testuale con indicazioni puntuali sui termini e sulla forma, ma sempre entro un quadro guidato dall'insegnante. Queste azioni configurano un ambiente didattico capace di adattarsi agli apprendenti, allineato alle prospettive socio-culturali che vedono nell'interazione mediata la via privilegiata per sviluppare padronanza linguistica autentica (Vygotsky 1978; Lantolf, Thorne 2006).

Alla fine, mettere insieme QCER, mediazione linguistica e *DigCompEdu* permette di creare una struttura chiara per analizzare le abilità degli studenti e quanto bene funzionino gli strumenti

digitali. Da questo punto di vista, l'intelligenza artificiale affianca la pianificazione delle lezioni senza prendere il posto dell'insegnante; è sempre lui a stabilire gli scopi comunicativi, scegliere gli esercizi più pertinenti e verificare che la tecnologia serva ad apprendimenti reali, su misura e attenti al contesto culturale. Quando si combinano competenze digitali, capacità di mediazione e livelli del QCER nasce così un modello concettuale essenziale, utile prima di usare strumenti specifici di intelligenza artificiale ed elaborare compiti concreti in classe.

3 Strumenti IA per la didattica

3.1 Modelli linguistici generativi generalisti per la didattica delle lingue seconde e straniere

Nei moderni approcci all'apprendimento linguistico assistito dal computer, spiccano i modelli generativi per il linguaggio. Grazie ai progressi nell'intelligenza artificiale e nell'apprendimento profondo, tali sistemi interpretano, elaborano e creano testi naturali con flessibilità. Adattano le risposte al contesto, allo scopo della comunicazione non meno che alla preparazione dello studente. A differenza dei primi strumenti digitali per lingue, incentrati su esercizi rigidi o prove valutative, oggi si aprono scenari diversi. Interazioni complesse prendono forma: dialoghi simulati, parafrasi supportate e suggerimenti mirati stimolano ragionamento critico e riflessione attiva. Queste caratteristiche li distinguono nettamente dalle versioni precedenti, ampliando le possibilità didattiche concrete (Stockwell 2012; Aljohani 2025).

I modelli generativi generalisti nascono per affrontare due questioni chiave nell'insegnamento linguistico. Uno stimolo arriva dalla richiesta di fornire feedback immediati, duttili, calibrati sulle differenze tra gli studenti. Un fattore parallelo riguarda l'opportunità di costruire contesti di studio vivaci e partecipativi, incentrati sull'utilizzo reale della lingua piuttosto che sulla semplice applicazione di schemi grammaticali (Al-Obaydi et al. 2025). Grazie a una preparazione basata su grandi quantità di testi multilingui, i LLM possono regolare il materiale secondo le soglie previste dal QCER, favorendo avanzamenti mirati e itinerari d'apprendimento su misura (Xu et al. 2024).

Qui, a guidare il processo resta sempre l'insegnante: figura fondamentale, mai davvero rimpiazzabile. Per usare bene i modelli linguistici di grandi dimensioni in classe, servono abilità precise nel creare sollecitazioni mirate – ossia saper porre domande ben definite, adatte al contesto e legate ai principi dell'apprendimento (*prompt*

engineering). Quello che esce dai sistemi automatici non è per definizione utile dal punto di vista educativo; occorre invece un filtro critico capace di verificarne la precisione lessicale, l'appropriatezza nell'uso e l'allineamento agli scopi didattici previsti (Peña-Acuña, Durão 2024). Da questo punto di vista, tali tecnologie non prendono il posto del docente, bensì agiscono affianco come risorse per facilitare lo scambio verbale e culturale, arricchendo le opzioni progettuali e aprendo spazio a compiti più personalizzati e significativi (Cinganotto, Montanucci 2025).

I modelli generativi generalisti presi in considerazione nel presente studio includono ChatGPT, Gemini e Gemma. Di questi, uno attira più attenzione nell'insegnamento: Gemma. Non è un semplice sistema chiuso, bensì un modello *open-weight* firmato Google DeepMind, proposto in varianti multiple per taglia e capacità. Offre molto oltre alla scrittura automatica; permette adattamenti testuali, compila documenti ordinati, genera slide concise e trasforma parole in immagini descrittive. Grazie a queste abilità miste, si estende l'uso pratico degli LLM, aprendo scenari dove testo, grafica e schematizzazione collaborano (Leiker et al. 2023). Senza dimenticare che essere accessibile facilita la gestione delle informazioni e favorisce modifiche su misura – qualità utile quando si lavora con enti didattici.

In ottica pratica, i modelli linguistici avanzati trovano spazio in diversi settori dell'insegnamento delle lingue straniere. Si prestano a guidare la scrittura degli studenti offrendo esempi testuali, termini appropriati e schemi organizzativi (Han et al. 2023). Grazie a riduzioni chiare, *rephrasings* o quesiti mirati, aiutano a decifrare testi difficili. In scenari comunicativi plausibili, permettono esperienze conversazionali simulate e giochi di ruolo (*role-play*). Quando la classe include livelli disparati, questi strumenti accompagnano processi personalizzati. Anche nell'ambito della mediazione tra culture e sistemi linguistici rispondono alle capacità richieste dal QCER.

Uno sguardo attento mostra che i modelli linguistici generativi funzionano bene nell'insegnamento delle lingue seconde e straniere. Anche se servono prudenza e guida da parte del docente, permettono adattamenti precisi ai ritmi degli studenti. La capacità di affinare le abilità comunicative emerge con chiarezza in diversi scenari d'uso. Gestiscono bene strutture linguistiche articolate, spesso ostiche per gli apprendenti. Il loro peso specifico nella scuola moderna continua a salire, come indicato dai dati recenti (Yan et al. 2024).

3.2 Piattaforme verticali per la didattica delle lingue seconde e straniere

Oltre ai comuni modelli linguistici, nel settore dell'insegnamento si diffondono applicazioni mirate alla formazione linguistica. Queste soluzioni combinano dialoghi guidati (*tutoring* conversazionale), itinerari d'apprendimento organizzati e risposte correttive generate dal sistema, talvolta accompagnate dagli elementi di *gamification*, verifica continua e regolazione automatica del livello di difficoltà. Mentre gli strumenti generici non perseguono obiettivi educativi precisi, i programmi specializzati sono costruiti attorno a metodologie pensate per coltivare l'abilità nella seconda o terza lingua fin dalle basi (Aljohani 2025).

Ciò che contraddistingue queste piattaforme è l'offerta di spazi pensati per imparare una lingua, con materiali suddivisi nei livelli del QCER e funzioni che tracciano l'avanzamento dell'utente. A rendere questi sistemi utili è la loro abilità nel seguire lo studente lungo percorsi già strutturati, mediante esercizi via via più complessi e logicamente collegati, riducendo il carico sul docente nell'organizzare ogni singola attività. Tali ambienti si rivelano particolarmente adatti quando gli studenti lavorano da soli, in modalità mista (*blended*) oppure in gruppi numerosi, situazioni in cui personalizzare l'insegnamento diventa difficile (Cinganotto, Montanucci 2025).

Tra i servizi oggi più utilizzati emergono Praktika, Talkpal, MagicSchool e Diffit, ognuno con obiettivi operativi differenti. A differenza degli altri, Praktika punta sul potenziamento dell'ascolto e della comprensione linguistica, offrendo registrazioni e interazioni vocali costruite su scenari realistici. Il sistema incoraggia un apprendimento graduale, sostenuto da risposte in tempo reale che evidenziano imprecisioni indicando possibili aggiustamenti, fungendo così da supporto mirato nell'acquisizione delle abilità essenziali (*core skills*) (Al-Obaydi et al. 2025).

Talkpal, invece, punta a migliorare la capacità di parlare e interagire in modo efficace. Grazie a *chatbot* conversazionali intelligenti, offre situazioni simulate simili a incontri reali nella vita di tutti i giorni oppure nel lavoro, dove lo studente può provare diversi *role-play* con struttura chiara. Ogni errore viene corretto subito; inoltre vengono dati consigli mirati sulla lingua, favorendo così una comprensione più profonda del messaggio e un uso più preciso dello stile comunicativo adatto al contesto. Questa modalità aumenta in maniera netta l'impegno da parte di chi impara (Bekdaş 2025).

A differenza di altri sistemi, MagicSchool mette a disposizione diversi strumenti pensati apposta per organizzare lezioni incentrate sulla scrittura. Non soltanto permette di costruire esercizi passo dopo passo, ma include anche indicazioni sul vocabolario da usare e modalità per verificare il proprio lavoro (Han et al. 2023). In contrasto,

Diffit si distingue perché cambia dinamicamente la complessità degli esercizi durante lo svolgimento. Questa flessibilità risponde bene alle necessità di gruppi con competenze miste, semplifica la preparazione rapida di materiali mirati ed incoraggia gli studenti a sentirsi più sicuri nelle proprie abilità (Leiker et al. 2023; Xu et al. 2024).

Insieme, le piattaforme specializzate creano spazi organizzati capaci di affiancare i modelli linguistici ampi. A seconda delle mete educative e del quadro europeo, chi insegna può scegliere con maggiore precisione grazie alla sinergia fra questi strumenti. Pur senza sostituire il ruolo critico dell'insegnante (Katelhön 2025), si rivelano appoggi utili per adattare gli studi alle singole persone e costruire percorsi nell'ambito linguistico più equilibrati.

4 Applicazioni pratiche dei modelli e delle piattaforme IA nella didattica di LS e L2

Prima si sono descritte le qualità fondamentali dei modelli linguistici ampi e delle piattaforme specializzate nella didattica delle lingue. Ora l'attenzione passa all'uso pratico di tali risorse nell'insegnamento, mostrando come costruire esercitazioni che coltivino abilità comunicative, adattino i percorsi di apprendimento a ciascuno e favoriscano la traduzione non solo verbale ma anche culturale.

Nonostante l'ampia diffusione dell'intelligenza artificiale, qui si sceglie una struttura flessibile e collegata tra parti distinte, capace di unire sistemi a vasta scala – adatti soprattutto alla creazione scritta o alle interazioni simulate – insieme a spazi digitali specializzati, costruiti per supportare tappe progressive e risposte rapide (Aljohani 2025). A svolgere il compito principale resta chi insegna: figura attenta, presente, regista discreto. Questa visione nasce da approcci pedagogici incentrati sulla persona, nei quali i mezzi tecnologici entrano come sostegno, mai come obiettivo ultimo, volti al benessere cognitivo ed emotivo di chi apprende, oltre che a risultati più solidi nell'apprendimento linguistico (Balboni 2018). Colui che guida l'insegnamento accompagna i discenti nell'utilizzo critico dei dispositivi, nel confronto sui significati condivisi, nella personalizzazione del materiale rispetto ai vari stadi del Quadro Comune Europeo (Katelhön 2025).

La progettazione delle attività mette al centro l'adattamento ai singoli, la varietà nei percorsi, l'inserimento di tutti. In linea con i principi del *DigCompEdu* e con studi aggiornati sulla preparazione degli insegnanti (Cinganotto, Montanucci 2025), usare intelligenza artificiale riduce ostacoli legati al pensiero o ai sensi. Strumenti tecnologici danno la possibilità di regolare il livello linguistico quando gli studenti sono molto diversi tra loro (Leiker et al. 2023), insieme a funzioni mirate per chi ha difficoltà educative particolari o disabilità: si

passa da forme multiple di presentare informazioni fino ad alleggerire lo sforzo mentale e sensoriale (Peña-Acuña, Durão 2024).

Soprattutto quando si insegnano lingue ricche di forme e strutture articolate, diventa cruciale ridurre il carico mentale che può ostacolare l'apprendimento. A scopo illustrativo, in questa sezione si utilizza come caso di studio la lingua russa come L2/LS. Questa lingua offre una prova efficace del modo in cui sistemi automatici e ambienti digitali mirati aiutino a interiorizzare norme sintattiche intricate e a costruire frasi sensate in uno spazio controllato e inclusivo (Ciaramita 2025; Al-Obaydi et al. 2025).

Partendo da casi pratici suddivisi in moduli autonomi, qui si mostrano metodi d'insegnamento dove l'accessibilità diventa parte fondante del progetto formativo. Mentre il russo funge da esempio per comodità espositiva, i compiti proposti trovano riscontro anche nell'apprendimento di altre lingue non native. Il punto centrale: impiegare con intenzionalità modelli generativi e ambienti specializzati può estendere lo spettro dell'apprendimento, accrescere l'impegno individuale (Bekdaş 2025), oltre a rendere l'insegnamento linguistico più coinvolgente, su misura, aperto a tutti e operativo sul piano quotidiano.

Per cominciare, si esplorano strategie per distinguere i materiali didattici. In seguito, l'attenzione si sposta sulla chiarezza del testo. Ciò avviene grazie a strumenti digitali che offrono supporto graduale. L'apprendimento risulta più fruibile quando gli ausili sono ben calibrati. Ogni passaggio è pensato per ridurre il carico cognitivo. Così facendo, anche testi complessi diventano alla portata di tutti.

4.1 Attività 1: Differenziazione dei materiali e accessibilità testuale attraverso lo scaffolding digitale

Livello dei destinatari: A2 (QCER)

Obiettivi didattici

L'attività ha come obiettivo principale lo sviluppo della comprensione scritta attraverso l'accesso graduale a testi autentici. In prospettiva trasversale, mira a potenziare la mediazione intralinguistica (parafrasi, riformulazione) e la consapevolezza delle strategie di lettura. La produzione (orale o scritta) non costituisce l'obiettivo primario, ma rappresenta un esito secondario funzionale alla verifica della comprensione e alla riflessione metacognitiva.

Strumenti e risorse

Piattaforma di differenziazione Diffit; modelli linguistici generativi come Gemma o ChatGPT; testi autentici tratti da portali informativi russi (ad es. *Lenta.ru*, *RIA Novosti*).

Descrizione dello scenario e svolgimento

In una prima fase, il docente seleziona un testo originale in russo caratterizzato da elevata densità informativa e strutture sintattiche complesse (costrutti participiali, subordinate multiple, lessico specialistico). Il testo non viene proposto immediatamente agli studenti, ma costituisce la base di lavoro per la progettazione didattica.

Con l'ausilio di Diffit e di un LLM, il docente elabora tre versioni differenziate:

1. Versione semplificata di base: il testo viene riformulato in frasi più brevi, con riduzione dei costrutti participiali e sostituzione del lessico specialistico con sinonimi di livello A2, mantenendo il contenuto informativo essenziale.
2. Versione facilitata: alla versione semplificata si aggiungono supporti espliciti: glossario bilingue dei termini chiave, brevi spiegazioni in lingua ponte, eventuali immagini o mappe concettuali generate dall'IA per visualizzare le relazioni tra le informazioni principali.
3. Versione avanzata: il testo originale viene mantenuto quasi intatto, ma accompagnato da domande di comprensione inferenziale e da compiti di riformulazione (ad es. trasformare i costrutti participiali in frasi finite, sintetizzare il contenuto in 3-4 frasi).

In questo scenario, semplificazione e facilitazione svolgono ruoli distinti: la *semplificazione* interviene sulla struttura linguistica (frasi più brevi, riduzione dei costrutti complessi, lessico A2); la *facilitazione* aggiunge supporti esterni (glossario, immagini, spiegazioni) che non modificano il testo, ma ne rendono più trasparente l'interpretazione. La versione avanzata, invece, mantiene il testo originale e introduce compiti di riformulazione che stimolano la riflessione linguistica. Questa distinzione permette di mantenere l'autenticità del materiale originale, modulando al tempo stesso il livello di accessibilità in funzione dei bisogni degli studenti.

Una volta predisposte le tre versioni, il docente può organizzare il lavoro in modo differenziato, mantenendo un equilibrio tra supporto e autonomia. In classe, il docente distribuisce le versioni in modo flessibile: alcuni studenti lavorano sulla versione facilitata, altri sullo

standard semplificata, altri ancora sulla versione avanzata, a seconda del loro livello e dei bisogni specifici. In una fase successiva, gli studenti sono invitati a:

1. Confrontare la propria comprensione con quella dei compagni che hanno lavorato su versioni diverse;
2. Produrre una breve parafrasi del testo (orale o scritta), eventualmente supportata dall'IA;
3. Discutere quali elementi hanno reso il testo più o meno accessibile (lunghezza delle frasi, lessico, presenza di supporti visivi).

In questo modo, la semplificazione non è fine a sé stessa, ma diventa parte di un percorso di mediazione e riflessione condivisa.

