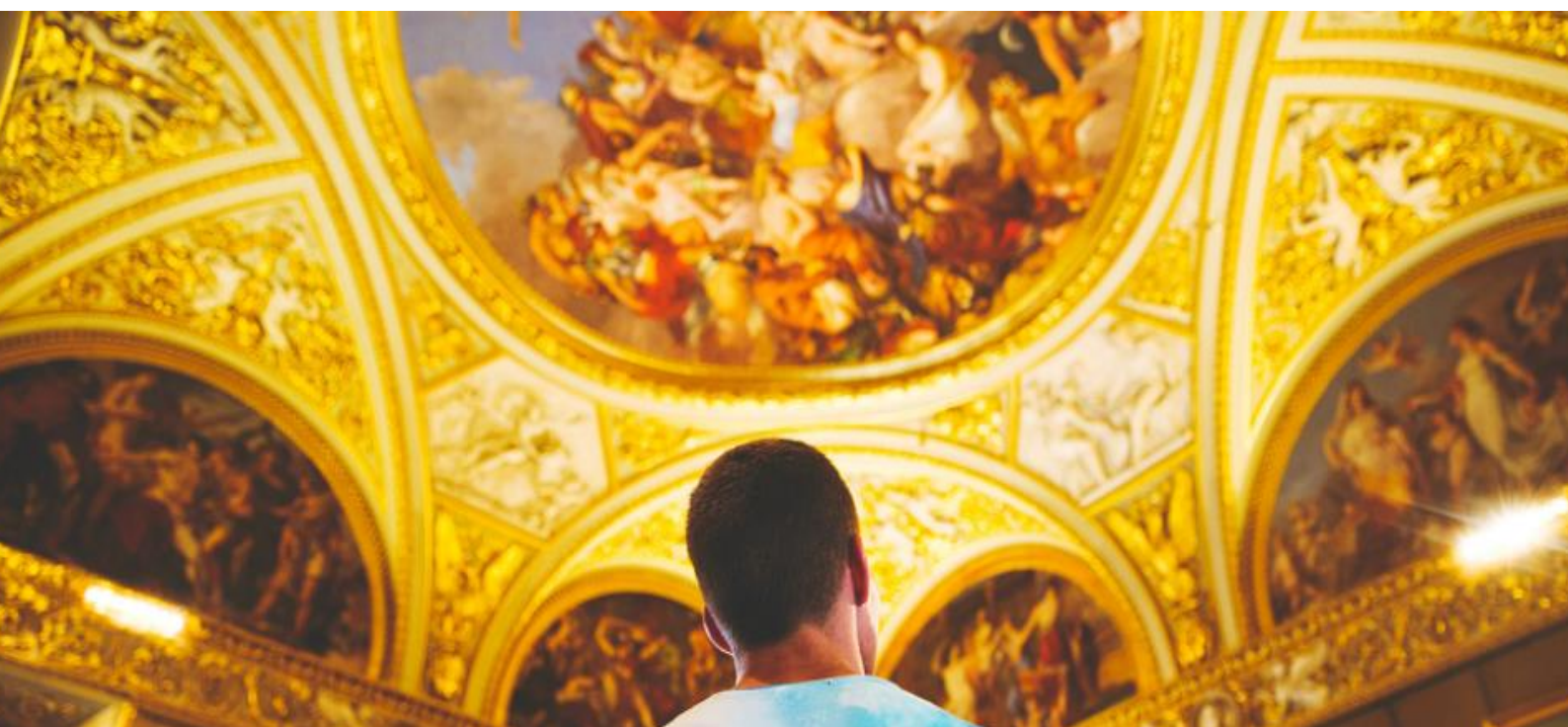


Methodological Guidelines



Pastille Project

Edited by Sonia Maura Barillari and Gianluca Olcese
2nd Edition



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Introduction: from Theory to Praxis

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Abstract

The aim of this guide is to introduce teachers to the use of a new teaching method for Italian as a foreign language, which uses texts, films, songs, and other art forms as tools to transmit culture through the target language by means of modern glottodidactic theory and access to multimedia materials linked to e-learning strategies that can encourage research and development of personal culture. The language learning takes place in a European perspective, aware of the links of continuity and exchange between the different regions of Europe and, starting from the Mediterranean basin, deepens the international historical links in a broad dimension. The teaching materials will be available free of charge for students and teachers, thus contributing to the development of a sense of belonging to Europe and global citizenship. Through the knowledge of the Italian tradition and language, the method consciously encourages the learning of other foreign languages and the link with the culture in which they flourished.

Keywords: didactics, interculturality, Italian, motivation, teaching, languages

1. Introduction

The methodological guide drawn up by the international experts within the PASTILLE project consortium is aimed first and foremost at providing teachers of Italian language and culture with the theoretical key that underpins our method. This guide is aimed at university teachers and, more generally, is accessible to teachers of Italian in schools of different types and grades so that they can make practical use of the didactic units and other tools created for better teaching and learning of the Italian language and deepen their knowledge of the didactic, motivational, and biological aspects that fall within the field of study of the language. The guide can also be helpful to students wishing to achieve a practical understanding of the learning processes and thus consciously stimulate their motivation, while highlighting the double thread linking the language to the culture and therefore to the artistic production of the areas in which it is spoken and an integral part of daily life as a whole, not just in the field of communication.

The contents of the modules include the following information:

Level 1 - Preparatory knowledge introducing the essential information needed to properly understand the overall functioning of the method, which includes, along with theory, references to history and the importance of cultural values.

Level 2 - Specific factors of motivation and demotivation that can occur when learning a new language and the signals allowing to identify them.

Level 3 - Prevention of demotivation and intervention for specific needs of learners, recent acquisitions in the field of language learning, together with elements of neurology.

2. Didactic approaches to the teaching of Italian language

The PASTILLE project aims at deepening the participants' linguistic and cultural knowledge. At the same time, intercultural learning in a rapidly growing European community integrated in the Mediterranean seems to be important also, and above all, in the training of students as future cultural promoters and mediators. It is therefore necessary to develop a wide selection of teaching materials based on cultural expressions that have artistic value, as a model and enrichment.

The teaching units' target groups are students who are proficient in Italian or preparing to learn Italian, in order to provide them with skills and knowledge that the language conveys, about the Italian tradition and reality. The e-learning activities are accompanied by a programme of online seminars for teachers.

For the implementation of the teaching activities, the European Union guidelines on freer and more equitable access to knowledge indicate the use of e-learning to foster the development of new skills and knowledge. Therefore, the material of the PASTILLE project is available free of charge and takes into account advances in research and changes in society, as well as the needs of teachers and students through regular feedback. For these reasons, the practical implementation of the PASTILLE project involves active participation in the choice of topics and production of the material, which is made available online.

The dissemination of theoretical knowledge is indispensable for those who teach a language, to be able to convey information about the culture the language itself carries. The psychological and biological processes of learning influence teaching practice, and the awareness of them promotes the capacity for learning and self-learning. This kind of knowledge increases the student's motivation and is an important factor in the preparation of those who carry out teaching work, or prepare for it, allowing full access and critical understanding of the linguistic-cultural dynamics taking place during the lesson. The PASTILLE programme is developed on the basis of a close interrelation between research activities in different fields with implications for linguistics and glottodidactics, higher education skills and technologies and didactic applications. The implementation is divided into two phases: during the first phase innovative teaching methods, activities and materials will be prepared; all of them will be contextualised in real situations through authentic material, i.e. destined for a mother tongue audience, of recognised artistic value, thus favouring the role of linguistic communication as a vector of culture. The second phase consists of the concrete application of these tools, which will complement and support those currently in use. The methodology envisages learning pathways in line with the indications of the European Commission and the Council of Europe concerning the encouragement of education for plurilingual and multicultural competence (as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

The direct involvement of students through questionnaires and the preparation of activities will motivate a comparative approach to both, language and culture (e.g. to look for common elements between Italian and the language and culture of their home territory). Groups of participants will be asked to complete research tasks that will satisfy their motivational/professional needs and critical capacities. These short studies should further raise participants' awareness of the reciprocal links between their cultural tradition and the Italian one. This will be done through discussions on European cultural heritage from the five involved countries, which represent four important cultural areas of Europe and the Mediterranean basin: Slavic, Baltic, Greek and Romance. The project will enhance the sense of belonging to a community characterised by a great linguistic variety and a dense network of internal references in order to highlight how cultural exchange cannot be limited within national borders.

2.1 Didactic practice

The practical application of various fields of knowledge, as highlighted in this guide, allows for the best possible development of the methodological awareness necessary for teaching and learning by pursuing the objective of realising courses with the support of innovative material for the teaching of the Italian language. The aim is to maintain a high level of interest and involvement of participants through authentic materials

including literature, visual art, aspects of society. The use of new multimedia technologies to develop different skills will ensure an improvement in the language acquisition process and greater effectiveness of the methods. The different uses of the language were divided into skills in the 2002 CEFR – speaking, listening, reading and writing – which led, in the more recent 2018 edition, to the definition of the four communicative modes – receiving, producing, interacting and mediating – which take into account functions involving the different areas of the brain. In the course of the lesson, they must be correctly stimulated, by following a precise order aimed at the directionality of the cerebral hemispheres, also taking into account the motivational factor and the affective filter in teaching practice.

The development of linguistic competence follows a broader perspective, starting from authentic material, not only literary, but also audiovisual, including that preserved in the archives of Italian television and radio. The activities are based on a multidisciplinary approach and they will be used to integrate the language courses through innovative teaching units for learners of all levels, based on reading and listening of theatrical texts, dialogues from auteur cinema, opera and song, images belonging to the contemporary auteur photography context and the history of art. In the preparation we will use texts and material of artistic value and elements of civilisation extracted from the works of writers, intellectuals and thinkers who deal with Italy in a European context and primarily open to the Mediterranean.

Language as a means of communication requires an interlocutory context. During the implementation of the project, students will have moments of direct interaction, where Italian will be the most natural way to communicate. The innovation of the used method aims to foster communication also on the basis of the use of modern technological means, such as social networks, chats and e-learning and blended learning platforms, which become important factors for learning and improving language skills. All this is based on the idea of encouraging lasting contact between people and the use of materials that correspond to the varieties of native speakers through texts and listening produced by speakers at an advanced level in the Italian language. Particular attention will be paid to new multimedia technologies, used for blended learning and e-learning in order to develop complex skills that will ensure a more effective language acquisition process and improve learners' e-skills. During the implementation of the project, students will be actively involved through the reception in the choice and way of using the digital content subsequently published online.

2.2 Intercultural learning

Learning is based on the constant practice of linguistic interaction skills that are themselves an expression of culture, of which they include constant references to the different forms of expression of a society – particularly evident in multi-ethnic, multilingual and multicultural societies such as the current ones. These peculiarities place the PASTILLE project method at the heart of a strategic field for innovation and social development policies in an intercultural and multilingual perspective aimed at the inclusive involvement of the population.

Our intercultural approach, which emphasises the European community context and also integrates new didactic devices, will transform simple language lessons into classes where language is also the means to achieve knowledge of authentic cultural components such as art, music, folk traditions, etc. The implementation will encourage, at all levels of the educational process, interactions between students on the basis of solid linguistic and cultural competence. Teachers and students are expected to interact in the educational process, thus testing the practical usefulness of the acquired skills and thus sustaining a direct motivational impact. Direct contact with people and culture will also be aimed at enhancing references to Italy. These references will highlight the context of exchanges, including cultural ones, and the reciprocal influences between different cultures and geographical areas will be well highlighted, expressed in the places and social phenomena that condition practical life and international relations. References to the reciprocal linguistic and cultural influences within the societies in which we live will be favoured by the study and research groups, which correspond to large language families, will support the students' motivation, linked to the opportunity to apply in real situations the practical skills acquired in class.

3. Innovation

The tools for teaching Italian at a level that is not purely playful and basic rarely introduce activities drawn from authentic material that also have artistic value. By also providing adaptable educational models that support virtual mobility, the educational objectives of the PASTILLE project focus on enriching the materials available to teachers and the cultural competences of Italian learners at all levels. The educational activities can be used by both, Italian language teachers (in universities abroad, as well as Italian as a second language in Italy), and in centres offering courses for foreigners, such as the Dante Alighieri Society. It is useful for the language teacher to always deepen their knowledge of didactic theories, in order to favour the transmission of cultural competences together with linguistic concepts. For students it is equally important to be aware of the learning processes, in order to make the best use of the proposed material and to foster the motivation to continue to higher levels. It is therefore necessary that a student can also acquire the tools of access, to understand and trace the linguistic influences due to geographical exchanges and historical changes, to the reality and culture of the language.