Inclusività e accessibilità

L'IA funge da mediatore per i Bisogni Educativi Speciali (BES) e per studenti con profili di apprendimento eterogenei. Per studenti con disturbi specifici dell'apprendimento (DSA), il docente può richiedere all'LLM la generazione di mappe concettuali del lessico in cirillico, riducendo il sovraccarico cognitivo e favorendo l'organizzazione visiva delle informazioni. Per studenti con disabilità visiva, il modello può produrre descrizioni narrative lineari di tabelle o schemi morfologici, ottimizzate per l'uso con screen reader. Studenti con difficoltà nella produzione scritta o motoria possono usufruire di strumenti di *speech-to-text* per la fase di parafrasi e di rielaborazione.

Istruzioni operative (Prompt Engineering)

L'efficacia dell'attività dipende dalla precisione dei prompt forniti all'IA. Un esempio di prompt per la semplificazione potrebbe essere: «Перефразируй этот текст для уровня А2. Замени сложные причастные и придаточные предложения простыми. Сохрани основную информацию. В конце добавь список из десяти ключевых слов с переводом на итальянский и короткими пояснениями на русском» (Riformula questo testo per un livello A2. Sostituisci i participi complessi e le frasi subordinate con frasi semplici. Mantieni le informazioni principali. Alla fine, aggiungi un elenco di dieci parole chiave con la traduzione in italiano e brevi spiegazioni in russo).

Per favorire una dimensione più collaborativa, il docente può inoltre chiedere all'IA di proporre domande di comprensione e attività di riformulazione che gli studenti possano svolgere in autonomia, ad esempio: «Составь пять вопросов по тексту для

проверки понимания (уровень A2) и предложи два задания на перефразирование предложений» (Formula cinque domande sul testo per verificare la comprensione (livello A2) e proponi due esercizi di riformulazione delle frasi).

In questo modo, l'IA non si limita a produrre una versione semplificata, ma contribuisce alla costruzione di un percorso di lavoro strutturato.

Risultati attesi

L'implementazione di questo scenario può contribuire a rendere più gestibili i testi autentici per studenti di livello A2, riducendo il carico cognitivo iniziale e permettendo un accesso graduale al contenuto. La presenza di versioni differenziate e di supporti espliciti mira a diminuire l'ansia legata alla complessità del materiale, favorendo un clima di maggiore sicurezza e disponibilità alla lettura.

L'implementazione non mira a «semplificare per semplificare», ma a costruire uno scaffolding graduato che permetta agli studenti di avvicinarsi progressivamente al testo autentico. Questo approccio può contribuire a ridurre l'impatto iniziale della complessità linguistica e a favorire un clima di maggiore sicurezza, senza stabilire una relazione diretta e automatica tra semplificazione, autonomia e filtro affettivo.

Dal punto di vista linguistico, ci si attende un ampliamento del lessico specifico legato all'attualità e una maggiore familiarità con strutture sintattiche complesse, grazie al confronto tra testo originale, versioni semplificate e parafrasi prodotte dagli studenti. La pratica sistematica della riformulazione sostiene lo sviluppo di abilità di mediazione intralinguistica.

Sul piano metacognitivo, il confronto tra la propria produzione e quella generata dall'IA stimola la riflessione sulle strategie di comprensione (uso del contesto, inferenze, segmentazione del testo) e sulle scelte linguistiche, promuovendo consapevolezza metalinguistica e capacità di autoregolazione. L'inclusività costituisce un obiettivo centrale: studenti con BES o con disabilità sensoriali possono accedere ai contenuti attraverso modalità adatte (descrizioni testuali, mappe concettuali, trascrizioni, strumenti *speech-to-text*), riducendo il sovraccarico cognitivo e permettendo una partecipazione attiva e significativa.

Dal punto di vista motivazionale, l'impiego di testi autentici, combinato con strumenti digitali interattivi, tende ad aumentare il coinvolgimento, stimolando interesse e curiosità verso la lingua e la cultura target. Infine, l'uso dei *tool di IA* consente al docente di ridurre i tempi di preparazione dei materiali differenziati e di concentrare maggiormente le proprie energie sulla mediazione in

classe, sul supporto individuale e sulla progettazione di attività creative. Le competenze sviluppate dagli studenti – gestione di testi complessi, parafrasi, interazione consapevole con strumenti digitali – risultano trasferibili ad altre lingue e contesti educativi.

4.2 Attività 2: Interazione orale simulata e sviluppo della competenza sociopragmatica

Livello dei destinatari: A2-B1 (QCER)

Obiettivi didattici

L'attività mira a sviluppare la competenza comunicativa orale con particolare attenzione agli aspetti sociopragmatici: gestione del registro (formale/informale), uso di formule di cortesia, realizzazione di atti linguistici ricorrenti (richiesta, rifiuto, offerta, chiarificazione), strategie di riparazione e negoziazione del significato. Obiettivo trasversale è ridurre l'ansia da prestazione offrendo un ambiente non giudicante che favorisca la sperimentazione di strategie comunicative e la consapevolezza metapragmatica.

Strumenti e risorse

Piattaforme di conversazione con avatar IA (Talkpal, Praktika.ai); sistemi ASR/TTS; LLM generativi (Gemma, ChatGPT) per personalizzare scenari e supportare la riflessione metapragmatica; registrazione e log delle interazioni per l'analisi didattica.

Descrizione dello scenario e svolgimento: L'attività si articola in tre fasi integrate

Fase 1): Preparazione sociopragmatica Il docente presenta gli atti linguistici e i marcatori pragmatici rilevanti per il compito (es. formule di cortesia, attenuatori, strategie di chiarificazione). L'IA può generare coppie contrastive (formale vs informale) e brevi esempi da analizzare per evidenziare differenze di tono, attenuazione e adeguatezza contestuale. Il docente fornisce inoltre una mini-griglia sociopragmatica (registro, attenuazione, distanza sociale, grado di imposizione) che gli studenti utilizzeranno come riferimento durante l'interazione e la fase di riflessione.

Fase 2): Interazione con l'avatar IA Lo studente svolge un *role-play* (es. check-in in aeroporto, richiesta di assistenza tecnica,

prenotazione) parlando con l'avatar. L'IA: adatta il registro al contesto; segnala malintesi con formule di riparazione; propone alternative più cortesi; chiede conferme e invita alla riformulazione. L'interazione è pensata come co-costruzione del significato, non come semplice simulazione: l'IA non solo risponde, ma guida la negoziazione pragmatica e stimola la riflessione in itinere.

Fase 3): Riflessione e riformulazione Il docente analizza i *log* focalizzandosi su adeguatezza pragmatica, uso delle formule di cortesia, strategie di riparazione e gestione dei turni. Gli studenti riformulano enunciati con il supporto dell'IA, che propone varianti e spiega le differenze pragmatiche; si conclude con un *debrief* collettivo sulle scelte comunicative adottate. La riformulazione è guidata da criteri sociopragmatici espliciti (adeguatezza dell'atto, attenuazione, gestione della distanza sociale), così da rendere trasparente il processo di revisione.

Indicatori osservabili e misurazione

Per rendere lo scenario verificabile, si definiscono indicatori osservabili: adeguatezza pragmatica (percentuale di enunciati appropriati al contesto), uso di formule di cortesia (numero e qualità delle attenuazioni), strategie di riparazione (frequenza e efficacia), e capacità di riformulazione. Tali indicatori possono essere raccolti tramite analisi dei *log*, rubriche di valutazione docente e brevi questionari di autopercezione (motivazione, ansia) somministrati prima e dopo l'attività. Gli indicatori sono allineati agli obiettivi sociopragmatici dell'attività e permettono una valutazione trasparente e replicabile.

Inclusività e accessibilità

L'attività è progettata per la partecipazione piena di studenti con bisogni diversi: trascrizione simultanea per ipoudenti; interfacce vocali per chi ha difficoltà motorie o disgrafia; *feedback meaning-oriented* per studenti con DSA o elevata ansia linguistica, privilegiando l'efficacia comunicativa rispetto alla sola correttezza formale.

Istruzioni operative (Prompt Engineering)

Il docente fornisce prompt che rendono l'IA un partner didattico e riflessivo. Esempio in russo: «Ты — сотрудник стойки регистрации. Говори со мной на простом русском (уровень A2). Если я использую слишком прямую или неуместную формулировку,

предложи более вежливый вариант и кратко объясни разницу. В конце диалога задай мне три вопроса о том, почему я выбрал те или иные выражения» (Sei un addetto al banco check-in. Parla con me in russo semplice A2. Se uso una formulazione troppo diretta o inappropriata, proponi una variante più cortese e spiega brevemente la differenza. Alla fine del dialogo fammi tre domande sul perché ho scelto quelle espressioni).

Per la fase di preparazione si possono usare prompt che generano coppie contrastive e brevi attività di analisi; per la riflessione, prompt che chiedono all'IA di formulare spiegazioni metapragmatiche e domande di autovalutazione per lo studente.

Risultati attesi

L'attività dovrebbe migliorare l'uso appropriato di atti linguistici e la modulazione del registro; aumentare la capacità di gestire malintesi e riparazioni; promuovere consapevolezza metapragmatica e strategie di autoregolazione. L'ambiente digitale non giudicante tende a ridurre l'ansia da prestazione, favorendo la sperimentazione e la partecipazione attiva. Gli strumenti testuali e vocali integrati garantiscono inoltre l'inclusione e la piena accessibilità dell'attività.

Mini-validazione proposta

In prospettiva, il design può essere validato confrontando un gruppo sperimentale che svolge le attività descritte con un gruppo di controllo che segue pratiche tradizionali. Misure consigliate: rubriche di valutazione pragmatica, scale di autovalutazione della motivazione e dell'ansia, e analisi qualitativa dei *debrief*. Anche una verifica pilota su campione ridotto ($N \approx 20$ per condizione) fornirebbe evidenze preliminari utili per affinare il modello.

4.3 Attività 3: Produzione scritta collaborativa e feedback formativo mediato dall'IA

Livello dei destinatari: A2-B1 QCER

Obiettivi didattici

L'attività mira a sviluppare la competenza di produzione scritta e le abilità di mediazione intralinguistica e interlinguistica, promuovendo strategie di pianificazione, riformulazione e revisione. Obiettivi

trasversali: potenziare la capacità di autorevisione, favorire la collaborazione tra pari e ridurre l'ansia da prestazione attraverso feedback formativi non giudicanti.

Strumenti e risorse

Editor collaborativi online (Google Docs o equivalenti didattici); LLM per *feedback* formativo (Gemma, ChatGPT); piattaforme di peer review strutturata; strumenti *speech-to-text* per la dettatura; strumenti di accessibilità (*screen reader*, ingrandimento testo, mappe concettuali generate dall'IA).

Descrizione dello scenario e svolgimento

L'attività si articola in quattro fasi integrate:

Fase 1): *Brief* e pianificazione

Il docente presenta il compito di scrittura (es. breve articolo di attualità, email formale, post informativo) e fornisce criteri di successo (scopo, destinatario, registro, coesione). Gli studenti, in coppie o piccoli gruppi, elaborano una mappa delle idee e uno schema testuale; l'IA può suggerire strutture possibili e parole chiave adeguate al livello A2-B1. La scelta di una cornice narrativa (articolo, email, post informativo) consente di lavorare in modo mirato sul sistema verbale del russo, poiché la costruzione di eventi, sequenze e relazioni temporali richiede selezioni aspettuali diverse (perfettivo/imperfettivo), che diventano oggetto esplicito di riflessione nella fase di revisione.

Fase 2): Produzione collaborativa

I gruppi redigono una prima bozza in ambiente collaborativo. Gli studenti possono usare strumenti di dettatura o digitazione assistita; l'IA fornisce suggerimenti lessicali e frasali su richiesta, ma non riscrive il testo in autonomia. L'enfasi è sulla co-produzione e sulla negoziazione delle scelte linguistiche.

Fase 3): Feedback formativo e *peer review*

La bozza viene sottoposta a due livelli di feedback: (a) peer review strutturata secondo una rubrica (chiarezza, adeguatezza del registro, coesione, correttezza minima); (b) feedback formativo dell'IA orientato al significato e alle strategie di miglioramento (suggerimenti per riformulazione, alternative lessicali, domande metacognitive). Il docente supervisiona e integra i feedback, privilegiando indicazioni operative per la revisione. Il feedback dell'IA non sostituisce quello umano, ma funge da mediatore che stimola domande, alternative e spiegazioni, favorendo una revisione realmente collaborativa e non automatizzata.

Fase 4): Revisione e riflessione metacognitiva

I gruppi rivedono il testo sulla base dei feedback ricevuti e producono la versione finale. Con l'aiuto dell'IA, compilano una breve nota metacognitiva che descrive le scelte effettuate e le strategie adottate. Si conclude con un debrief collettivo in cui il docente evidenzia pattern ricorrenti e suggerisce strategie di miglioramento. La fase di revisione rende espliciti i processi di mediazione intralinguistica e interlinguistica, poiché gli studenti riformulano contenuti, adattano il registro e negoziano significati in funzione del destinatario.

Indicatori osservabili e misurazione

Per rendere lo scenario verificabile si definiscono indicatori osservabili: coesione testuale (presenza di connettivi adeguati), adeguatezza del registro (percentuale di scelte lessicali coerenti con il destinatario), capacità di revisione (numero e qualità delle modifiche apportate dopo *feedback*), autopercezione (scale di motivazione e ansia pre/post). Raccolta dati: analisi delle versioni successive del documento, rubriche di valutazione docente, registri di *peer review* e questionari brevi somministrati prima e dopo l'attività. Gli indicatori sono pienamente allineati agli obiettivi dell'attività (pianificazione, coesione, adeguatezza del registro, capacità di revisione) e permettono una valutazione trasparente e replicabile del processo di scrittura collaborativa.

Inclusività e accessibilità

Uso di dettatura e *speech-to-text* per chi ha difficoltà motorie o disgrafia; supporti visivi e mappe concettuali per studenti con DSA; output compatibili con screen reader per studenti con disabilità visive; *feedback meaning-oriented* per ridurre la pressione sulla correttezza formale.

Istruzioni operative (Prompt Engineering)

Esempio in russo per feedback formativo: «Прочитай этот черновик. Укажи три сильных момента текста и три аспекта, которые можно улучшить с точки зрения ясности и уместности для адресата уровень А2-В1. Предложи две простые перефразировки для одного проблемного предложения и задай автору два вопроса для саморефлексии» (Leggi questa bozza. Indica tre punti di forza del testo e tre aspetti che possono essere migliorati dal punto di

vista della chiarezza e dell'appropriatezza per un destinatario di livello A2-B1. Proponi due semplici riformulazioni per una frase problematica e poni all'autore due domande per l'autoriflessione).

Prompt per peer review guidata: «Составь краткую рубрику из четырех пунктов ясность, уместность, связность, лексика с описанием уровней «хорошо», «средне», «нужно улучшить» и примерами конкретных замечаний для каждого уровня» (Crea una breve rubrica basata su quattro criteri: chiarezza, appropriatezza, coerenza e lessico, con una descrizione dei livelli «bene», «medio» e «da migliorare» ed esempi di osservazioni specifiche per ogni livello).

Risultati attesi

Miglioramento della pianificazione e revisione testuale; aumento della consapevolezza delle scelte linguistiche; potenziamento delle strategie di autoregolazione. Il feedback formativo mediato dall'IA e integrato con la peer review favorisce la riflessione metacognitiva e riduce l'ansia legata alla produzione scritta. Le competenze sviluppate risultano trasferibili ad altri contesti linguistici e disciplinari.

Mini-validazione proposta

Per una verifica preliminare si suggerisce un pilota con due condizioni: gruppo sperimentale (attività con *feedback IA + peer review*) vs gruppo controllo (attività tradizionale con feedback docente). Misure: rubriche di qualità testuale, conteggio e qualità delle revisioni, scale di autopercezione (motivazione, ansia) e interviste qualitative di *debrief*. Un campione pilota ($N \approx 20$ per condizione) permetterebbe di raccogliere evidenze iniziali sull'efficacia del design e di calibrare rubriche e procedure.

Le tre attività presentate mostrano come l'integrazione calibrata tra modelli linguistici generativi e piattaforme educative specializzate possa sostenere in modo concreto lo sviluppo delle competenze previste dal QCER, mantenendo al centro la mediazione linguistica e il ruolo progettuale del docente. In tutti gli scenari, l'IA non sostituisce l'insegnante, ma agisce come mediatore cognitivo e linguistico, facilitando processi di comprensione, produzione e riflessione metalinguistica.

Nel primo scenario, la differenziazione dei materiali attraverso semplificazione e facilitazione consente un accesso graduale ai testi autentici, riducendo il carico cognitivo e favorendo la partecipazione di studenti con livelli e profili diversi. Nel secondo scenario, l'interazione orale simulata con avatar IA permette di lavorare in modo mirato sulla competenza sociopragmatica, grazie a un ambiente

dialogico che supporta la negoziazione del significato, le strategie di riparazione e la modulazione del registro. Il terzo scenario, dedicato alla produzione scritta collaborativa, valorizza la revisione come processo formativo: il *feedback dell'IA*, integrato con la peer review, stimola la riflessione metacognitiva e rafforza le abilità di mediazione intra- e interlinguistica.

Un elemento trasversale ai tre scenari è l'inclusività: strumenti come mappe concettuali generate dall'IA, descrizioni testuali accessibili, *speech-to-text* e *feedback meaning-oriented* riducono barriere legate a difficoltà cognitive, sensoriali o motorie, ampliando le possibilità di partecipazione attiva. In questa prospettiva, l'IA contribuisce a creare ambienti di apprendimento più equi, senza sostituire la guida pedagogica dell'insegnante, che resta responsabile della selezione dei materiali, della calibrazione dei compiti e della supervisione critica dei processi (Kessler 2018; Peña-Acuña, Durão 2024).

Per garantire la verificabilità del design, il progetto definisce una serie di indicatori osservabili che permettono di misurare gli esiti didattici e l'impatto sul filtro affettivo: coesione testuale, adeguatezza del registro, capacità di revisione, adeguatezza pragmatica (atti linguistici, formule di cortesia, strategie di riparazione), oltre a scale di autopercezione relative a motivazione e ansia. Questi indicatori, raccolti tramite *log*, rubriche e questionari pre/post, assicurano coerenza metodologica e replicabilità, offrendo una base empirica per future validazioni su campioni più ampi.

Nel complesso, le attività delineano un modello di glottodidattica aumentata in cui tecnologie generative e piattaforme verticali ampliano le possibilità di *scaffolding*, interazione e revisione, senza indebolire la centralità del docente. L'IA diventa così un supporto strategico per costruire percorsi personalizzati, inclusivi e orientati alla mediazione, favorendo un apprendimento più consapevole, motivante e sostenibile.

5 Criticità e limiti

L'integrazione dell'intelligenza artificiale nei percorsi di apprendimento linguistico presenta potenzialità significative, ma richiede una gestione attenta per evitare rischi pedagogici e distorsioni nell'uso degli strumenti. Come evidenziato dalla letteratura (Kessler 2018; Yan et al. 2024), l'adozione non mediata dell'IA può generare forme di delega cognitiva, riduzione dell'impegno attivo e riproduzione di bias linguistici o culturali. Per questo motivo, in tutti gli scenari proposti il docente mantiene un ruolo centrale nella selezione dei materiali, nella calibrazione dei compiti e nella supervisione critica delle interazioni.

Un primo limite riguarda la qualità e l'affidabilità dei contenuti generati dall'IA. Sebbene i modelli linguistici avanzati offrano supporti utili per la semplificazione, la riformulazione o la simulazione dialogica, essi possono produrre errori, incoerenze o suggerimenti non adeguati al livello QCER previsto. Negli scenari descritti, questo rischio è mitigato attraverso un controllo sistematico da parte del docente e tramite l'uso di rubriche e criteri espliciti che guidano la revisione.

Un secondo limite riguarda la possibile sovrastima delle capacità dell'IA da parte degli studenti, che potrebbero percepire gli strumenti come sostituti dell'interazione umana o come soluzioni immediate ai compiti complessi. Per contrastare tale rischio, le attività enfatizzano la co-costruzione del significato, la riflessione metacognitiva e la mediazione linguistica, rendendo trasparente il processo di scelta e revisione.

Un terzo limite riguarda la variabilità dell'accesso e delle competenze digitali, sia per gli studenti sia per i docenti. L'uso efficace degli strumenti richiede familiarità con le piattaforme, consapevolezza dei loro vincoli e capacità di integrare il feedback automatico in un percorso didattico coerente. In questo senso, la formazione digitale del docente – come indicato dal *DigCompEdu* (Redecker 2017) – rimane un prerequisito essenziale.

Infine, l'IA non elimina le disuguaglianze, ma può talvolta amplificarle se non accompagnata da strategie inclusive. Gli scenari proposti affrontano questo rischio attraverso strumenti di accessibilità (*speech-to-text*, mappe concettuali, descrizioni testuali, interfacce vocali) e attraverso un design che privilegia la gradualità, la trasparenza dei criteri e il supporto personalizzato.

6 Conclusioni e prospettive future

L'integrazione dell'intelligenza artificiale nei percorsi di apprendimento linguistico mostra come modelli generativi e piattaforme verticali possano ampliare le possibilità di *scaffolding*, interazione e revisione, senza ridurre la centralità del docente. Gli scenari proposti evidenziano che l'IA, se inserita in compiti ben strutturati e guidata da criteri didattici chiari, può sostenere la comprensione, la produzione e la mediazione linguistica, contribuendo a rendere l'apprendimento più accessibile, personalizzato e motivante. In questa prospettiva, l'IA non sostituisce l'insegnante, ma ne potenzia la capacità di progettare percorsi calibrati sui livelli del QCER e sulle esigenze dei singoli apprendenti (Diadori 2022; Ciaramita 2025).

La letteratura recente conferma che l'uso consapevole dell'IA può incidere positivamente sulla motivazione, sulla percezione di autoefficacia e sulla partecipazione attiva (Bekdaş 2025; Xu et al. 2024). Allo stesso tempo, emergono sfide rilevanti: la necessità di

evitare forme di delega cognitiva (Kessler 2018), di mitigare possibili distorsioni linguistiche e culturali (Yan et al. 2024) e di garantire un accesso equo agli strumenti digitali. Gli scenari presentati mostrano come tali criticità possano essere affrontate attraverso un approccio *human-in-the-loop*, in cui il docente mantiene il controllo dei processi interpretativi, della selezione dei materiali e della supervisione critica del feedback generato dall'IA.

Sul piano inclusivo, l'adozione di strumenti multimodali - mappe concettuali, descrizioni testuali, interfacce vocali, *speech-to-text* - contribuisce a ridurre barriere cognitive, sensoriali e motorie, ampliando le possibilità di partecipazione anche per studenti con bisogni educativi speciali o disturbi specifici dell'apprendimento (Peña-Acuña, Durão 2024). L'IA diventa così un supporto concreto per costruire ambienti di apprendimento più equi, in linea con le prospettive del *DigCompEdu* e con le indicazioni del QCER sulla mediazione.

Le prospettive future riguardano tre direzioni principali. La prima è lo sviluppo di modelli generativi più trasparenti e controllabili, capaci di ridurre bias linguistici e culturali e di adattarsi in modo più preciso ai profili degli apprendenti. La seconda riguarda la ricerca empirica: occorrono studi sistematici che valutino l'impatto dell'IA su motivazione, ansia, strategie di autoregolazione e sviluppo della competenza pragmatica, attraverso indicatori osservabili e protocolli replicabili. La terza direzione riguarda la formazione dei docenti, chiamati a integrare competenze digitali, consapevolezza critica e capacità di mediazione per orientare l'IA verso obiettivi linguistici autentici.

Nel complesso, l'insegnamento delle lingue arricchito dall'intelligenza artificiale non rappresenta una semplice innovazione tecnologica, ma una trasformazione metodologica che unisce progresso digitale e riflessione pedagogica (Katelhön 2025). Guidare questo cambiamento, più che subirlo, significa costruire percorsi di apprendimento più consapevoli, inclusivi e sostenibili, in cui la tecnologia diventa un alleato per sviluppare competenze linguistiche e interculturali profonde, in linea con le esigenze della glottodidattica contemporanea.

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Linguistic-Communicative Strategies in the CEFR Companion Volume and Italian L2 Proficiency A Correlational Analysis with Adolescents

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Abstract The present study intends to investigate the use of linguistic-communicative strategies specified in the CEFR Companion Volume among 132 immigrant adolescent learners of Italian as a second language (L2) in upper and lower secondary schools. The research question addressed is whether elementary language proficiency (LP) in Italian L2 and the use of language learning strategies (LLSs) correlate. The results prove a moderate positive correlation between LLS use and learners' LP. Findings will inform best practices for teaching Italian L2 in educational contexts to ensure better understanding and communication skills for immigrant learners.

Keywords Italian as a Second Language. Multilingual Learners. Companion Volume. Spearman Correlation Coefficient. Pearson Correlation Coefficient. Language Learning Strategies. Language Proficiency.

Sommario 1 Introduction. – 2 Correlating Language Learning Strategies Use with Proficiency. – 3 Research Design. – 4 Data Collection and Testing Procedures. – 5 Results and Discussion. – 6 Conclusion and Future Directions.



Peer review

Submitted 2025-10-29
Accepted 2026-05-23
Published 2026-07-14

Open access

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1 Introduction

The Early Leavers from Education and Training (ELET) indicator ranked Italy fifth among European countries for school dropout rates. Namely, in 2023, the early school leaving rate among young foreigners was three times higher (26.9%) than that of Italians (9.0%).¹ Additionally, the overall percentage of ELET from upper secondary school is 24.3%, with significant differences between female and male pupils, favouring the former.

Table 1 [tab. 1] presents the average non-Italian secondary school population in the Veneto region (northeastern Italy), comprising 22.083 (23.8%) foreign students in middle schools and 23.338 (25.2%) in high schools.²

Table 1 Students with Non-Italian Citizenship in Secondary Schools of Veneto, Padova, Treviso, and Italy – School Year 2023/2024

Location	Enrolled %	Middle Schools	High Schools
Padova ages 11-18	11.5		8.227
Treviso ages 11-18	10.8		7.729
Veneto Secondary Education	10.6	22.083	23.338
Italy Secondary Education	10.2	195.455	228.124

The Veneto region ranks third in Italy for the highest regional presence of foreign students, after Lombardy and Emilia-Romagna.³ A resulting problem arising from these data is the marked divide between the degrees of linguistic-communicative competence required by the Italian school and the language proficiency (LP) of alloglot students.

Another issue, central to this study, is the significant gap in the availability of formal tests designed to assess how many and which Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) immigrant teenage learners employ. LLSs are strategies, or steps, learners take in the language learning and use process to facilitate language acquisition (Cf. Cohen 2000). For instance, students may rely on their first language (L1) to process new vocabulary or ask for clarification when the meaning is

1 Further details on the ELET indicator and school dropout rates in Italy are available in the official report published by ISTAT, accessible at: <https://www.istat.it/comunicato-stampa/livelli-di-istruzione-e-ritorni-occupazionali-anno-2023/>.

2 <https://www.tuttitalia.it/veneto/statistiche/cittadini-stranieri-2023/>.

3 <https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/Principali+dati+della+scuola+-+Focus+avvio+anno+scolastico+2023-2024.pdf/8ba0c506-a14f-9071-fbb7-e0aede0a5ebb?t=1695388882235>.

unclear. Purpura (1999) argued that existing tools primarily consist of questionnaires that measure the types and frequencies of strategies, rather than their effectiveness or understanding of promotion and learning. Therefore, the need for more robust assessment methods in Italian secondary schools to better understand and improve LLS is clear-cut.

In this respect, the recent publication of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe 2020), i.e., the Companion Volume (henceforth CEFR/CV), has provided international guidelines to support plurilingual competence in educational settings. Organized into 6 Chapters, the CEFR/CV outlines in Chapter 3 a series of linguistic-communicative activities and strategies using descriptor scales, along with corresponding strategies for reception (59), production (68), interaction (87), and mediation (117).

While existing literature has predominantly concentrated on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in examining the relationship between LLS usage and proficiency (Stander 2020), the present study seeks to shed light on the correlation between CEFR/CV-based strategies and activities and proficiency in Italian as a second language (L2). To this end, it develops a test of linguistic-communicative strategies designed for non-native learners of Italian pursuing educational purposes.

2 Correlating Language Learning Strategies Use with Proficiency

Since the latter half of the 20th century, numerous scholars have attempted to define the notion of strategy within the LLS domain.⁴ Strategies are cognitive and behavioural processes that aid students in performing tasks effectively, serving as tools, actions, or techniques to enhance learning outcomes (Rubin 1975). Oxford (1990) proposed a classification system for LLSs based on classroom observation and data collection, including strategies that directly impact learning (memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies) and those that indirectly affect learning (metacognitive, affective, and social strategies). In keeping with Rubin's (1975, 43) view, the so-called good language learner may be a good guesser, willing to appear foolish to communicate, and inclined to test their knowledge by producing new sentences, thereby putting newly acquired competence into use.

⁴ The taxonomy of LLSs is open to several debates; however, issues in strategy classifications will not be addressed in this paper. See Oxford 1990 for discussions.

O'Malley et al. (1985) stressed that LLSs' use and tasks are inextricably related, implying that the choice of a strategy is largely dependent on the demands of the language task. Additionally, in her Model of Second Language Learning, Bialystok (1978, 71) defined LLS as a set of *optional* methods that language learners can employ in various learning situations. These strategies are considered optional means for exploiting available information to enhance competence in an L2 (1978, 76).

Between the learning process itself and LLS use, strategic competence is involved in accomplishing the tasks. Bachman (1990), in defining what constitutes learning competence, proposed a distinction of two components:

1. language components, which comprise grammatical, textual, illocutionary, and sociolinguistic competence;
2. strategic competence, which includes assessment, planning, and execution functions in relation to the communicative goal of the language learner.

Similarly, in the CEFR/CV, strategic competence is described by descriptors influenced by the model: plan, execute, monitor, and repair.⁵ From this perspective, strategic competence development is a primary objective for language learning. Furthermore, strategic competence is not directly related to LP; on the contrary, it is an ability that could enable immigrant learners to overcome breakdowns during L2 communication due to performance variables or insufficient competence (Dörnyei, Thurrell 1991). It follows that the degree of awareness involved in LLS use is critical, as it implies that learners are not merely passive recipients of information but active participants in their educational journey. Consciousness plays a central role in distinguishing strategic from non-strategic processes. According to Cohen (2000), unlike subconscious processes, strategies involve a degree of awareness, or total awareness that allows learners to apply them purposefully and in alignment with their learning objectives. The author also notes that students will use language strategies to varying degrees depending on their awareness of possible LLSs and their ability to mobilize them. This conscious application of LLSs is particularly pertinent in scenarios where immigrant students are learning an L2 for academic purposes but lack high LP in the target language, jeopardizing the effectiveness of language instruction.

Politzer and McGroarty (1985) and Bialystok (1983) sought to examine the statistical relationship between LP and LLSs using questionnaires. However, both studies found minimal statistically

⁵ <https://rm.coe.int/cefr-companion-volume-with-new-descriptors-2018/1680787989>.

significant correlations between the questionnaire's responses and the performance measures. These findings suggest that the strategies students reported implementing did not strongly align with their actual LP.

More recent studies employing quantitative statistical methods and correlation coefficients (Habók, Magyar 2018) have corroborated these earlier results, showing a modest to positive correlation between LLSs and LP, although in some cases the correlation proved to be statistically insignificant (Kiram et al. 2014). In contrast, Green and Oxford (1995) and Zhao (2015) observed a greater use of LLSs among more successful learners.

Building on this body of literature, which has mainly focused on EFL and self-report questionnaires, the current study aims to improve understanding of the relationship between LLS use and L2 proficiency in Italian language education among newly arrived foreign adolescents.

According to the Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito,⁶ newly arrived immigrant students are defined as those enrolled in the Italian school system for the first time in either the current or the previous school year, typically characterized by a non-native linguistic background and limited LP in the language of instruction.

Against this backdrop, the present study examines selected CEFR/CV linguistic-communicative strategies through a tailored placement test.

3 Research Design

This study investigated a specific research question to address the lack of correlational research between LLS usage and Italian language learning in secondary educational settings:

Is there a significant correlation (> 0.7) between immigrant teenagers' use of linguistic-communicative strategies and the related CEFR/CV (2020) activities (i.e., reading for information and argument, reading for information, creative writing, and note-taking) in relation to their elementary Italian language proficiency?

The present study adopts a quantitative correlational research design. In this research, LP is restricted to the pre-A1, A1, A1+, and A2 levels. It is important to emphasize that the CEFR/CV framework describes competences through descriptors ("can-do" statements). There is no objective justification for assuming that the difference between A1 and A1+ is numerically equivalent to that between A1+ and A2. Consequently, assigning values such as 1 to A1, 2 to

⁶ <https://www.mim.gov.it/principi>.