The artistic and cultural expressions constituting the teaching activities are primarily literary, made up of elements that require an in-depth interdisciplinary study, especially for a reader taking his first steps towards the Italian language. The main points of reference will be principles of Renato Morelli's artistic research, the definition of the circumstantial paradigm that Carlo Ginzburg proposed in his method for historical research, Ernesto De Martino's anthropological research, as well as the reciprocal literary and artistic influences that can also be found in popular tradition and folklore: the methodological side will serve as a vehicle for students to understand the links with the Italian cultural tradition. The contents of the courses will be of a linguistic-cultural nature, with particular attention to the development of communicative and critical skills. Language is the vector of our knowledge about the world, and courses will focus on the coherent development of different areas of expressiveness. In addition, it is intended to provide participants with some knowledge of anthropological-cultural phenomena, so that at the end of the courses they will be able to demonstrate a higher degree of non-linguistic competence in the fields discussed during the lessons.

3.1 Foundations for the reception of texts and works of art

Texts constitute the basis for establishing necessary connections between the testimony they bear and the society and context in which they are produced. The choice of materials is in continuity with the interpretative structure of the «aesthetics of reception» that has characterised the Constance School since the studies of Jauss and Iser, whose roots are already detectable in the phenomenological study of literature proposed by Roman Ingarden. Reading is a communicative process in which an exchange relationship is established between author, work and reader: this can be understood in a synchronic and diachronic way. Textual interpretation is the effect produced in an interaction whose elements are conditioned by the recipient, who will develop knowledge about the world and experience as a reader. Assuming a notion of the text that includes aspects of society that relate to everyday practices, this can be extended to the whole activity of the learner and his reading of the world. Here, the active participation of the recipient must be taken into account, since he must be put in the condition of possessing the skills to understand the text in all its extension. On the other hand, the history of literature – and the diachronic view of the reception of texts – takes into account a set of factors parallel to literary creation that must be studied in depth, as well as the lexicon and syntax that characterise a language. These seem to be the necessary premises for investing the reader not only with the role of the recipient of a text, but also with that of an interpreter and disseminator of knowledge about the world.

This includes questions about the character of literary texts and their fiction, as well as the relationship between author, text and recipient of the text. Approaches to interpretation target either the biographical aspects of the respective authors or are derived from the texts themselves. Various lines of argument come into play here: psychoanalytic and sociological approaches to literature can find a place alongside postcolonial and thus migration-related and mediated narratives or feminist and gender issues, as well as perspectives on comparative literary studies or structuralist and post-structuralist approaches, each of which

is reflected in foreign language teaching with tools such as literature and art in a broad sense. Consequently, the aesthetics of reception is central, as the focus on the interaction between the text (the author) and the reader (the recipient of the publication) is dynamic and seems to bring about improvements in linguistic practice, favouring the achievement of communicative and intercultural goals, and is therefore a significant tool for the classroom.

The main result of the project will be an innovative method of language and meta-linguistic training for foreign students. The approach will go beyond simple language training by involving and taking into account the different fields in which Italian is used and implemented in European countries. The new method will be based on an active work on authentic materials (art, literature, current affairs, traditions) and methodological guidelines, in a perspective of the European sense of belonging to a common culture, even if multilingual.

We expect that our activities and innovative contents, together with the method, will contribute to the deepening of the linguistic and cultural competences of those who, both during and after their studies, are themselves cultural promoters and diffusers, through their work activity, study relationships and in general international interpersonal relationships. The contents will revolve around language, tradition, and daily-life situations. The aim is to help shaping a critical thought about Italy and its cultural influences in different areas of Europe and about the traces of other cultures in the Italian tradition and language.

4. Motivation

Italian is the second language in the EU in terms of the number of native speakers¹ [1]. This is an element to be taken into account when highlighting the motivation that drives a good number of people to attend language courses in Italy and abroad every year. Even though it is the official language of a smaller territory than the other major languages, the cultural heritage of the Italian peninsula is one of the most interesting aspects, so the Italian language learner has a good starting motivation, mainly based on pleasure, which contemplates not only the phonetic and rhythmic aspects creating the melody of the spoken language, but also an interest linked to the country's wine and food, artistic, landscape and literary heritage. Learning a culture requires a good knowledge of its language, just as learning a language requires a good knowledge of the culture in which that language is cultivated. This aspect is vital according to contemporary models of communicative competence, which include in addition to grammatical knowledge, sociolinguistic skills, pragmatic skills, sociocultural knowledge, and intercultural awareness.

New technologies allow both, e-learning activities and the didactic application of existing tools for communication and language improvement. The teacher plays the role of guide and facilitator, through a wide range of different materials used to develop students' language skills by linking language textbooks to cultural heritage such as landscape, popular traditions and forms of artistic expression made accessible for example through in-person or virtual visits to museum and archaeological sites, opera concerts, or the use of multimedia materials such as audiovisual information sources.

The Italian language is fundamental within the fields of art, research (historical, artistic, scientific and philological), landscape, tourism, wine and food tradition, manufacturing and design, clothing and industry. Many people approach the study of the Italian language as a consequence of a good personal motivation. For us, the motivational approach is linked to the experiential side of contact with language and culture at the same time. We intend to emphasise the role of direct contact with Italian art and culture in the students' places of origin and to highlight reciprocal European and non-European influences, primarily in the Mediterranean basin.

¹ The most widely spoken mother tongue in the EU is German (16%), Italian at 13% (along with English before Brexit), French at 12%, followed by Polish and Spanish at 8% each.