A1+, and 3 to A2 merely signals the order relation ($A1+ < A2$), but it does not imply that the numerical distance between 2 and 3 is meaningful or comparable to the distance between 1 and 2. In such cases, non-parametric approaches are preferable. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (ρ), ranging from -1 to +1, measures monotonic relationships between ordinal-level variables and is thus well-suited for grouped LP data; conversely, the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) is typically applied when data are jointly normally distributed (Schober, Boer, Schwarte 2018, 1765). Accordingly, both Spearman's ρ and Pearson's r were computed in this study to determine whether the relationship between the two variables, the CEFR/CV LLSs, treated here as the dependent variable, and LP, the independent variable, of immigrant secondary-school learners, was strong ($|\rho| > 0.7$), moderate ($0.5 \leq |\rho| < 0.7$), fair ($0.3 \leq |\rho| < 0.5$), or poor ($|\rho| < 0.3$). Thus, Spearman's ρ was used alongside Pearson's r whenever the assumptions of the latter were violated. The statistical analysis was performed using the Python programming language with the `scipy.stats` library (Virtanen et al. 2020) to calculate Pearson's r and Spearman's ρ .

3.1 Participants

The study initially involved a pool of 213 students. The sample was drawn from one upper secondary school in Padova, six lower secondary schools in Padova, and one lower secondary school in Asolo (Treviso). To ensure participant anonymity, each participant was assigned a unique identifier, randomly generated, from S001 to S213.

During the testing period from November 2023 to January 2024, the following 132 students were present: S001, S002, S009-S029, S034-S104, S106-S108, S111-S121, S123-S128, S132-S140, S144-S149, S190, S191, and S193.

Of the 132 students included in the experiment, 80 (60.6%) were male, and 52 (39.4%) were female, aged 11-22 years, with a mean age of 181.25 months and an average length of residence in Italy of 34.58 months. It should be noted that male participant S002 (19 years old) significantly affected the average length of residence. Although the student reported having resided in Tyrol since birth, active use of Italian began only one year before test administration, and no prior exposure to the language at home or school was reported. Nonetheless, the median length of residence in Italy among the sample is 12 months ($n = 17$), corresponding to one year of stay, followed by 6 months ($n = 15$) and 5 months ($n = 12$). According to the definition discussed, these participants can be classified as newly arrived learners.

Based on teachers' assessments and evaluations, participants' Italian proficiency at the time of the study ranged from A1 to low A2 on the CEFR/CV scale, a level further investigated in the present research. Of these, 54 participants (S055-S104, S106-S108, S193), enrolled in Provincial Centers for Adult Education, or Centri Provinciali per l'Istruzione degli Adulti (CPIA), in Padova and Asolo, where they follow educational pathways leading to a lower secondary school diploma, exhibit low LP levels (Pre-A1, A1). This may be attributable to their prior educational experiences in Qur'anic schools, which are predominantly grounded in rote memorization practices of the Qur'an rather than in the development of broader literacy skills. Out of 54, 32 participants reported living in residential care facilities for unaccompanied minors while attending the Italian CPIAs. For the remaining participants, schooling occurred in their countries of origin; however, precise educational attainment levels are unavailable, likely due to limited LP.

28 Countries of origin were identified in the sample, as shown in Chart 1.

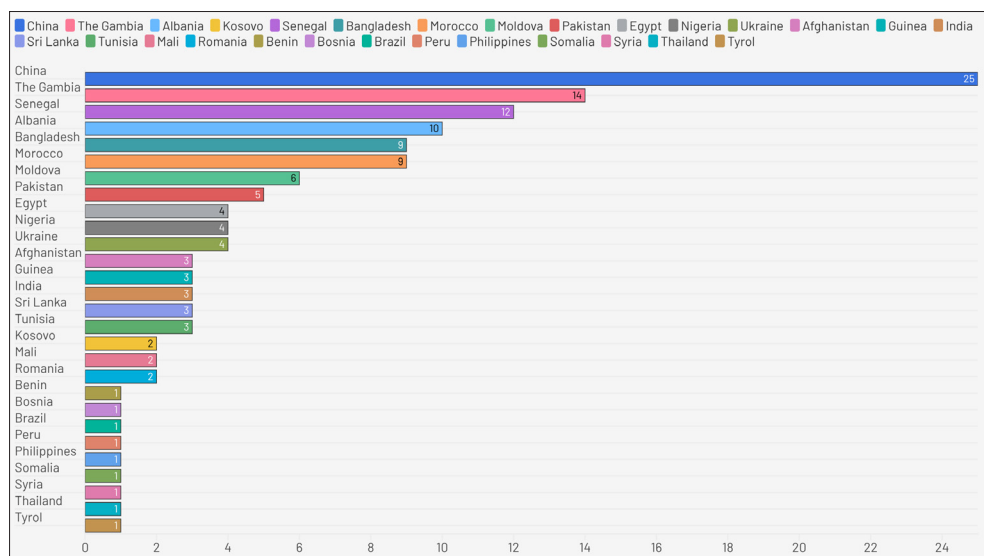


Chart 1 Sample Distribution by Country of Origin

The sample [chart 1] is characterized by a substantial representation of students from Asia (China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka) and Africa (The Gambia, Senegal, Morocco, Egypt). This is complemented by a significant presence of students from Eastern Europe and the Balkans (Albania, Moldova, Ukraine, Romania, Kosovo). A smaller

proportion of participants is from South America (Brazil and Peru), further enhancing the sample’s geographical diversity.

3.2 Participants’ L1

The variety of home countries is associated with 31 first languages, as detailed in Chart 2.

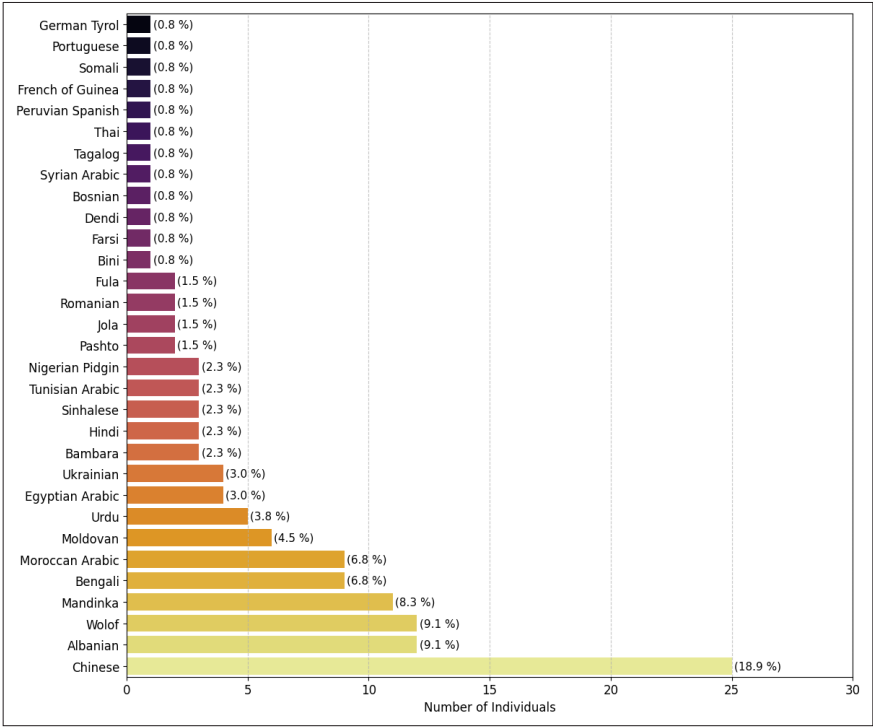


Chart 2 L1s Distribution and Frequencies

As illustrated in [chart 2], the sample under investigation presents a remarkable degree of linguistic diversity. For instance, S084, a Farsi speaker from Afghanistan, also reported speaking Pashto. In other contexts, the same language is shared across different nation-states. As an example, participants S023 and S102 came from Kosovo, and eleven pupils came from Albania (S015, S041, S048, S053, S074, S078, S079, S088, S103, and S104), where Albanian is spoken as a shared L1. Similarly, six Moldovan (S024, S045, S046, S047, S148, and

S191) and two Romanian students (S014 and S144) share Romanian as an official L1.⁷

As attested by previous sociolinguistic research (Mantovani 2024), several learners in the sample can be classified as multilingual. Four Ukrainian students (S035, S038, S044, and S137) in the sample additionally reported proficiency in Russian, Moldovan, and Romanian. S149 and S145, from Pakistan, declared Urdu as their L1, alongside Punjabi.

A region of vast linguistic diversity is the Niger-Congo. In West Africa, English is the *de facto* language in The Gambia and Nigeria, while in Senegal, Guinea, Mali, and Benin, it is French. Notably, no participant reported a *de facto* language as their L1, except S065 from Guinea, who reported French as his L1. In Senegal, twelve participants (S055-S059, S062, S063, S064, S066-S069) reported speaking their L1, Wolof, alongside the official language, French. The Gambia, Guinea, and Mali countries exhibit significant multilingualism, with students reporting knowledge of three to five languages each. Mandinka is the main language of The Gambia, spoken by ten students (S039, S060, S070, S077, S089, S090, S093, S094, S098, and S101); notwithstanding, alongside it, Fula, spoken as L1 by students S092 and S108, Jola, spoken as L1 by S095 and S096, and Wolof are also used. West African English Creole includes the Nigerian Pidgin, spoken by S028, S035, and S136, the most widely spoken pidgin-creole language in the world. Mandinka, reported as the L1 of S076, functions as the principal *lingua franca* of Guinea, Senegal, Mauritania, and western Mali. Dendi, reported by S080, is a Songhay dialect spoken in Benin. Bambara, reported by S075 and S091, is the most widely spoken language in Mali and is also present in Guinea (S097).

The Arabic-speaking countries represented in the sample are characterized by a high degree of dialectal variation employed in daily communication. Within the sample, Moroccan Arabic (or Darija) was the most widely attested, spoken by nine students (S026, S029, S043, S051, S052, S061, S106, S107, S128); this was followed by Egyptian Arabic (S071-S073, S193), Tunisian Arabic (S049, S050, S125), and Syrian Arabic (S139), which together reflect the Maghrebi and Levantine *continua*.

Given this linguistic diversity, multilingualism was carefully accounted for in both the analysis and the design of the experimental proposals.

7 This study maintains the distinction between Moldovan and Romanian as a matter of national and linguistic identity, based on the students' self-declared L1 in their language biographies. See Mantovani 2024.

4 Data Collection and Testing Procedures

A placement test designed to address strategies and Italian language competence was administered between November 2023 and January 2024.

The test was administered to a total of 122 students from the 8 lower secondary schools and 10 students from the upper secondary schools in Padova and Treviso. The administration time was 75 minutes.

In line with Cecilio-Fernandes et al. (2019), it is essential to identify items with bias for quality control and the fair calculation of administration times for exercises administered. To make inferences about the outcomes of the administered test, the execution of LLSs should be defined in measurable criteria to distinguish strategies from other individual characteristics that can affect test performance.

4.1 CEFR/CV Descriptors and Score Allocation

Given the above, the specifications, visible in Table 2, were constructed considering the CEFR/CV evaluation grids and the Self-Assessment Grid of the Council of Europe.⁸ The scales for levels pre-A1 (when available), A1, A1+, and A2 were considered for the administered test. Thus, a score was set for each presented activity, proportional to the degree of success in implementing LLS.

The scores reported in [tab. 2] should be interpreted both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative dimension is reflected in the numerical values (Score). In contrast, the qualitative dimension must be assessed against the CEFR/CV descriptors and the corresponding LPs presented alongside the table (Descriptors & Levels). The final score scale for levels A1–A1+ spans a broader range than the other levels, from a lower score (16) to a considerably higher one (29). In this case, it is up to the researcher-teacher to assess the learners' most appropriate LP level within this interval.

⁸ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portfolio/self-assessment-grid>.

Table 2 Activities, Criteria, Descriptors, and Score Specification

Administered Activities	Assessment Criteria	Descriptors & Levels		Score
1a. Open-ended completion task comprising 4 items on familiar and concrete vocabulary	Identification of everyday objects: - can recognize and describe only the words that are strictly familiar to him/her using high-frequency vocabulary - can provide a simple description of the images he/she sees with high-frequency or appropriate vocabulary	CEFR/CV, 60	Pre-A1	0-1
			A1	2
			A1+	3
			A2	4
1b. Global comprehension with an open-ended question	Capacity for content anticipation: - can infer the literal meaning of the text with at least a single word from the title - can infer the general meaning of the text by analyzing multiple keywords or phrases		Pre-A1	0-1
			A1	2
			A1+	3
			A2	4
2. A binary (true or false) reading comprehension	Understanding specific information: - capable of grasping the content of informational material if it is straightforward and contains brief, simple descriptions - can locate specific information in simple, everyday written material	CEFR/CV, 55-6	Pre-A1	0-2
			A1	3-4
			A1+	5-6
			A2	7-8
3. Creative writing on a given topic (home country)	Complete responses to specific questions: - can write simple expressions and paratactic sentences about themselves, their place of origin, and their activities - can write sentences connected to everyday aspects of their country (people, places, food)	CEFR /CV, 67; 69	Pre-A1	0-3
			A1	4-6
			A1+	7-9
			A2	10-12
4. Open-ended completion through lexical and grammatical competence	Ability to simplify complex information: - can partially simplify the comprehension of images using a limited vocabulary - can simplify the understanding of images a few words at a time, employing both verbal and non-verbal means to facilitate comprehension	CEFR /CV, 105	Pre-A1	0-2
			A1	3-4
			A1+	5-6
			A2	7-8
Final Scores		A0	0-15	
		A1-A1+	16-29	
		A2	30-36	

4.2 LLSs Investigated

LLSs are not always observable to the human eye, particularly when they involve cognitive or metacognitive processes, as Martínez (1996) noted. In the present study, however, the strategies under investigation manifest in ways that can be identified through written performance: note-taking (Activities 1a and 4), underlining and highlighting keywords (Activity 2), and exploiting co-text and paratextual cues (Activities 1b and 3). Although internally conceived,

these strategies become externally visible, allowing for systematic empirical observation.

For this reason, the level of use of a given LLS was operationalized as a dependent variable (outcome) and coded on a three-point scale (Cf. Torregrossa, Carbonara 2025). Specifically:

1. 0 out of 2 corresponds to 'not attempted'. The learner does not yet demonstrate awareness of the need to activate an LLS in response to a task demand.
2. 1 out of 2 corresponds to 'attempted'. At this level, strategic behaviour is present but not yet fully controlled.
3. 2 out of 2 corresponds to 'successfully executed/attempted'. Learners demonstrate both awareness and effective control over the strategy.

This systematic procedure facilitates quantification of LLS use while accommodating variability in learners' ability to implement LLSs successfully.

4.2.1 Reception

The first set of reading for information and argument activities functions as a pre-reading activity, introducing learners to the written input through visual support.

Specifically, in Activity 1a, students are asked to observe an image and list four objects they recognize:⁹ *Cosa vedi nell'immagine? Scrivi quattro oggetti che conosci* (What do you see in the image? Write down four objects you recognize).¹⁰ In Activity 1b, they are prompted to go one step further and formulate a hypothesis about the content of the upcoming text: *Dopo aver osservato questa immagine, secondo te, di cosa parlerà il prossimo testo?* (After observing this image, in your opinion, what will the next text be about?).

The LLSs tested are identifying cues and inferring (CEFR/CV 2020, 60). Learners are encouraged to attend to visual and paratextual information, using these cues as scaffolding to anticipate the meaning of the written text.

The primary objective is to foster learners' ability to exploit illustrations, headings, and contextual elements to build hypotheses about the text's content. More specifically, the tasks are designed to

9 The elements included in the image were: the map of Italy, a shoe, a gondola, a fork, a knife, the Vatican, a pizza, a church, a coffee cup, a Roman column, a wine glass, a wine bottle, carnival masks, sunglasses, olives, tomatoes, a plate of pasta, a plate of spaghetti, a chili pepper, the Colosseum, and the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

10 While the instructions are presented here in both Italian and English, learners were only provided with the Italian version.

assess whether learners can infer meaning from the co-text, paratext, and linguistic environment.

4.2.2 Reception and Mediation

In this reading-for-orientation activity, learners are then instructed to read a short informative text and subsequently mark a set of statements as either true or false (Cf. Appendix): *Leggi il testo. Poi, indica con una crocetta <X> se la frase è vera o falsa* (Read the text. Then, mark with a cross <X> whether the statement is true or false).

The mediation strategy tested is streamlining a text (CEFR/CV 2020, 121). Learners are expected to highlight or extract the key information from the input to respond accurately to the comprehension items. Although the instructions do not explicitly require underlining or note-taking, the main objective is to assess learners' ability to identify and retain essential information from a short-written input. A further aim is to monitor whether the use of textual engagement strategies (e.g., underlining or annotating) correlates with higher performance. More specifically, the task examines whether students who underline or mark relevant segments of the text obtain higher scores, or whether learners with greater proficiency can achieve high results without relying on these strategies.

The written text was assessed using Gulpease's readability formula¹¹ to determine its accessibility for the target audience of immigrants. The index produced a score of 62.6 on a 0-100 scale. This range corresponds to a text suitable for readers with a middle school education, specifically a score between 60 and 80. Consequently, the text is considered suitable for enabling learners to infer meaning from a short and relatively simple context.

Items 1-4 focus on the learners' vocabulary range (CEFR/CV 2020, 131), requiring them to infer the meanings of familiar and unfamiliar words and phrases from co-textual and contextual cues. Items 5-8, by contrast, target the ability to exploit linguistic cues more directly, including basic vocabulary, geographical terminology, place names, and quantitative data. This requires both lexical and syntactic analysis, as learners must recognize and interpret specific linguistic markers to identify correct answers.

11 Index = $89 - (Lp / 10) + (3 \times Fr)$, where Lp is the total number of letters in the text divided by the number of words, and Fr is the number of sentences divided by the number of words.

4.2.3 Production

In this creative writing task (CEFR/CV 2020, 67), learners are required to complete a description sheet about their country of origin. The prompt explicitly asks them to “Complete the description sheet of your country of origin. Use complete responses” (*Completa la scheda di descrizione del tuo Paese d’origine. Usa risposte complete*).

The production strategy elicited is compensating (CEFR/CV 2020, 69). Learners are expected to draw on available linguistic resources to fill potential gaps in their knowledge, for example, by using paraphrasing or circumlocution.

The objective is to assess learners’ overall ability to produce coherent written language. The activity is also designed to observe how learners manage lexical or grammatical gaps, and whether they can reformulate ideas or paraphrase creatively to convey meaning effectively.

The description sheet includes the following items:

- a. Where are you from?
- b. What is the capital of your country?
- c. What is the official language?
- d. What is the most important national holiday? When is it celebrated?
- e. What is a typical food or dish?
- f. What is your favourite city? Why?

These questions aim to elicit both factual information and personal perspectives.

4.3 Mediation

In this note-taking activity (CEFR/CV 2020, 105), learners are asked to observe two images and produce a short list of keywords:

1. The illustration depicts a cartoon-style Earth with a smiling face in the background. In the foreground, three characters are engaged in environmentally friendly activities: a boy is disposing of bottles into the appropriate recycling bin, one girl is watering the Earth from above, and another girl is offering flowers to the boy. The overall style is playful and colourful, emphasizing ecological awareness and positive interactions with the planet.
2. This cartoon-style image shows two archaeologists working in a desert setting. They are bent over examining a broken piece of an ancient vase, with a cactus visible in the background. One of the archaeologists, a man, holds a magnifying glass to inspect the artifact more closely. Both archaeologists wear typical field attire, including hats, beige pants, and utility

belts. The illustration conveys a sense of careful observation and fieldwork in an archaeological context.

The task is introduced with a simple prompt: *Cosa vedi? Scrivi una lista di parole-chiave per le due immagini (4 circa)* (What do you see in the two images? Write a list of keywords [approximately 4 for each image]). The activity is designed to elicit two specific mediation strategies: linking to previous knowledge and breaking down complex information (CEFR/CV 2020, 118). Although the CEFR/CV does not provide explicit descriptors for note-taking at the pre-A1 and A1 levels, the descriptors still outline a developmental progression in this area; at lower proficiency levels, note-taking is mainly seen as writing down a series of points.

The main objective is to activate and recall learners’ prior knowledge while simultaneously assessing their ability to simplify relatively complex input.

5 Results and Discussion

The results of the correlations (ρ , r) between tested strategies and LP, including information on the mode of each strategy (LLS Mode), and the average language proficiency score (Mean LP), are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3 Correlation (ρ , r) Results between Tested LLSs and LP

Activity	Tested Strategies	Mean LP	LLS Mode	ρ	r
1a.	Identifying cues and inferring	0.657	1	0.447	0.479
1b.	Identifying cues and inferring	0.848	2	0.649	0.604
2.	Streamlining a text	1.583	0	0.083	0.067
3.	Compensating	0.564	1	0.827	0.739
4.	Linking to previous knowledge; breaking down complicated information	1.092	2	0.578	0.521

As demonstrated in [tab. 3], the Pearson and Spearman correlations between LLSs and LP vary across activities.

Strategies that focus on identifying cues and inferring show a mean LP of 0.657 (Standard Deviation, SD = 0.642) in Activity 1a, which indicates that participants in this task had an average LP between pre-A1 and A1, and 0.848 (SD = 0.805) in Activity 1b, slightly higher than Activity 1a, corresponding to an average LP still between pre-A1 and A1 but closer to A1.

The scores demonstrated a moderate positive correlation in Activity 1a ($\rho = 0.447$; $r = 0.479$), with an LLS score’s SD of 0.388, and in Activity

1b ($p = 0.649$; $r = 0.604$; $SD = 0.717$), reflecting moderate dispersion in results. In these activities, learners often make educated guesses based on non-verbal visual cues,¹² which allows them to communicate more efficiently even when their L2 vocabulary is momentarily limited and elementary. The LLSs' score reached its highest mode (2), that is, the most frequently occurring score, in Activity 1b, indicating that many students successfully engaged strategies such as relying on the title of the following text or the input image provided in the pre-reading phase to answer questions correctly. By leveraging these strategies, low-level students can more effectively enhance their language skills. Strategic competence (CEFR/CV 2020, 35) can indeed help speakers overcome communicative problems, enabling learners to make use of linguistic tools and mnemonic, repetitive, cognitive, and metacognitive cues, thereby enhancing linguistic performance.

The average LP in Activity 2 is the highest among all tasks (1.583), corresponding to a proficiency level between A1 and A1+. This implies that, on average, learners in this task had a slightly higher LP compared to the other activities. Unsurprisingly, this task focused on written text comprehension, which is generally easier to perform and to acquire than written production for elementary-level learners; however, the SD of 0.900 indicates substantial variation among participants. The correlations were poor for both indices ($p = 0.083$; $r = 0.067$), with an $SD = 0.597$ for the LLS score, yielding non-significant results. 22 participants out of 132 (16.6%) employed underlining or highlighting as a strategy to identify key words in the text, with an LLS mode of 0. Although these students correctly identified key words, they did not always manage to answer the questions. For example, S039, a male Mandinka speaker, achieved only 37.5% correct answers despite underlining the appropriate keywords, while S065, a male French speaker from Guinea, scored just 25%. Thus, underlining and highlighting text to streamline comprehension do not always correlate with LP success, indicating that additional strategies need to be made explicit to learners to support successful task performance.

Activity 3 exhibits the strongest positive correlation ($p = 0.827$, $r = 0.739$), with a mode LLS score of 1, a modest result, and an SD of 0.548.¹³ Respondents did not capitalize on the linguistic cues in the questions themselves, nor did they make intelligent use of test-wiseness strategies to draw on the previous text (Activity 2), which contained numerous ready-made sentences. The mean LP is the lowest across tasks

12 S061 (female Moroccan speaker) noted: *il prossimo testo parla di esploriamo l'italia* (The next text talks about exploring Italy).

13 S036 (female Urdu speaker): **il capitale di Pakistan e islamabad* ("La capitale del Pakistan è Islamabad" / The capital of Pakistan is Islamabad), against S107 (female Moroccan speaker): *Sono venuta dal marocco, precisamente da Casablanca* (I came from Morocco, specifically Casablanca).

(0.564, SD = 0.743), suggesting that participants in this activity had, on average, the weakest LP, closer to pre-A1.¹⁴ This outcome underscores a deficiency in employing strategies to circumvent the lack of LP (Cohen 1998). Learners in this activity often relied on their L1, English, or hybrid forms,¹⁵ disregarding the contextual cues available in the task.

In Activity 4, the mean LP is slightly above 1 (1.092; SD = 0.870), corresponding to an average LP around A1. The LLSs show the highest mode (2), together with Activity 1b, with an SD of 0.484. The moderate positive correlations observed ($\rho = 0.578$; $r = 0.521$) highlight the learners' ability, despite limited LPs, to infer crucial elements from the linguistic paratext to comprehend the text. Consequently, even students who have not yet achieved full mastery of Italian LP can effectively rely on contextual clues to enhance their understanding of the target language.¹⁶ Such ability is critical for language acquisition, as it demonstrates the learners' will to interpret complex information through contextual cues (Zhou, Wu 2024). Notably, even though the assignment instructions did not explicitly require this, a female Chinese student (S054) used a compensation strategy to address the lexical gap related to the noun *vaso* (vase): she used a drawing to represent the missing concept. This strategy is explicitly promoted by the CEFR/CV (2020, 89) for Interaction Activities. Although this approach may appear avoidant, the data indicate that low-proficiency foreign adolescents remain motivated to learn the L2 and are not discouraged by language-related challenges.

All in all, the Spearman coefficients are consistently slightly higher than the Pearson values, suggesting that the association between LLS use and LP is better captured as a monotonic trend rather than a perfectly linear one. This pattern indicates that higher reliance on strategies tends to be associated with greater proficiency, although the increase may not be proportional across all levels of LP.

The correlations between strategies and students' LP in Italian L2 can be better understood by examining Figure 1. For each task, a scatterplot was generated showing the relationship between LPs' scores (on the x-axis) and LLSs' scores (on the y-axis) using aggregate data per student.

14 S102 (male Albanian speaker): *mia cita preferonto Prizeren ("*La mia città preferita è Prizeren*" / My favourite city is Prizeren).

15 S060 and S090 (male Mandinka speakers): English.

16 S147 (female Bengali speaker): *Riciclare [...] piantare nuove piante prendere cura della pianeta terra* (Recycle [...] plant new plants take care of planet earth).

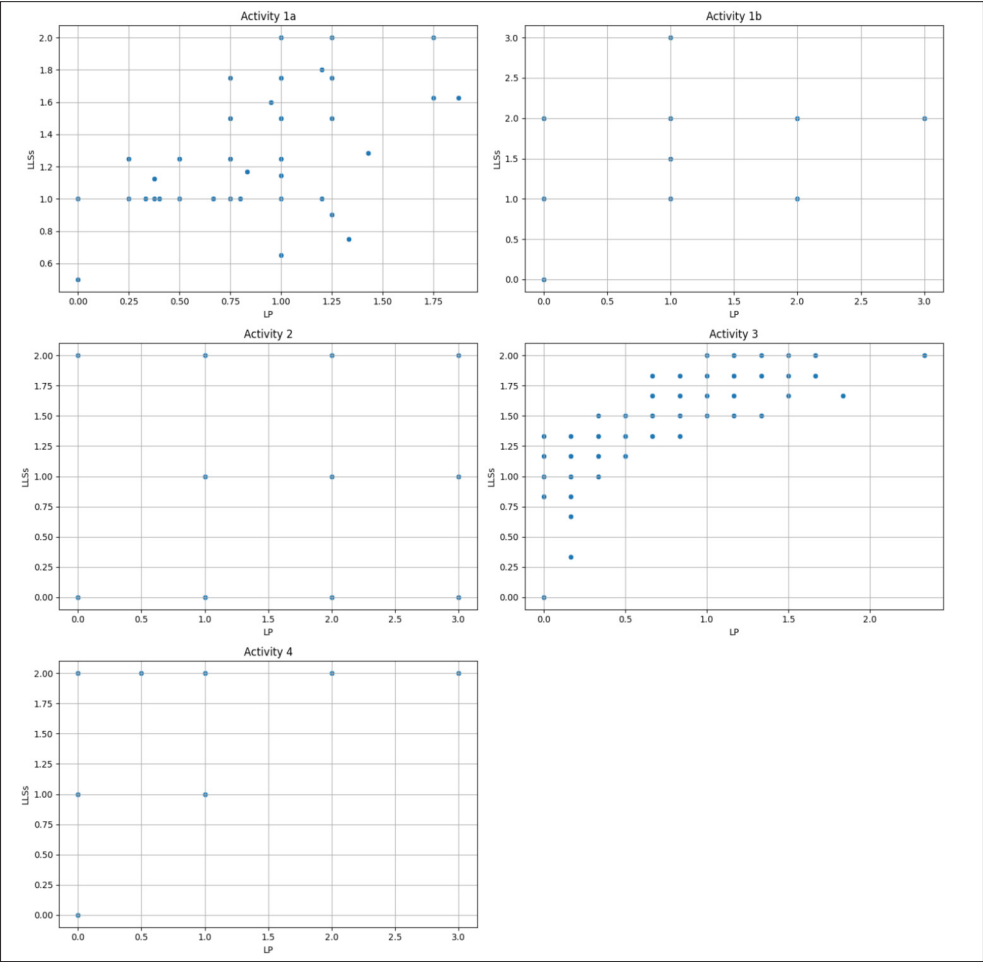


Figure 1 Results of the Correlation (ρ , r) between Strategies and Proficiency

As shown in [fig. 1], the scatterplots visually confirm the results of the correlation analyses presented: Activities 1b, 3, and 4 display stronger positive relationships, with task 3 presenting the clearest and strongest positive relationship, whereas Activities 1a and 2 exhibit weaker ones, with Activity 2 also showing issues of data variability. This is consistent with the poor correlation, close to 0, computed for this task, suggesting limited variation in the data. Low LP can hinder the proper use of strategies, and, more problematically, make LLS unrecognizable when observing the learner's progress. In accord with Green and Oxford (1995), learners might lack the knowledge to select appropriate LLS

or to enlist them effectively. This complicates the researchers' ability to accurately predict which LLS are most successful in fostering L2 acquisition.¹⁷ It cannot be excluded that certain factors, already studied by other authors (e.g., Doró, Habók 2013), such as L1, age, or motivation, may influence the strategies learners can implement in L2 communication. Hence, it is not possible to assert that low LPs *alone* inevitably impact LLS use for L2 teenage students.

In addressing the research question, at low levels of Italian LP (pre-A1, A1), there is a moderately positive correlation with teenage learners' low use of strategies. This finding is also supported by Rao (2016) and Stander (2020) for the EFL students.

This study also confirms this with a series of data emphasizing the tendency to resort to compensation strategies, including drawing, recalling the L1, using English as a *lingua franca*, or attempting to execute the output in L2 regardless of accuracy.¹⁸

6 Conclusion and Future Directions

The primary objective of this study was to investigate whether there is a correlation between LLSs and low LP in Italian L2 among adolescent learners.

Results advised that the strength and significance of the correlation between LLSs and LP vary across tasks. Activities 1a, 1b, 3, and 4 show moderate-to-strong positive correlation between LLSs and LP. Activity 3 exhibits the strongest correlation ($\rho = 0.827$; $r = 0.739$), followed by Activity 1b ($\rho = 0.649$; $r = 0.604$), and then Activity 4 ($\rho = 0.578$; $r = 0.521$). Moderate positive correlation between LP and linguistic-communicative strategies applied by non-native Italian students and key strategies that learners use to cope with unfamiliar content, including a tendency to be involved in trial-and-error processes, language mix, non-verbal strategies (drawing), approximation, periphrases, and avoidance of topics. Identifying cues, inferring, and compensating strategies are widely exploited by low-level learners. Conversely, strategies oriented toward streamlining written texts (e.g., underlining or highlighting) appeared less effective and may require additional pedagogical support to become truly beneficial for learners with limited LP.

It is important to note that detailed information on literacy levels in the learners' countries of origin is not available for all participants

17 S075 (male Bambara speaker): **artiteci omo e dona nivola capelo, Scarpe*. "Architetti uomo e donna nuvola cappello, scarpe" (Architects man and woman cloud hat, shoes).

18 S087 (female Bini speaker): **Pounded yam, è Egusy soup fried rice è pollo (chicken) Black soup Pouno* (Pounded yam, is Egusy soup with fried rice is chicken [chicken] black soup).

due to their low LP, which may have limited their ability to provide it. This variable may play a critical role in shaping both the use and effectiveness of LLSs and thus warrants further investigation.

Findings recommend aligning pedagogical strategies with the skills and competencies of immigrant adolescents, conforming to the EU's plan to encourage new techniques and initiatives in language learning and teaching.¹⁹ The implications for classroom practice include incorporating explicit and implicit LLS training (Cohen 2000), peer support, and peer instruction to help adolescents unlock previous knowledge and expand thinking in L2. In this context, mediation work by educators for low LP consists of making learners aware of the different types of LLS, facilitating the development of a strategic chain for foreign students through mediation activities and strategies to be tested (CEFR/CV 2020, 'section' 3.4). These comprise creating expectations, embedding new linguistic elements within meaningful contexts to enhance understanding and retention through real-world scenarios, and interpreting and simplifying L2 tasks.