4.1 Expected results

The aim of this guide is to enrich the methodological tools available to active and future teachers, linking the Italian language, tradition and reality, and to deepen teachers' and students' awareness of the dynamics of learning. The PASTILLE project envisages a didactic pathway aimed not only at developing specific skills, but also at highlighting and promoting a concept of identity based on inclusion, which develops in the form of an exchange of knowledge: at the roots of European identity lies the dialogue between the different traditions of both the countries of the continent and non-European countries, starting from the Mediterranean basin and the Near East. The history of these areas is deeply interconnected and linked to Europe by a common past, as shown by the numerous testimonies of mutual influences in all fields of knowledge. This will serve as a model for advanced language training, primarily among the Romance languages. The methodological guidelines contain a model that makes it possible to replicate the comparative approach of the PASTILLE project within other major language families and to work on the common elements that exist between the Mediterranean and Slavic areas and those of other European cultures. This has been made possible thanks to the dialogue between the regions of the continent, a principle whereby traditions, through continuous cultural and commercial exchanges, are subject to a rich mutual influence. We live in times in which it seems necessary to highlight the common and shared roots of every cultural sphere – linguistic, artistic, literary, geographical and political: through the PASTILLE project we propose to show students, in a comparative perspective, developments and common elements on which the well-being of society is based and which will allow to strengthen and improve peaceful coexistence in Europe and develop it in neighbouring countries, for which linguistic-cultural competence, which is the heart of the project, is an essential vehicle.

5. Conclusion

The innovative aspect of the PASTILLE project will be a mixed competence of the students which is both, linguistic and cultural. The focus on common heritage is unusual as a starting point for language learning. This kind of training will also promote a sense of European belonging, which is not yet integrated in most existing teaching methods.

Literary and popular sources, artistic objects and any other kind of authentic artistic material are a new element which requires interdisciplinary sociological, historical and ethno-anthropological analysis, especially for readers coming from more than one culture. A new methodological aspect, both in the selection and preparation of teaching content, will be used as a vehicle for understanding the rich links between Italian cultural and popular traditions. The course will provide diverse linguistic and cultural content with a focus on developing both, communicative skills and critical thinking of learners.

Language is part of a culture, and therefore reflects and interprets the culture itself.

Didactic Units will present factual knowledge about fine arts such as literature, music, dance, painting, sculpture, theatre and film, encompassing a wide variety of interconnected aspects, including attitudes, assumptions, beliefs, perceptions, norms and values, social relations, customs, celebrations, rituals, conventions of courtesy, patterns of interaction and organisation of discourse, the use of time in communication and the use of physical space and body language.

Cultural elements of artistic value add relevance and motivation to the learning process. The study of a different language is essential to help realise the potential of our multicultural and multilingual environment which requires mutual understanding.

It is necessary to develop an awareness of multicultural citizenship and to ensure meaningful connections to foster global understanding. Culture may include extending content, setting the context of content in a different tradition, discussing how students in a different environment may approach the same topic, or the awareness of developing an idea of global citizenship [2].

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Methodological Premise²

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Abstract

What techniques did the ancients use for learning? What principles did they follow? Are there any similarities with today's glottodidactic approach? How can we enhance acquisition by supporting the mind in pursuing its nature?

The first part of the chapter provides an analysis of the rules of the ancient art of memory, applied by orators in the classical era, and the philosophy behind the didactics of the past. This is followed by the introduction to the concept of directionality, the principle underlying the affective humanistic communicative approach, which serves as the basis for constructing the phases of a lesson. Finally, we propose a synthesis of the main associative relations useful for memorization, and of the didactic techniques for contextual learning of vocabulary and grammar.

Keywords: *memory, glottodidactics, Italian, acquisition*

1. The art of ancient memory

Regrettably, the Greek works expounding the rules of the art of classical memory have been lost; the only source that remains belongs to the Latin tradition.

The text in question is the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, which dates back to 86 BC. It defines, among other things, the fields of competence of the orator, one of which is memory. Throughout the Middle Ages, its authorship was attributed to Cicero; later it proved to be the work of an anonymous master of rhetoric, who drew the rules from Greek sources, presumably from Metrodorus of Scepsis. Described by the author as 'the ark of inventions' and the guardian of all parts of rhetoric, **memory** can take two forms, **natural** and **artificial**.

The former is innate to the mind and directly linked to thought, while the latter may be enhanced and trained through education. The first step in practising the art of *artificial memory* will be to choose a place, the most useful being a spacious, varied and ornate building. The places should not be similar to each other, neither too big nor too small, neither too brightly lit, but not too dark either. One can also resort to an invented place, preferably an architectural structure with irregular spaces, which would facilitate memorisation. Moreover, the memory places can possibly be reused to remember different things, by erasing the preceding images and inserting new ones.

In the second phase, we need to mentally create a figure in the act of doing something; in order to be effective, it should be of exceptional beauty or ugliness, in other words either beautifully adorned or disfigured, impressive or ridiculous. It is necessary to create emotional strikes that facilitate memorisation. Moreover, each person needs to form his or her own personal images and arrange them in an orderly manner so that the thread of the discourse can be retraced at any time and starting from any point desired,

² The author would like to thank Alicja Grabarczyk for her support with the translation.

with the possibility to proceed in either direction, forward or backward. Nature itself teaches us how to proceed: when we see something that affects us positively or negatively, we are able to remember it without any problem, whereas normal, ordinary things slip our minds quite easily.

In essence, memory can be compared to writing: the places would represent wax tablets, the images would be letters, while the arrangement of the images would correspond to writing, and lastly, speaking would correspond to reading. There are two types of artificial memory: memory for things, that is, concepts, and memory for words, *memoria verborum*, the recollection of a discourse word for word. In our case we will deal with the former, namely, *memoria rerum*.

To trace its origins, one should refer to the *Parian Chronicle*, an inscription dating back to 264 B.C., which records the dates of the most important discoveries made by mankind, and according to which the creation of this discipline is the work of Simonides of Ceos, known as Melicus. The lyric poet, also famous for being the first to charge a fee for his poems, lived in Greece's most flourishing period, between the 6th and 5th centuries BC. The framework in which the concept of memory developed is therefore that of the greatest thinkers of antiquity: Aristotle, the philosopher of reference in the scholastic period, and Plato, heir to the maieutic approach proposed by Socrates, the rediscovery of whom formed the basis of the Italian Renaissance.

According to Plato, ideas are already present in the memory: like preconceptions, they can be remembered through intuition, a faculty residing in the soul. Being dormant in memory, they only wait to come to light, while material things constitute their reflection, their shadows. According to this theory, expounded in the *Phaedo*, true knowledge consists in adapting the imprints that are derived from sensory impressions, to the ideas, the seal from which they originate. For this reason, in order to give form to material things, derived from sensory impressions, it would be necessary to refer to the corresponding perfect idea found in the suprasensible world, from which imperfect copies would emerge. For the philosopher, the aim of rhetoric would not be to pursue one's own ends, as the Sophists did, but rather correspond to the art of telling the truth. The teacher would be responsible for facilitating this process in the pupil through the Socratic maieutics, the art of giving birth to ideas, a methodology that came before the inductive approach currently used in modern didactics.

In *The Topics*, also Aristotle recommends that artificial memory be used for arguments on frequently recurring issues, in the belief that it makes man more capable of reasoning. In the work *On Memory and Reminiscence*, he considers the imagination to be an intermediary between perception and thought: the soul never thinks without a mental image, so thinking is like remembering. Images determine recollection through their reconstruction, whereas thought is determined by their deliberate selection. For this reason, remembering should follow the same principles as thinking, which occurs in a natural way. Memory, belonging to the same part of the soul as imagination, would correspond to the collection of mental images, like painted pictures, whose state of permanence depends on age and temperament. In particular, Aristotle clarifies the two fundamental principles of association and order: according to the principle of association, we can remember what we want by starting from something similar, opposite or closely related: by similarity, diversity or contiguity. The principle of order is linked to the movements of memory which follow the same sequence as the original events, hence the importance of recovering facts in order, the need for a starting point.

The art of memory was later perfected by Metrodorus of Scepsis, one of the last representatives of Hellenism and a contemporary of Cicero. He authored several writings on rhetoric – the art of which memory was a part in classical times – in which he expounded his doctrine.

2. The natural stages of acquisition

Until recently, and in many cases still today, the teaching of foreign languages focused on the use of the left hemisphere, where the mechanisms of language are located, above all by means of analytical and sequential activities.

Nowadays, due to the development of modern language teaching and the communicative humanistic affective approach, we also make use of the potential of the right hemisphere and its globalising, analogical, visual and synthesising functions. The grammar/translation method, i.e. the former approach, favours students with logical/mathematical skills, to the detriment of those who are more intuitive and who find it easier to grasp the overall, general sense of a concept, but who find it more difficult to deal, for example, with individual grammatical aspects.

In order to acquire, and thus to *internalise*, certain knowledge, and to memorise communicative functions, vocabulary and grammar in the long term, it would be easier if we could use both hemispheres in symbiosis with each other.

The concept of **directionality** clarifies the course in which we perceive information, first through the right hemisphere and then through the left, in a game of cross-references. It is a principle intrinsic to that of bimodality, which makes it possible to plan the sequencing of the study of a foreign language and of any other discipline. First of all, it is important to have or set a goal to achieve that comes as close as possible to one's own passions and personal needs.

The first phase is **motivation**. It represents the first contact with the subject and involves the participation of both modalities. As observations show, we initially focus our attention on pleasure, on the attractiveness of a particular subject or topic. We learn what we enjoy naturally and with little difficulty. Curiosity stimulates the desire to make assumptions, a drive that is supported by necessity, which in turn determines how practical and useful it can be in reaching a linguistic goal (such as getting by in an everyday situation like finding a flat) or how the language might facilitate finding a rewarding job.

This is followed by a **global** phase, during which one gets an initial, general idea of the contents. It is similar to a first reading of a textbook in a specific discipline, e.g. literature, history, philosophy, etc., or to *comprehending the general meaning* of a text in a foreign language. At this stage it is not essential to know all the words, but to understand the general sense of the message, if only approximately.

Starting from a general overview, we move on to a more detailed **analysis** of individual issues, in the course of which the text is broken down and studied in smaller units through condensed paraphrases, diagrams, mental maps or grammatical analysis and hypotheses on how the language works, a more detailed comprehension phase involving the exploration of new vocabulary.

The next step is the **synthesis** of what has been studied. This can be accomplished by designing a scheme providing a proper overview of the concepts as a whole, so that they are linked together in a logical sequence. Other useful ideas may include summaries or "ladders" of the fundamental concepts that one needs to keep in mind, preparing charts or even formulating a rule induced and derived from the analysis of particular examples.

The basis for the development of new knowledge emerges through **reflection**. Certain fields of research are explored in greater depth by coming up with new solutions or by making new use (through games or communicative exercises) of the vocabulary and grammar obtained in the previous phases.

To learn a language in the best possible way without missing anything, one should simultaneously practise all four skills required to understand messages and communicate intentions in both written and oral form.

Nature teaches us in what time sequence this process takes place and which skills are most important. This can best be understood by drawing a parallel with children who, before being able to speak, first communicate their needs through body language. It is only after a couple of years, as a result of listening and observing external reality, that they begin to communicate verbally. When they begin to speak, they do so in a very simplified way. The same is true of people approaching a foreign language. After an initial phase in which they tend to simplify things, e.g. by using verbs in the infinitive or omitting articles, they gradually become more and more proficient as they internalise the typical structures and forms of the target language.

In the short-term, however, it is important to convey information and to understand it; correctness comes second.

In everyday life our understanding, and consequently our recollection of certain messages, is facilitated by observation of the place in which we find ourselves, the situation, the facial expressions and gestures of our interlocutor. All this is encoded by our brain through images. Therefore, just like in a real situation, in the course of a lesson we should have the opportunity to look at images that are congruent with the topic at hand.

Only afterwards will the reading of a text be proposed; at this point, the students will be asked to complete corresponding tasks aimed at understanding the written meaning, or to write an essay. These activities represent the moment of greater reflection on what has been learnt at oral level and may be done as homework, partly in order to review what has been learnt but not yet acquired. In this way, the language can be put to practical use in different life situations: of primary importance is the rule of "learning by doing", meaning that the learner is encouraged to be active and participate in the construction of his or her acquisition process. "One learns by talking" and therefore, especially in the context of the second language, the priority should be placed on oral communication, favouring interaction between the participants.

3. Acquisition of contextualized vocabulary

At the beginning, it would be useful to concentrate on acquiring vocabulary related to the situations in which one wants to communicate in order to be understood, only then one should concern oneself with giving it formal coherence.