By implementing LLS, instructors can encourage a more effective multilingual repertoire and promote vocabulary acquisition and retention in Italian secondary education systems. Moreover, embracing combined instructional programs, such as Content and Language Integrated Learning, enables L2 learners to rely on LLS to accomplish their tasks and overcome barriers in L2. In this vein, robust and high-quality assessment methods are essential for addressing the specific needs of teenage immigrant populations.

From a methodological perspective, this study contributes to a refined coding system for strategic use based on a triadic score (0-1-2) derived from task performance. This paradigm could be validated in future research using qualitative approaches such as think-aloud protocols (Cohen, Wang 2024), which would allow learners to articulate their (meta)cognitive and strategic processes.

Future research should also explore how strategies are enacted and negotiated within group dynamics and classroom interactions, and extend the investigation to receptive listening skills, which remain an underexplored area in relation to LLS use in Italian L2 contexts.

19 <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/improving-quality/multilingualism/european-language-initiatives>.

Appendix

Esploriamo l'Italia!

L'Italia si trova nel sud dell'Europa, al centro del Mar Mediterraneo. L'Italia è lunga e stretta e ha la forma di uno stivale. L'Italia è una “penisola” perché ha il mare a ovest, a sud e a est; a nord, invece, gli Stati vicini all'Italia sono la Francia, la Svizzera, l'Austria e la Slovenia.

In Italia ci sono due grandi isole, la Sicilia e la Sardegna, e tante isole piccole. Ci sono anche molti laghi e fiumi: il lago più grande è il lago di Garda e il fiume più lungo si chiama Po. A nord ci sono delle montagne molto alte, che si chiamano Alpi. Ci sono anche i vulcani: i due vulcani più importanti sono il Vesuvio, vicino a Napoli, e l'Etna, vicino a Catania, il vulcano più alto in Europa.

Il clima in Italia varia da regione a regione. A nord le estati possono essere calde e gli inverni freddi, mentre a sud il clima è mediterraneo, con estati calde e inverni miti, né caldi né freddi.

La capitale è Roma, una città molto antica che si trova nella regione Lazio e che è stata il centro dell'Impero romano. Altre città famose includono Milano, famosa per essere la capitale della moda e del design, e Firenze, famosa per i suoi capolavori artistici.

In Italia ci sono circa 60 milioni di abitanti e la lingua ufficiale è l'italiano, ma ci sono anche molti dialetti. L'Italia è uno dei 27 Stati che fanno parte dell'Unione Europea (UE).

Vero o falso?

1. La geografia dell'Italia ricorda quella di uno stivale	V	F
2. La capitale della moda in Italia è la città di Roma	V	F
3. L'Etna è un vulcano ed è il più alto in Europa	V	F
4. La lingua ufficiale in Italia è il dialetto di Roma	V	F
5. L'Italia è un'isola che si trova nell'Europa settentrionale	V	F
6. L'inverno al Sud può essere mite, cioè molto freddo	V	F
7. La parola “Alpi” è un nome proprio di luogo	V	F
8. Il testo parla di quattro Paesi vicini all'Italia	V	F

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The Integration of Language and Culture in Chinese as a Foreign Language Teaching at University Level

Literature, Movies and TV Dramas as Teaching Tools to Develop Intercultural Communicative Competence

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Abstract Language and culture are closely interconnected. Therefore, to obtain the so-called ‘intercultural communicative competence’, culture must be an essential part of Foreign Language teaching, including Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL). Literature, films, and TV dramas are components of a culture; thus, they can effectively support the integration of language and culture study. This paper presents a teaching experiment, organized around the theme “Women and Their Relationship with Men”, that tried to integrate the two components in a workshop-based university course on Chinese literature for Italian and native Chinese-speaking students.

Keywords Chinese as a foreign language. Intercultural communicative competence. Language and culture teaching. Literature. Movies and TV dramas. Teaching tools. Motivation.

Sommario 1 Introduction. – 2 Language and Culture. – 3 Teaching Tools. – 4 Rationale Behind the Teaching Tools. – 5 The Course. – 6 Concluding Remarks.



Peer review

Submitted 2025-10-29
Accepted 2026-05-23
Published 2026-07-14

Open access

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1 Introduction

Being effective communicators does not only mean to know a language.¹ As many have claimed, in fact, the cultural knowledge of a Foreign Language (hereafter FL) must be an integral part of the teaching process (Gabbianelli 2020) not only because learning a FL is “learning the language of a culture” (Kramsh 1993 cit. in Orton, Scrimgeour 2019, 151), but also because cultural knowledge supports the development of the intercultural communicative competence, that is

the ability to take up the perspectives of the listener or the reader and establish and maintain human relationships with people from other cultures. (Byram 1997 cit. in Wang, Jia 2023, 8)

This principle is undoubtedly also a foundation of CFL teaching (Zhang 2022). As a matter of fact, ‘cultural awareness’ is mentioned as one of the learning objectives² of the 2014 *International Curriculum for Chinese Language Education* and it is described as “an essential factor for enabling learners to use Chinese language more appropriately” (Lin et al. 2020, 121-2).

The so-called ‘Chinese fever’ (*hànyǔ rè* 汉语热) and the consequent growth in the number of students engaged in the study of Chinese language and culture in Italian universities (Masini 2022) impose a reflection on this aspect and lead to a broad question, far from being solved, which is how to develop communicative competence integrating the study of Chinese language and culture. In the attempt to address this challenge, the article provides an account of a teaching experiment conducted in an Italian university workshop-based course (hereafter ‘course’) devoted to Chinese literature, attended by both Italian and native Chinese-speaking students. In this course, literature, movies and TV dramas in their original language were employed as teaching tools to foster communicative competence while combining the study of Chinese language and culture. The presence of native Chinese-speaking students, enrolled in a master’s programme in foreign languages (English and Chinese) at the university, did not affect the main aim of the course, since its contents and objectives remained consistent with the Italian degree programme’s focus on Chinese language and culture acquisition.

1 This work is the result of close collaboration between the two authors, especially with regard to the Sections concerning the course design (whole chapter 5). For the concerns of the Italian academic evaluation processes, the writing of the article was divided as follows: Cristina Caterina Rambaldini is mainly responsible for Sections 1, 2, 5, 5.1 and 5.4, while Enrica Peracin is mainly responsible for Sections 3, 4, 5.2, 5.3 and 6.

2 The other objectives are linguistic knowledge, linguistic skills and strategies (Hanban 2014, III).

The paper is organized as follows: after a short introduction on the relationship between language and culture in FL teaching and in relation to CFL (§2), section 3 describes the teaching tools employed during the course. Firstly (§3.1), it is presented the role of literature in the FL classroom emphasizing its use as real language and its evident linguistic and cultural benefits (Licandro 2024). In Section 3.2, we describe the effectiveness of video-based materials, such as films and TV dramas, in integrating language and culture learning (Zhang 2022). We then highlight how these media, “cultural product[s] pregnant with cultural meanings” (Zhang 2011, 212), provide students with valuable opportunities to deepen both linguistic and cultural issues while sustaining students’ motivation in an era in which “maintaining students’ interest has become the main objective” (Ruan, Duan et al. 2015, 170). Section 4 focuses on the rationale behind the selection of the teaching tools employed, particularly their role in fostering student motivation (§4.1), developing a student-centred approach to learning (§4.2) and supporting internationalization (§4.3). The choice of the languages to be used as working medium by teachers and students is addressed in section 5, while the course together with its structure and organization are the subject of section 6: after a presentation of the characteristics of the course, we introduce the theme and the teaching materials (§6.1). We then discuss the organization of the course, focusing on the involvement of both Italian and Chinese teachers and on the implications and outcomes associated with this dual teaching presence (§6.2). Section 6.3 outlines the activities carried out, providing examples drawn from teachers’ lectures and students’ presentations. The article concludes with a set of final remarks (§7).

2 Language and Culture

The relationship between language and culture is widely recognized. Since they are inextricably linked (Brody 2003 cit. in Xing 2006), they have been considered as the two sides of the same coin in second language classroom (Brooks 1968; Tang 2006). In FL pedagogy this assumption probably dates back to Hall’s statement that “communication is culture and culture is communication” (Hall 1959 cit. in Tang 2006, 87). Thus, the idea of incorporating culture, the so-called “hidden dimension” (Hall 1966 cit. in Wong 2008, 2), into the language curriculum aims to improve both linguistic competence and cross-cultural understanding. In fact, in order to achieve the aforementioned communicative competence, culture must be an essential part of FL study (Singermann 1988 cit. in Wong 2008). Otherwise, as Wong (2008, 5) points out, “successful communication is very difficult”.

Chinese language teaching is no exception. As a matter of fact, the idea that language and culture teaching cannot be separated has

gradually been accepted also in the field of CFL (Orton, Scrimgeour 2019). However, all this seems to be easier said than done (Wong 2008). The prevailing perception is that culture is still commonly and widely treated as a stand-alone subject, inserted more or less *ad hoc* into language lessons (Danison 2013) or even as the subject of separate courses, especially at the university level where the division between 'language courses' and 'culture courses' remains predominant, "with the latter commonly referred to as 'content courses' and the language courses seemingly 'content-less'" (Yu 2009, 75).

For all these reasons, the teaching experiment described in this paper explores the potential of effectively integrating language and culture teaching using literature, cinema and TV dramas, undeniably components of a culture, to foster intercultural communicative competence.

3 Teaching Tools

Literature, movies and TV dramas are rich, complex and multifaceted sources that can help students focus on target language and culture in different ways. Moreover, they are successful teaching and learning instruments for improving FL competence and fostering cultural understanding and multicultural awareness. Literature promotes students' acquisition of language accuracy and cultural deepening. Movies and TV dramas are captivating and entertaining tools that can support students' understanding of different language codes and help the retention of cultural information.

3.1 The Literary Text

The use of literature in FL teaching has been widely recognized (Babae, Yahya 2014). Literary texts were used as a fundamental tool in the teaching of FL during the grammar translation approach period: they were considered good sources of grammatical structures and polished writing. Instead, the structural method considered literature as a model of an outdated teaching approach, and the same was true for the notional-functional method, which did not regard literature either as a genuine communicative tool or as a practical language sample (Babae, Yahya 2014). Over the past two decades, however, the value and the significance of literature in FL teaching have regained new space, because "It is in line with the new communicative approaches that have found in reading literature their desired principles namely communicative competence" (Sanz, Fernández 1997 cit. in Babae, Yahya 2014, 81).

The use of literature can expose learners to ‘real language’, which can give positive effects on the acquisition of both linguistic and pragmalinguistic competences (Gilmore 2007 cit. in Licandro 2024) as well as stimulate their emotional engagement (Mishan 2005 cit. in Licandro 2024), combining linguistic and cultural learning (Licandro 2024). Literature, in fact, contributes to the achievement of language accuracy (Gabbianelli 2020), since it offers elements of lexicon and syntax; it also provides cultural enrichment thanks to idiomatic expressions and language structures typical of the target language.

Literature can also support a ‘dynamic student-centred approach’ because in the teaching practice students play a central role, actively exploring the formal traits of literary texts, their communicative implications and their relevance to both historical contexts and personal experiences (Maugeri 2021).

3.2 Movies and TV Dramas

Integrating the use of literature with that of movies and TV dramas can be very effective because they facilitate the recognition of cultural elements and improve their retention (Gabbianelli 2020). Research underlines that information received through videos is more memorable (Choi, Johnson 2005 cit. in Gabbianelli 2020) and can boost students’ interest and motivation in learning (Gabbianelli 2020). Videos can help teachers build an entertaining and captivating student-centred learning environment (Hughes 2019). As Lottman (1961 cit. in Zhang 2011, 211) states, the visual image portrays “a real-life situation with dialogue [and] an authentic picture presented in an authentic contest”.

Movies are helpful in analyzing both verbal language, for example idiomatic expressions, and non-verbal language, such as objects, movements, facial expressions, gestures and cultural models, known as extralinguistic aspects (Maugeri 2021). Moreover, they can enhance students’ comprehension of movie-specific words, grammar patterns, conversational patterns, and the nuances of speech features employed during the time frame of the movie itself (Hughes 2019). Nowadays, a movie can be an effective tool for reaching a new generation of language learners (Hughes 2019), offering “a unique link to target language and culture because it is visual, it is authentic, it is readily available and because in the digital age [...] it is extremely attractive” (Sturm 2012 cit. in Hughes 2019, 44).

Movies and TV dramas share many elements and features, yet TV dramas have unique characteristics: they are episodic, more flexible and more realistic than movies (Zhang 2022). They can help train language skills in a new way, distinct from cinema (Diadori, Carpiceci, Caruso 2020 cit. in Martari 2020). TV dramas are a part of what is called ‘pop culture’ and as such, they offer

rich multimodal, often embodied, contemporary enactments of language and culture, typically created for the purposes of entertainment and enjoyment, but also easily adapted for educational purposes. (Pai, Duff 2020, 192)

TV dramas reflect authentic life and show typical everyday situations, focusing on human relationships and changes in social life. They give students enough time to get deeply in contact with the characters. Besides, the repetition of situations, language habits and environments helps students explore and reinforce their learning of the target language and culture, thereby increasing their motivation (Martari 2020).

4 Rationale Behind the Teaching Tools

The choice of using literature, movies and TV dramas as the main tools and, at the same time, content-objects of the course was due to many factors: firstly, they naturally embed both language and culture, a characteristic that aligns perfectly with the aim of the course. Secondly, they convey cultural messages that can be beneficial to students' "longer-term intercultural understanding and ability to interpret meaning and communicate effectively in Chinese or with Chinese people" (Orton, Scrimgeour 2019, 163). Lastly, these three media can be effective in fostering students' motivation, developing a student-centred approach to learning and support the presence of an international class of both Italian and native Chinese-speaking students.

4.1 Motivation

As far as motivation is concerned, Zoltan Dörnyei states that

Without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals, and neither are appropriate curricula and good teaching enough on their own to ensure student achievement. (Dörnyei 2005, 65)

Motivation plays a role in any learning process, and this is also true for FL learning (Dörnyei cit. in Wen 2018). Some studies have reported the effectiveness of integrating cultural elements in FL teaching in promoting learners' motivation to learn a FL (Dörnyei 1994; Ho 1998 cit. in Ruan, Duan et al. 2015; Csizér, Dörnyei 2005 cit. in Gabbianelli 2020). For example, Yu reports that "Learning the culture of the language being studied also provides learners with a strong motivation by making language learning more 'real'" (Yu 2009, 74).

Motivation also plays a role in CFL learning, especially for Italian students who have to deal not only with a language that is typologically distant from their L1, but also with a “distante Kultur” (Guder 2005). The integration of Chinese culture in the CFL classroom has been proven to develop motivation (Zhou, Wang 2020 cit. in Wang Guenier, Li 2022; Ruan, Duan et al. 2015; Xing 2006) and to support linguistic progress, promoting the understanding of the context of the FL, its development and appropriate use (Gabbianelli 2020). Besides, motivation can be sustained through specific methods and different activities, chosen and adapted to fit the context, meet students’ needs and interests and, of course, align with the aim of the course (Gabbianelli, Formica 2017; Romagnoli 2019).

4.2 Student-Centred Learning and Teaching

Student-Centred Learning and Teaching (hereafter SCLT) is praised by students and educational researchers (Grøndahl Glavind et al. 2023). An exhaustive definition of SCLT is that

Student-centred education focuses on the idea of the active student[s] being the primary architect of their learning in contrast to teacher-centred education that highlights the teacher’s role and expertise. (Mascolo 2009 cit. in Grøndahl Glavind et al. 2023, 1248)

The student-centred approach to teaching and learning is primarily based on active rather than passive learning, with a strong emphasis on deep understanding and critical engagement. It also promotes greater responsibility and accountability on the part of students, fosters learner autonomy, and encourages a mutual relationship between teachers and learners (Lea et al. 2003 in O’Neil, McMahon 2005). These characteristics proved to be fully consistent with the organization of the course and contributed significantly to enhancing students’ cooperation, motivation, and engagement.

4.3 International Class

Internationalization³ has been described as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education (Knight 2004).

³ For a thorough analysis of the definitions, approaches and methods of internationalization in higher education see Knight 2004 and Costa, Murphy 2018.

As reported by Costa and Murphy (2005, 602), “Working with international students can provide opportunities for wonderfully enriching teaching experiences”. As a matter of fact, an international class is the right place to encourage cooperation among students with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, promoting language acquisition, cultural exchange, and mutual enrichment. Teaching in international classes is also a great opportunity for a teacher.