The communicative approach can be consistently applied at the mental level, playing with your imagination. You could use the power of imagination going to the local grocers or clothes shop, recreating the situation of a job interview, commenting on a football match or imagining the everyday actions we usually perform. Or when out walking in the city or in the countryside, you could try to name and describe things encountered on the way in your target language. The main techniques and associative relationships useful in vocabulary acquisition include:

1. A technique used to bring about new consciousness is called *brain storming*. The central theme can be any subject you want to explore; all around it, write down the ideas that come to mind, in no particular order.
2. The next step is the construction of a *spider gram*, a scheme that starts from the centre consisting of a hyperonym that represents the object of study, a precise semantic field or the theme we wish to explore. It is then expanded by attaching related hyponyms, terms with a more narrow semantic field. This technique has the power to facilitate memorisation since it organises knowledge in the same way as it is represented in our brain, that is, by subdividing it in groups and categories, through visual chains which constitute the graphic representation of the mental semantic chains. An example of a lexical scheme could be: animals – cat (meows, scratches) – dog (barks, wags tail) etc.
3. A group of words could be presented in the form of a sequence which, in order to be memorised, should be complete, i.e. closed. For example, if we want to remember "almost everything", it would be useful to put it in a series: **nothing – a little – enough – almost everything – everything**. For the same reason, it appears useful to simply juxtapose antonyms (fat – thin, beautiful – ugly), which can be further developed, as shown in the example above, in a series: obese – fat – robust – slim – thin – scrawny; wonderful – beautiful – pleasant – cute – ugly – hideous.
4. *Logical associations* are activities that consist in creating sentences or stories using certain words that one wants to memorise, which would then be put into context. Drawing up a list of words by forming logical relations would facilitate faster retrieval of the vocabulary in the semantic memory. For example, after a conversation class, during which a student has noted down new words, it is

recommended that they write a short story containing the words they need to memorise and, if necessary, the grammatical forms they found problematic during the class.

5. *The association between words and images* can be created using drawings on the blackboard, photos or real objects and is useful not only can be used not only at the early stages of learning, but at all times: it has been proven that a person remembers better what they have heard and seen simultaneously, compared to what they have only heard. For example, the learner, whether staying in their room, or elsewhere, even walking down the street, can list the nouns belonging to the semantic field of "room" or "street" by associating them directly with their image. For this reason, such tools as picture dictionaries, structured according to semantic fields/categories, as well as thematic and situational posters can also prove useful in the process of memorisation.
6. *The association between sound and word* is based on the analogy created between a particular sound and certain terms, useful for example to categorise participles according to their endings: *preso, reso, teso / cotto, rotto, tradotto / risposto, disposto, proposto*. The same applies to nouns in terms of their derivative suffixes: professor, actor, sculptor / bricklayer, songwriter, teacher.
7. Another example is that of association through rhyme. Typically used with children, it is based on the assonance between words, for example in songs and nursery rhymes that young learners are happy to repeat several times.
8. Another technique is the *keyword method*, which relies on the ability to form acoustic and visual links between the word one wants to memorise and another word that they already know. Once the association has been established, the student creates a mental image of the connection. The keyword can also be a phrase, the important thing being that it is as acoustically similar as possible to at least part of the foreign word being learnt. This allows for the creation of an image that one can easily remember and at the same time distinguish from other keywords. The technique is particularly suitable for learning words and verbs that designate concrete things, as they are more easily associated with images. It may happen that we know a word but struggle to retrieve it from memory as we speak (but "have it on the tip of our tongue"), in which case the keyword method can help us remember it. For example, if we want to remember the Polish word *słońce* (sun), we could associate it with the Italian word *suono* (sound) by visualising the image of the sun with hands, playing a musical instrument.
9. Memorisation, and consequently the learning of foreign languages, can be aided by the so-called **mental visualisation** of an imaginary film, for example in reference to frequently repeated actions, such as daily routines, or in order to memorise terms which are particularly difficult to recall, and which may be linked to places we regularly visit. This way, the images that we create in our mind in the form of a "mental film" can lead us to the word we want to remember. For example, one could imagine a possible dialogue at the corner shop or at a job interview.
10. Once again, we mention the association between *synonyms* (die, pass away) and *antonyms* (big, small), which prove useful insofar as they present complete systems.
11. Next, we analyse the technique of **visual anchors**. This method allows us to visualise real things, for example by writing words to memorise on sheets of paper, accompanied by a drawing or translation, which we then put in the spaces in the house we use most frequently, such as a wardrobe or a fridge. Like other previously discussed techniques, this one relies on the use of the sense of sight, which helps us remember things much more easily than if we just relied on our sense of hearing. The simultaneous use of the two codes (verbal and visual) can play a decisive role in our learning because it involves the activation of both hemispheres.
12. To fully understand all meanings and connotations of a term, it must be introduced in connection with situations of its use and thus in a specific context or in a communicative situation. Consequently, it is

also important to focus on the **connotative** and cultural aspects of words right from the start. In any given dictionary, the first meaning of a term, the primary one by which it is identified, is called **denotative**. The meanings that appear later are referred to as **connotative**, and correspond to the nuances of meaning and the profound character of the language, reflecting the cultural differences between people, those that can normally lead to misunderstandings. To give an example, in the word **fox** we can distinguish two meanings: the **denotative** one, specifically pertaining to the literal meaning of the term, which can be found in a descriptive text, namely, a carnivorous mammal characterised by certain properties. The **connotative** meaning, on the other hand, refers to the figurative sense attached to the term: the word carries the connotation of *cunning*, which, depending on the context, may be positive or negative, and is often linked to the popular and literary knowledge of one or more linguistic communities.

4. Conclusions

The method used in *Pastille* is based on the techniques inspired by contemporary studies. The project is intended to implement the communicative humanistic affective approach; for this reason, the organisation of the phases of each didactic module will be subject to the principle of directionality.

The student is expected to take charge of his or her own course of study, and therefore to be active and aware of the techniques that facilitate memorisation, particularly those associated with vocabulary. The teacher shall assume the role of acquisition facilitator. Keeping explanations to a minimum, he or she will guide the students to deduce the rule on their own, so that they can derive satisfaction from having understood it and continue to enjoy discovering and learning.