5 The Course

The course, a workshop-based module devoted to Chinese literature, was held in the second semester and it consisted of 20 academic hours. It combined teacher-led lectures with small-group cooperative learning activities on a topic chosen by the instructors, that was ‘Women and their relationship with men’ (*Nǚrén yǔ nánrén de guanxi* 女人与男人的关系) (§5.2). Participation, which was linked to an optional literature examination covering ancient and modern Chinese literature, required students to engage actively through regular attendance and independent work conducted outside the classroom in order to develop a final project to be presented to their peers and teachers.

5.1 Students and Teachers

The group of students consisted of four native Chinese speakers and seven native Italian speakers studying Chinese. The Italian students had different language proficiency levels, ranging from the second year of the bachelor’s degree to the second year of the master’s degree. The Chinese students had a B1/B2 level of Italian, as they had obtained a bachelor’s degree in this language in China; thus, even if they were not in Italy to explicitly study Italian, they used it as the medium of instruction and communication in the university setting and everyday life.

The presence of Chinese and Italian students provided the opportunity to form bilingual working groups for the cooperative work conducted out of class and prior to the in-class presentations. Students were divided into three groups, each composed of three or four students, each including at least one Chinese student. This choice was made to promote cooperation and exchange between students, both at the linguistic and cultural level. For example, some cultural content is more immediately accessible to native speakers than to FL learners. Besides, cooperative work has been shown to effectively promote motivation (Anderson, Palmer 2001; Brophy 1987;

Slavin 1996; Johnson, Johnson 2009 cit. in Tran 2019), an important aspect to consider when working with young students.

The course was taught by a team of two native Italian-speaking teachers and one native Chinese-speaking teacher. The composition of the teaching staff was due to a fortunate set of circumstances, as courses are not typically assigned so many instructors. As discussed later in Section 5.3, the teachers, as well as the students, adopted a flexible use of Italian and Chinese.

5.2 Theme and Teaching Materials

The general topic addressed in the course, ‘Women and their relationship with men’ (*Nǚrén yǔ nánrén de guānxi* 女人与男人的关系), was selected for its broad scope, cultural richness, and potential to establish connections across different cultural contexts. The relationship between women and men both in ancient times and modern and contemporary times in China is a subject that offers abundant opportunities for research, comparison and analysis, providing valuable insights into the understanding of different cultures. Therefore, it was the focus of all the teaching materials chosen for both lectures and students’ presentations.

The decision to adopt a broad subject was motivated by two major considerations: the possibility of relating it to different cultural backgrounds and the need to find suitable teaching materials among Chinese literary texts, movies, and TV dramas. Identifying appropriate teaching and learning resources is not easy; for example, the materials should adapt as much as possible to students’ different language proficiency levels, be sufficiently engaging, and stimulate reflection so as to maintain students’ motivation and engagement.

Teaching materials used by the teachers during their lectures and given to the students for the cooperative work were in Chinese. Thus, to facilitate students’ access to these materials in their original language, which could be very challenging, the activities were all guided by the instructors. As a matter of fact, during the teacher-led lectures, instructors provided the historical-cultural and literary contexts as well as language analysis (for example syntactic structures, culturally significant words, idiomatic expressions, cultural insights, and intercultural comparisons) related to the assigned materials. In fact, they reflected different historical and cultural contexts, while the Chinese language itself conveyed meaning related to the period of production or setting of the literary texts, movies or TV dramas. For their group work, students not only were assigned selected teaching materials, but they were also guided to specific elements for analysis. In addition, the teachers also provided other resources, such

as academic papers, Chinese literature and culture books, literary criticism related to relevant themes and aspects.⁴

The choice of the literary texts fell on Zhang Jie's (2024) short story *Ài, shì bù néng wàngjì de* 爱, 是不能忘记的 (Love Cannot Be Forgotten) for teacher-led lectures and the first chapter of the novel *Cháng hèn gē* 长恨歌 (The Song of Everlasting Sorrow) by Wang Anyi (2019) for students' in-class presentations. It is important to underline that the literary texts were selected due to their remarkable linguistic and cultural richness, as well as their capacity to offer a wide range of insights for critical reflection. They served as effective starting points for the analytical work conducted within the students' small-group discussions and for teacher-led lectures. Moreover, Zhang Jie's short story and Wang Anyi's novel published translations in Italian⁵ are available, an element that considerably helped the cross-linguistic and cultural analysis among both Italian students and Chinese students.

As for the video materials, the movie *Hóng dēnglóng gāogāo guà* 红灯笼高高挂 (Raise the Red Lantern) by Zhang Yimou (1991) and the TV drama *Lǐzhì pái shēnghuó* 理智派生活 (The Rational Life) directed by Xu Fujun (2021) were presented by the teachers. The Chinese movie *Mùlán* 木兰 (Mulan) by Ma Chucheng (2009) and the TV drama *Sānshí ér yǐ* 三十而已 (Nothing but Thirty) directed by Zhang Xiaobo (2020) were proposed for students' presentations.

5.3 Vehicular Languages

Three main reasons guided the choice of the vehicular languages to be used: the aim of the course, that was fostering intercultural communicative competence while simultaneously promoting linguistic and cultural progress, the inclusion of both Italian and native Chinese-speaking students with varying levels of proficiency in the respective L2s, as well as the presence of a team of Italian and native Chinese-speaking teachers in charge of the course.

For these reasons, it was decided to adopt a flexible use of Italian and Chinese: both languages could be used by the teachers and by the students. During the teacher-led lectures, the two languages could be employed within the same class. In other cases, a lesson might be conducted entirely in one language. During presentations, students could alternate the two languages.

In this context, the exclusive use of Italian would not have served the main purpose, i.e. the integration of Chinese language and culture; furthermore, it would have been too difficult for the Chinese

⁴ See Pedone, Zuccheri 2015; Pesaro, Pirazzoli 2019; Rossi, Rambaldini 2021.

⁵ Pedone, Zuccheri 2015, 119-23; 237-40.

students to understand all the content. Similarly, the exclusive use of Chinese would have created some comprehension problems for the Italian students. This background, supported by the aim of the course and by the assumptions that the language class is a bilingual environment (Gilardoni 2015) and that “Any language learner is an incipient bilingual. Any bilingual is or was a language learner” (Byram 2000, 84), led to the decision of switching between the two languages to ensure that “more learning will take place than if the switch had not taken place” (Macaro 2009, 81).

In addition, the presence of a Chinese native-speaking teacher, who conducted most of the teaching in Chinese, proved to be a valuable pedagogical resource, particularly for the Italian students. It allowed them to engage more directly with culturally embedded aspects of the language while also improving their listening comprehension and overall language skills. On the other hand, the use of both Italian and Chinese by the Italian instructors was helpful for both Italian and Chinese students: the former were able to deepen their understanding of Chinese language and culture while also addressing potential comprehension gaps; the latter benefited from instruction in Italian, which helped strengthen their Italian language proficiency.

5.4 Activities

As mentioned above, the course adopted a multimethod approach that combines teacher-led lectures with students’ in-class presentations, resulting from the cooperative work conducted outside the classroom.

The teachers delivered the first seven lessons (14 academic hours), to provide students with new linguistic and cultural content and to familiarize them with the topic and the types of teaching materials they were expected to work on autonomously. During these sessions, supported by PowerPoint presentations, the teachers introduced the historical, cultural, and literary contexts, along with an analysis of salient linguistic and cultural features of the materials under study. As previously explained (§ 5.3), the teachers adopted a flexible use of Italian and Chinese, alternating between the two languages within the same lesson or across different sessions. During the Chinese colleague’s lessons, the Italian teachers provided support whenever students had comprehension difficulties.

After an introduction to the main theme of the course (§5.2), teachers focused on the three selected cultural products – the short story *Love Cannot Be Forgotten*, the movie *Raise the Red Lantern* and the TV drama *The Rational Life* – addressing their historical and socio-cultural context, the linguistic and cultural dimensions, as well as the distinctive features of each one. Due to space limitations, we cannot present here all the activities and lesson content of the teacher-led classes; therefore,

we use the work carried out on the movie *Raise the Red Lantern* as an illustrative example. Comparable activities were then implemented for the other cultural materials under study, each specifically contextualized and tailored to their respective characteristics.

The movie *Raise the Red Lantern* was first introduced by one of the Italian instructors, who provided contextual information such as the director, the plot, the setting, as well as its relationship to the novel *Qīqiè chéng qún* 妻妾成群 (Wives and Concubines) by Su Tong,⁶ from which it was adapted. The introduction also addressed specific cultural elements, such as foot massage or the lighting of the lanterns as well as broader themes including the dehumanization of women, arranged marriage, and gender inequality. The Chinese teacher showed relevant scenes of the movie, explaining some linguistic and cultural related meanings. For instance, it was highlighted the intentional use of colors: apart from the red lanterns, the movie is dominated by black, white, and grey tones (*hēi bái huī* 黑白灰). Attention was given to the evolution of the protagonist's clothing: the student outfit from the opening scenes reappears at the end, when she loses her sanity. The soundtrack, inspired by Peking opera, shifts between slower and faster rhythms depending on the scene. Theme-related idiomatic expressions such as *zhòng nán qīng nǚ* 重男轻女,⁷ together with culturally significant linguistic forms like the verbs *jià* 嫁 and *qǔ* 娶, were also analyzed.

As for students' autonomous work, they were expected to engage in collaborative activities on the assigned teaching materials (*The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, the movie *Mulan* and the TV drama *Nothing but Thirty*) to produce a final output. Their presentations, supported by PowerPoint slides, covered the final three classes (six academic hours). All groups presented their work in both languages: Italian students mainly used Chinese, while Chinese students mainly used Italian. In practice, the students' work followed the same structure adopted in class by the teachers, beginning with contextual information to frame each work and then proceeding to linguistic and cultural analysis, with the support of their native-speaking peers. Due to space limitations, selected examples of students' work are presented here to show how they engaged with both the linguistic *and* cultural dimensions of the assigned resources. These examples demonstrate that both language and culture were simultaneous object of study.

As can be seen from some the slides, the integration of language and culture was achieved on many levels: in the first slide [fig. 1], students from the group working on Wang Anyi's novel reflected on the history of the city of Shanghai with both reference to the past (as a concession) and to the present (as the business center of China), but also in terms of

⁶ The novel was published in China in 1990.

⁷ The meaning of *zhòng nán qīng nǚ* is 'regard men as superior to women'.

its primary role as a character of Wang Anyi's novel. In the second slide [fig. 2], while analyzing the language, students come across expressions used by Wang Anyi for narrative and descriptive purposes, which nonetheless refer to aspects of Chinese culture, in particular traditional arts (*xì gōngbǐ* 细工笔).⁸



Figure 1 Students' presentations

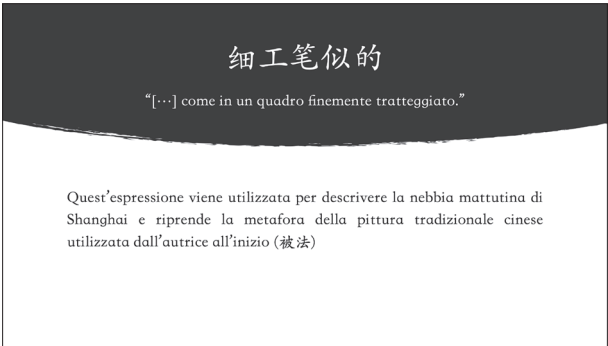


Figure 2 Students' PPT presentations

Students of the group working on the TV drama *Nothing but Thirty* got in touch with some cultural-related issues focusing on language use

⁸ The meaning of *xì gōngbǐ* is 'meticulous brushwork'. Gongbi is an ancient Chinese painting technique known for its precision and the elegance of its fine details.

[fig. 3],⁹ but they also got familiar with the Chinese social phenomenon of 'leftover women' (*sheng nǚ* 剩女),¹⁰ as showed in the slide [fig. 4].

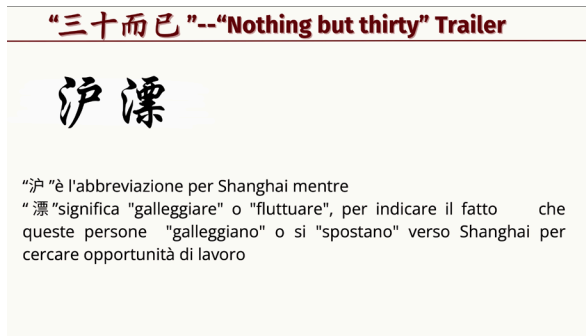


Figure 3 Students' presentations

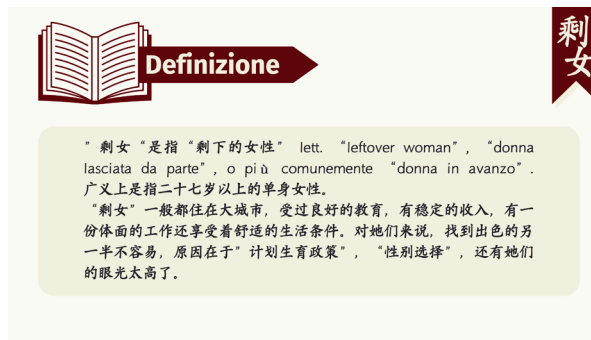


Figure 4 Students' presentations

6 Concluding Remarks

The teaching experiment described, showed the value of literature, movies and TV dramas as teaching tools employed to develop students' intercultural communicative competence thanks to their natural characteristic of embedding language and culture.

⁹ *hù 沪* is the abbreviated form of Shanghai, commonly seen on vehicle license plates, while *piāo 漂* means 'to float' or 'to drift.' The term *Hù piào 沪漂* is used to describe people who 'drift' or move to Shanghai in search of job opportunities.

¹⁰ *Sheng nǚ* is an expression belonging to the so called *liú xíng cí* 流行词 ('vogue word'), used to describe educated, successful, and independent urban women who are unmarried by their early 30s.

The peer-based structure of the activities, involving collaboration both among teachers and among students, as well as the alternating use of Italian and Chinese facilitated access to Chinese, while mixed groups with both native Chinese-speaking and Italian students leveraged complementary expertise and supported mutual enrichment. In addition, positioning cultural products as both tools and objects of study contributed to linguistic and cultural enrichment while enhancing learners' motivation to study.

All these characteristics could offer a replicable template for CFL programs seeking to bridge the divide between 'language' and 'culture' courses. As a matter of fact, the aim of the paper is not to offer scientific data or empirical results, but to provide an example for future projects focused on the integration of language and culture in the CFL classroom. We are aware that the course was organized in a rather specific context; nevertheless, certain features may offer valuable insights and be adapted for similar educational experiences aimed at fostering intercultural communicative competence through the simultaneous acquisition of language and culture.

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Learning German from a Prompt-Based Perspective

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Abstract The integration of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in language education raises questions about learners' interaction with AI during meaning-making processes. This qualitative study, conducted in a German as a Foreign Language workshop for upper secondary students, investigates Prompt-Based Learning in AI-supported language production. Analysis of worksheets documenting prompting, output evaluation and reflection shows that human-AI interaction is an iterative process of negotiation, refinement and evaluation. Findings highlight Prompt-Based Learning as a metacognitive framework fostering language learning, critical thinking, collaboration and media literacy.

Keywords Prompt-Based Learning. Generative AI. Human-AI collaboration. German as a Foreign Language. Media Literacy.

Sommario 1 Introduction. – 2 Theoretical Framework. – 3 Workshop Description. – 4 Methodology. – 5 Data Analysis. – 6 Discussion and Conclusion.



Peer review

Submitted 2026-04-29
Accepted 2026-06-09
Published 2026-07-14

Open access

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1 Introduction

In the Italian school context, the study of German is often characterised by a widespread perception of difficulty, which can negatively affect learners' motivation (Dörflinger, Atz 2020).¹ In this scenario, it is important to intervene not only at a cognitive level, but also at an affective one, through meaningful and engaging activities that foster a more positive relationship with the language.

This contribution builds on a previous study that investigated, through a pre- and post-questionnaire (T0-T1), students' perceptions of German and their level of awareness in using generative AI within a workshop addressed to upper secondary school students. The findings suggested a moderate reduction in perceived difficulty and a generally stable positive interest in learning German, alongside indications of greater awareness regarding the use of tools such as ChatGPT for the collaborative co-creation of a digital artefact, with potential implications for the development of 21st-century skills (World Economic Forum 2016; Cosgrove, Cachia 2025).

Building on these results, the analysis shifts the focus from outcomes to processes, specifically examining how learners interact with AI during language production. Drawing on the analysis of the worksheets, which document task definition, prompting, output evaluation, and reflection, the study explores how Prompt-Based Learning (Adorni 2026) frames the prompt as a cognitive artefact through which learners shape linguistic output by defining constraints, objectives, and context, engaging in iterative processes of negotiation and refinement. Against this background, the paper adopts a qualitative approach, focusing on the co-construction of artefacts in German mediated by AI.

The study is guided by the following research question: *What negotiation dynamics emerge in the use of generative AI during the co-construction of artefacts in German?*

¹ In the preparation of this work, the author made use of ChatGPT (OpenAI) to paraphrase and revise the text, with the aim of improving clarity and overall writing quality. After using this tool, the author carefully reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the final version of the publication.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Prompt-Based Learning between Language Learning and Media Literacy

Large Language Models (LLMs) are emerging as promising tools for language learning. Recent evidence shows that they can support conversational practice through dialogic simulations, ranging from everyday interactions to more specific contexts, while providing immediate feedback in a non-judgmental environment that reduces learners' anxiety (Barrot 2023; Chiu et al. 2023; Oranga 2024). In addition, they contribute to vocabulary expansion, the comprehension of complex texts, and written production in L2 (Kohnke et al. 2023; dos Santos et al. 2023).

In the domain of writing in particular, a shift in perspective is increasingly evident: AI is no longer viewed solely as a corrective tool, but rather as a *learning buddy*, a dialogic partner that supports idea generation without replacing the learner, while fostering reflection and revision (Spannagel 2025). This approach is especially relevant in light of the widespread but often non-strategic use of AI by students (Varriale, forthcoming), which does not necessarily translate into actual competence. From this perspective, AI also represents an opportunity for the development of media literacy, understood as the ability to critically analyse, evaluate, and re-elaborate digital content.

Within this perspective, Prompt-Based Learning (Adorni 2026) views prompts as cognitive artefacts through which learners define context, objectives, and audience, engaging in an iterative process of generating, evaluating, and refining AI outputs. The educational value lies not in the final product itself but in the interaction and reflection that accompany its development.

This perspective aligns with the DigComp 3.0 framework, which places problem solving at the core of digital competence (Cosgrove, Cachia 2025), as well as with the principles of Cyber Humanism, according to which technology does not replace the human subject, but enhances cognitive and reflective capacities.

In the workshop described in this study, the adopted approach is consistent with this model:² as will be shown in the analysis, AI was not used as a *one-shot* tool, but as part of an iterative cycle in which learners could evaluate and refine outputs. Moreover,

² Similar principles of prompt-based interaction, iterative revision, and output evaluation were adopted in the development of a framework integrating Computational Thinking and Generative AI for CLIL writing task design (Ferroglia, Storace, Varriale 2025).

collaboration played a central role: working in small groups, students co-constructed prompts, critically discussed outputs, and shared decisions, turning interaction with AI into a space for peer negotiation and learning.

2.2 The ESA Model as a Framework for Integrating Prompt-Based Learning

The co-creation of a digital artefact represents the final stage of a teaching sequence structured according to the Engage-Study-Activate (ESA) model. Proposed by Harmer (1998), this model organises the learning process into three interconnected phases, each fulfilling a specific function within the overall instructional progression.

The Engage phase represents the initial contact with the target content and aims to create the conditions for effective learning. The teacher proposes brief, stimulating and meaningful activities – such as watching a video, listening to a song, or participating in a team-based quiz – with the goal of fostering curiosity and engagement, without immediately focusing on linguistic accuracy.

The Study phase is devoted to focusing on language forms. Students are guided to observe and systematise structures and vocabulary, concentrating on how the language is constructed. This phase includes explanation, guided discovery and controlled practice activities, carried out individually or in groups, and aimed at consolidating sounds, grammatical and syntactic structures, as well as discourse organisation.

Finally, the Activate phase is the stage in which learners put into practice what they have learned by using the language to complete authentic tasks. More specifically, they are required to mobilise their linguistic repertoire in activities characterised by a low degree of control, such as role-plays (e.g. simulating real-life interactions), discussions and debates, collaborative writing tasks, or creative activities like story and poem writing. Other examples include designing short communicative products (e.g. advertisements) or interactive tasks such as “Describe and Draw”, where learners must convey meaning effectively to achieve a shared goal. These activities function as a “rehearsal for the real world”, enabling learners to transform acquired knowledge into effective communicative competence.

Within the workshop described in this study, the integration of generative AI does not represent an external addition, but is coherently embedded within the Activate phase, where it supports the production and collaborative co-construction of a digital artefact in German (e.g. a comic or a presentation), fostering processes of

negotiation, refinement and problem solving. The following section provides a more detailed description of the workshop.

3 Workshop Description

The workshop, with a total duration of 5 hours (2 + 3), was designed as an introductory course to German, integrated with the use of generative AI.

In the first session, an ice-breaking activity was proposed to foster mutual acquaintance and to elicit students' opinions and experiences related to learning German. In particular, through the metaphor of vehicles, participants were invited to represent their relationship with the language: the *microcar* indicated a cautious and gradual approach; the *SUV* a fast and determined learning style; the *campervan* an exploratory attitude; the *supercar* a perception of already having a good command of the language; and the *truck*, finally, the need for a more guided and structured learning path. This activity made it possible to identify the initial profile of the class.

Subsequently, an initial questionnaire (T0) was administered to investigate participants' perceptions of German and their level of awareness in using artificial intelligence. This was followed by a Mentimeter activity, in which students shared German words they already knew, prompting a reflection on the presence of German in international and Italian vocabulary, and leading into an introduction to the DACHL countries.

On this basis, the Engage-Study-Activate phase [tab. 1] was implemented, focusing on the introduction of greetings and self-presentation in preparation for the creation of a digital artefact. The cycle concluded with a plenary discussion, during which each group presented and commented on its work and received feedback from the instructor.

Subsequently, German compound words were introduced (Leonardi 2025): first through an association activity, and then through an explanation of the compositional mechanism, including the distinction between determinative and copulative compounds, with a focus on *Grundwort* and *Bestimmungswort* (Flinz 2024).

The workshop concluded with the administration of a final questionnaire (T1), which is not analysed in the present study and was aimed at detecting possible changes in students' perceptions of the language and their use of AI.

Table 1 Description of the activities for each phase of the ESA model

Phase	Description
Engage	Introduction to linguistic content through authentic materials (episodes from the series <i>Nicos Weg</i>): greetings, self-presentation, and numbers from 1 to 20. During the viewing, students were invited to participate freely by sharing what they were able to understand, thus fostering active engagement and contextualised learning.
Study	Further work on sounds and basic structures (verbs <i>heißen, sein, kommen, wohnen</i>) and vocabulary for self-presentation. Consolidation was carried out through a Memory game created with Wordwall. An introduction to prompting was also provided, focusing on the clear and unambiguous formulation of requests (5Ws), with particular attention to defining context, objectives, and audience (Adorni 2026; Dornburg, Davin 2024; Giray 2023; Badino, D'Asaro, Pedrazzoli 2024), as well as to issues such as output unpredictability (Dornburg, Davin 2024), potential biases, and data privacy (Yechuri 2024). The iterative nature of interaction with AI was also emphasised, highlighting the role of follow-up cycles in refining generated outputs.
Activate	Group work for the creation of a digital artefact (comic, poster, or video) focusing on self-presentation in German. AI was used to support brainstorming and content generation (e.g. images), while the final product was created using digital tools such as SimpleShow and Canva. The activity promoted authentic language use as well as peer collaboration.

For the creation of the artefacts, a range of digital tools was selected and made available to students, with the aim of offering multiple modes of expression and fostering autonomous choices based on the groups' preferences and competences.

In particular, Book Creator enables the creation of multimodal digital books, allowing the integration of text with images, audio, and video. SimpleShow allows users to produce animated videos from a script, facilitating the transformation of written text into visual sequences accompanied by narration. MakeBeliefsComix, in turn, is an intuitive tool for creating digital comics, particularly suited to representing dialogues and communicative situations. These tools are complemented by Canva, which allows the creation of posters and presentations through easily customisable templates, and Padlet, used as a shared digital board for collecting and presenting students' work, thus promoting sharing and peer interaction.

Such an approach has implications both at the affective level³ and in terms of inclusion. In line with the principles of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (CAST 2024) – multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement – the use of diverse tools broadens access to content and modes of expression, thereby addressing learners’ different needs and learning styles.



Figure 1 Group 2's work

4 Methodology

The present study is situated within a broader research project. In the previous phase, a pre- and post-intervention questionnaire (T0-T1) combining Likert-scale items and open-ended questions was administered. The instrument explored two main dimensions: learners’ affective attitudes towards German as a foreign language (e.g., perceived difficulty, anxiety related to speaking) and their awareness of the role of generative AI in language learning. The open-ended questions further elicited students’ reflections on the potential contribution of AI and digital tools to their learning

³ Arnold 1960; Krashen 1982; Fabbro 1996; Daloiso 2009; Balboni 2013.

experience. While that study adopted a mixed-methods approach focusing on learners' perceptions, the current investigation takes a qualitative perspective, examining learners' interactions with LLMs during the co-creation of a digital artefact in German.

The workshop involved a total of 35 students enrolled in upper-secondary education, organised into five working groups. Participants represented different geographical areas of Italy as well as diverse upper-secondary school tracks. The online format enabled the participation of students from multiple educational contexts nationwide.

The dataset consists of worksheets completed during the Activate phase of a teaching sequence based on the ESA model. These worksheets, designed as a support tool for Prompt-Based Learning, structure and make the activity observable through four sections: (1) Task definition, (2) Prompting strategies, (3) Output analysis and epistemic control, and (4) Reflection and metacognitive awareness. All data were collected and processed in anonymised form.

These sections do not merely function as an operational guide, but also constitute the units of analysis of the study: each allows for the observation of specific dimensions, from the definition of the communicative context to the formulation and revision of prompts, as well as strategies for evaluating outputs and metacognitive reflection. The analysis was conducted through thematic coding across these four dimensions, with particular attention to negotiation dynamics between learners and AI, as well as to collaborative peer interactions. From this perspective, the focus is not on the final product, but on the ways in which learners construct, revise, and adapt linguistic outputs.

5 Data Analysis

The qualitative analysis of the digital artefacts and the design worksheets completed by the five groups provides concrete insights into the learning dynamics that emerged during the Activate phase of the workshop. The task framed AI as a dialogic partner, and the examination of the worksheets clearly highlights the effectiveness of Prompt-Based Learning. The following sections present an overview of the findings for each phase of the process.

5.1 Task Definition

Most groups chose to create digital comics, while one opted for a presentation, using tools such as MakeBeliefsComix and Canva. It is noteworthy that, at this stage, the use of AI was not mandatory:

groups could independently decide whether and how to integrate it into their work. This degree of autonomy made an initial phase of negotiation visible, in which students discussed format, objectives, and modes of implementation, defining the task before interacting with the system.

5.2 Prompting Strategies

The analysis of the worksheets shows that prompting does not take the form of a one-shot interaction, but rather of a structured practice in which different functions may converge, such as task clarification, exploration, item generation, refinement, and evaluation (Scala, Varriale 2026).

A first significant example, drawn from Group 1, consists of an initial prompt such as: “I am a German teacher and I would like to create a three-scene comic about self-presentation between two people in a formal context”, followed by a more targeted refinement request: “Use simple language suitable for lower secondary students who are being introduced to German”. This illustrates how students progressively evaluate the generated outputs and subsequently introduce more specific constraints when needed.

A second example, from Group 3, shows a more articulated use of prompting: “Create an imaginary dialogue with 2 or 3 people, where one is a newly transferred middle school student and the other is the teacher [...]. Use a formal tone with the teacher and a more informal one with the classmate. Make the conversation suitable for A1 level”. Here too, the interaction develops through further refinements: “In the playground scene, replace the questions ‘Do you like the school?’ and ‘Are you new?’ with ‘Where are you from?’ and ‘How old are you?’”. As evidenced by this refinement attempt, students intervene on specific elements of the dialogue, replacing less relevant content with linguistic structures aligned with what had been covered in class. Prompting thus becomes a tool for bringing the output back within the boundaries of the syllabus.

In other cases, such as Group 4, prompting takes on an exploratory function: “Suggest possible themes for the comic and how to design it in Canva”. Here, AI is used to generate ideas and guide the initial phase of the task, while students remain responsible for selecting and developing the proposals.

Finally, Group 5 stands out for a particularly structured use of prompting, combining precise constraints with openness to creativity. The prompt defines the task in detail (“Create a presentation using expressions related to greetings and self-presentation, including name, age, and origin [...] Each slide should include two people interacting”). Students complement the request with a complete

script and include a specific output indicator (“Make it as creative as possible”), in line with prompt engineering principles (Giray 2023). In this case, learners maintain strong control over linguistic content, while relying more on the system for stylistic elaboration.

Despite these different approaches, a common feature across all groups is the iterative nature of interaction: rather than a single, definitive request, the activity unfolds through successive attempts, adjustments, and refinements.

5.3 Output Analysis and Epistemic Control

The “Keep/Remove/Refine” section represents a key component from a pedagogical perspective, as it makes visible the epistemic control exercised by students. Across all groups, the main issue concerns the linguistic complexity of the outputs, which often do not align with the A1 level: for instance, Group 1 noted that the initial language level of the generated content was relatively high. As a result, the group retained ‘characters, scenes, and context’, while intervening to make the sentences ‘simpler and more consistent with what had been covered in class’.

Group 4, by contrast, carried out a thematic selection, maintaining the idea of ‘false friends’ and discarding less relevant suggestions in favour of an ‘intercultural dialogue’. Group 5, finally, reported retaining the linguistic content in full, focusing primarily on the stylistic aspects of the presentation.

These findings show that revision does not occur uniformly, but operates across different dimensions: linguistic, content-related, and stylistic. In some cases, students intervene by issuing new prompts; in others, they directly modify the text or select among the alternatives generated by the LLM. In all cases, however, the output is not accepted uncritically, but is instead evaluated and adapted.

This suggests a dynamic of epistemic control in which AI is not treated as an authoritative source, but as an interlocutor from which material can be drawn and reworked. The inadequacy of the output thus becomes an opportunity for learning and for activating prior knowledge, particularly with regard to linguistic level and the structures actually addressed in class.

5.4 Reflection and Metacognitive Awareness

The final sections highlight difficulties, opportunities, and learning outcomes. Reported difficulties include both linguistic aspects (e.g. outputs that were too advanced) and technical issues (e.g. the use of platforms and tools). The opportunities, on the other hand, mainly

concern the ideational and organisational support provided by AI, which is perceived as useful for generating ideas and initiating the task.

Students' reflections reveal an increasing awareness of their interaction with AI: they recognise the need to provide clear instructions, to critically analyse outputs, and to intervene iteratively. In particular, the idea emerges that the system "needs guidance to improve" and that it is important "not to stop at the first difficulties".

Overall, the data show that interaction with AI takes the form of an iterative and negotiated activity rather than a one-shot use. Moreover, collaboration plays a central role: prompt construction, output revision, and final decisions are shared within groups, fostering peer discussion and collaborative learning.

6 Discussion and Conclusion

The present study extends previous research that examined, through a pre- and post-design, the impact of a generative AI-based intervention on students' perceptions of German and their awareness in using digital technologies. In that context, the findings suggested a moderate reduction in perceived difficulty and a generally stable positive interest in learning German, along with greater awareness of the use of tools such as ChatGPT for the co-creation of digital artefacts. Although these results are not the focus of the present contribution, they provide a useful interpretative framework.

Starting from the research question – *what negotiation dynamics emerge in the use of generative AI during the co-construction of artefacts in German?* – the qualitative analysis has shown that interaction with AI takes the form of an iterative and negotiated activity, rather than a one-shot use. In line with Prompt-Based Learning (Adorni 2026), prompting emerges as a metacognitive practice through which students define constraints, reformulate requests, and progressively adapt the output.

These dynamics can be interpreted within the conception of AI as a *learning companion* (Luckin 2022), in which the user retains epistemic and ethical agency, and within the notion of *co-intelligence* (Sharples 2023), which describes a creative collaboration between human and artificial intelligence. Within this framework, interaction with AI does not merely support language learning, but also provides opportunities for the development of media literacy, understood as the ability to analyse, evaluate, and critically rework digital content.

An additional element that emerged during the plenary reflection concerns students' perception of the limited opportunities within the school context to engage in critical discussions about AI. In this sense, the workshop represented a meaningful space for reflection, offering concrete insights into a more conscious and informed use

of these tools. Overall, the findings suggest that the use of AI in language production tasks cannot be reduced to the mere adoption of a tool, but requires the development of reflective practices in which students evaluate and rework outputs. In this perspective, the planned implementation of a further workshop may provide an opportunity to expand the sample and collect additional data, thus supporting a more in-depth longitudinal analysis.

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