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Module 1 – Language acquisition

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Abstract

During the period 1989–1996 the European Council of Europe has carried out a project aiming at promoting multilingualism in Europe and ensuring uniformity between its Member States as regards education and culture, supporting in parallel transparency and consistency in the learning and teaching of languages in Europe. The "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages" (CEFR) and the "European Language Portfolio" (ELP) are the most important outcomes of this project. It is essential for everyone involved in the teaching and learning of European languages to have a good knowledge of their content.

The CEFR establishes a common basis for programs and guidelines in the field of language learning and teaching, language qualifications, textbooks, exams, and study paths in different European countries. As far as students, private language providers and language assessment bodies are concerned, the CEFR guarantees transparency and offers the possibility of comparing the various language courses available. The reason that leads to obtaining an official certification is, in most cases, to increase one's chances in the labor market [1]. The "European Language Portfolio" (ELP) which is based on the CEFR aims at promoting multilingualism, the mobility of citizens in the European Union as well as the democratic European citizenship [2]

In this first module, initially there will be presented and briefly analyzed the objectives of the "Common European Framework of Reference" (CEFR), its theoretical approach and its structure, as well as its innovative aspects. Then, the objectives of the "European Language Portfolio" (ELP) will be defined and its essential elements will be also described. At the end, the module will present the most common Italian language Certifications which are issued by various linguistic assessment bodies and are internationally recognized.

Keywords: CEFR, ELP, certifications, Italian, languages

1. Introduction

In the European Union there are over 60 regional or minority languages, which are spoken by almost 40 million people. For this reason, the European Union has adopted a policy which aims to promote communication between citizens in their respective languages, protect Europe's rich linguistic heritage and boost language learning in Europe. The promotion of language learning is of great importance to the European Council, as it can help more people to live and study abroad, it can facilitate mutual understanding between people from different countries and cultures and it can promote successful working collaborations in Europe as well as the language industry (i.e., language teaching, translation and interpretation, language technologies, etc.). This reality has prompted the Council of Europe to recognize the need for mutual recognition of linguistic qualifications between European states by providing suitable tools for language learning guidance in order to preserve and increase multilingualism among European citizens. These tools are the "Common European Framework of Reference" (CEFR) and the European Linguistic Portfolio (PEL) which will be analyzed in the following sections [3].

2. Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

2.1 Definition and objectives of CEFR

CEFR is an English acronym that stands for “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages”: Learning, Teaching, Assessment, called in Italian QCER, ie., “Quadro Comune Europeo di Riferimento per la conoscenza delle lingue” [4]. This is the framework to which anyone refers for defining or grading the levels of foreign language proficiency. The CEFR actually applies to every European language, and it is a framework which was widely adopted in Europe after its publication by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg (November 2001) that recommended its adoption in order to build a common validation system for language skills. The CEFR is available in 40 languages and is one of the best known and most used tools offered by the Council of Europe. More concretely, the study on the CEFR was conducted by the Council of Europe in the context of the project “Language Learning for European Citizenship” during its first phase between 1989 and 1996. Its updated version entitled “Companion Volume” (CEFRCV) [5], which includes new descriptors (including those for sign language), was published in April 2020 by the Council of Europe and can be downloaded for free at the following link: <https://rm.coe.int/cefr-companion-volume-with-new-descriptors-2018/1680787989>

One of the central purposes of the CEFR is to objectively define all the linguistic abilities of an “ideal” native speaker, taking into account the common and pre-established parameters of all European languages with the aim of describing the different language levels.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is a tool that has three primary objectives:

- Provide language professionals across Europe with a common and transparent frame of reference for the development of language syllabuses, guidelines for the curriculum, textbooks, exams, etc.
- Contribute to overcoming communication obstacles arising from different European education systems.
- Define language proficiency levels against which to measure the progress of learners at each stage of their learning on a life-long basis [6].

Other objectives of the CEFR are the following:

- Promote multilingualism and the variety in the choice of languages in the curriculum;
- Support the development of multilingual profile of individual learners;
- Support teachers’ training and the cooperation between teachers of different languages;
- Improve quality and success in learning, teaching, and assessment;
- Facilitate the transparency in tests and the comparability of certifications [7].

2.2 The theoretical approach, core and structure of the CEFR

The theoretical approach adopted by the CEFR focuses on action. The speaker has the profile of an active person who performs various speech acts with the aim of achieving purposes of communication. In fact, the CEFR promotes an authentic approach to languages and considers them as a means of social exchange which is achieved through the application of various skills and competences, in different co-communicative contexts. Linguistic-communicative competence and its components (linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic competence) are found on the theoretical basis of the CEFR.

The core of the CEFR is made up of:

1. The descriptive scheme that defines four modes of activity and strategies of communicative language (reception, production, interaction, mediation);
2. General skills that include the ability to learn and the communicative language skills (linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic);

3. A global scale for common reference levels (A1-C2).

The common reference levels of the CEFR aim to provide standard descriptions to support and facilitate the language learning planning but also the different language assessment and certification systems. The CEFR establishes three progressive levels and each of them is divided into two further sub-levels. Each level outlines the language proficiency profile that each learner should develop taking into consideration the four basic linguistic skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). More concretely, the three levels are the following:

1. The Basic User's (Elementary) Level is divided into 2 sub-levels: A1 (Breakthrough or beginner) and A2 (Waystage or elementary);
2. The Independent User's (Intermediate) Level is divided into 2 sub-levels: B1 (Threshold or intermediate) and B2 (Vantage or upper intermediate);
3. The Proficient User's (Advanced) Level is divided into 2 sub-levels: C1 (Effective, Operational, Proficiency level or advanced) and C2 (Mastery or proficiency). [14]

To better explain and define the different levels, several descriptors have been proposed that refer to linguistic-communicative strategies and skills, but also to different communication activities, and are presented in different scales and grids. First of all, a global scale (Table 1) is proposed which describes the common reference levels but also a self-assessment grid (intended for learners and articulated by linguistic activities apart from the levels) and a table with qualitative aspects of the language (i.e., interaction, fluency, extension, correctness, coherence), at more specific scales which are divided in various linguistic activities.

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Table 1. Common Reference Levels: global scale [14]

2.3 Innovative aspects of the CEFR

The “Companion volume” published in April 2020 by the Council of Europe completes and updates the “Common European Framework of Reference for the knowledge of languages” (CEFR). It also further develops some of its essential elements.

The CEFR makes a paradigm shift in language education by introducing several innovative concepts, which include: interaction, mediation, multilingualism and the users/learners' view of the language as social agents. Learners are engaged in a reflective, strategic, and action-oriented approach that mobilizes their comprehensive language repertoires to perform real-life tasks and to further develop their intercultural awareness and their multilingual profiles. The CEFR considers the language user/learner as a “social agent”, acting in the social world, co-building meaning via interaction with others and being active during his/her learning process. This shows a remarkable shift in both course planning and teaching, promoting student's involvement and autonomy. Seeing learners as social agents implies their involvement in the learning process [8].

More concretely, The “Companion Volume” provides a wide range of new scales for different aspects of language proficiency (including mediation, plurilingual/pluricultural competence, online communication, literature appreciation) and a new analytic scale for phonological competence and descriptors for the language signs. Furthermore, the “Companion Volume” adds and updates the common reference levels (i.e., Level Pre A1: pre-basic, C2, levels +, etc.) and proposes a new self-evaluation grid which introduces new self-evaluation elements such as mediation [5].

All of these various initiatives are intended to encourage readers to investigate and experiment with new and updated descriptors in relation to curriculum planning, assignment design, and teacher assessment by promoting an inclusive, action-oriented, multilingual, and intercultural education [5]. The European Center for Modern Languages (ECML) offers language teachers and educators a quality web-based tool called Matrix CEFR-QualiMatrix (www.ecml.at/CEFRqualitymatrix) and aims to ensure the correct implementation of the CEFR and to promote linguistic innovation.

3. European Language Portfolio (ELP)

3.1 Definition and objectives of the ELP

The European Language Portfolio (hereafter referred to as ELP) (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/portfolio>) was conceived as a concept by the Council of Europe and is a very useful document for those studying one or more European languages. The main purpose of the ELP is to offer the opportunity to the learner of a language to create a personal documentation of his/her language skills. In the ELP each learner can record and monitor his/her linguistic progress, but he/she can also reflect on the results obtained, thus participating in his/her own learning process [9] [10].

In fact, the ELP is an essential tool not only for those learning a foreign language but also for those who want to travel and work in Europe. The ELP facilitates the mobility of citizens in Europe, strengthens mutual understanding between European citizens, and promotes multilingualism as a continuous learning process, as well as the awareness of belonging to the European cultural identity. In this way, every European citizen can use the ELP as an internationally recognized instrument of documentation and enhancement of his/her language studies.

More concretely, there are two main objectives of the Portfolio project [9]:

- a) provide motivation to those who learn one or more European languages, recognizing their efforts to strengthen and expand language skills at all levels;

- b) provide European citizens with valid documentation which will not only attest to the level of their linguistic and cultural skills, but will also constitute a curriculum which will offer them support in looking for a job both in their own country and abroad.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the European Linguistic Portfolio (ELP) are both initiatives of the Council of Europe that have a close and essential link between them. This is attested by the sharing of the evaluation scale (and self-evaluation), which facilitates the comparison between the various linguistic qualifications.

3.2 The essential elements of the ELP

The ELP consists of three different parts: a) the “Language Passport” which contains the so-called “self-assessment grid”; b) the “Linguistic Biography” which includes the checklists with the analytical descriptors of the different skills, divided according to the activities and the different levels of the CEFR; c) the “Dossier”.

More concretely, the “Language Passport” is a personal document that provides a picture of all the language skills that a learner possesses in the different languages that are defined in terms of skills and with respect to the various levels proposed by the CEFR. All formal language certifications obtained (i.e., academic qualifications, exams) are recorded in the “Language Passport” and the different linguistic and intercultural learning experiences are described. In addition, you can also find information that refers to the learner's still incomplete language skills, but, moreover, it includes language learning assessments by the teacher, the school, and the student himself.

The “Linguistic Biography” is the second part of the ELP, in which the learner inserts more analytical information than those presented in the “Language Passport”, which relate rather to their linguistic experiences in different contexts and communicative environments (i.e., at school, in the family, at work). This section of the “Portfolio” is inspired by the idea that the active involvement of the learner in the learning process can have a positive impact on his/her study of languages and on the results achieved.

The “Dossier” is the set of the most representative evidence of learners' language proficiency, i.e, activities and projects that can document the intercultural experiences and language skills declared in the “Language Passport”. This section of the ELP has an open form of a folder that contains various documents such as: photocopies of certificates for language courses followed, photocopies of certificates of attendance, or some verification, photocopies of evaluation forms completed in the school context, as well as the final result of an individual or group project carried out in class (i.e., video, booklet). From a pedagogical point of view, the “Dossier” has an important value, as it offers the opportunity to the learner to show his/her products related to his/her learning, reflecting on the linguistic and intercultural experiences gained both at school and outside the school environment [9].

3.3 ELP and CEFR

Having good knowledge of the content of the “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages” (CEFR) and the “European Linguistic Portfolio” (ELP), as well as being informed about their possible updates, is essential for everyone involved in the foreign or second languages' teaching and learning. The ELP and the CEFR are interdependent as the ELP is based on the CEFR and adopts its six (6) levels of language proficiency. The owner of an ELP is encouraged to use the CEFR to document and assess his/her language skills [6]. The online ELP is available here:

<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680492ff9>

4. Certificates of Knowledge of the Italian Language as a Foreign language or Second language

4.1 Internationally Recognized Language Certifications

A language certification is a formal document that certifies the level of knowledge of a language, is issued by a recognized certification body, and has an international value. The linguistic certification is, therefore, the instrument with which the linguistic skills possessed by a person in a specific language, other than his/her mother tongue, are recognized in a formal and objective way.

Currently, in Italy, the institutions that are members of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) are able to issue internationally recognized language certifications which in any case respect all the parameters of the CEFR and follow its own indications and directives [11].

The certifications of knowledge of the Italian language are the following [12]:

- CELI (Certificate of knowledge of the Italian Language) is a recognized qualification issued by the Perugia University for foreigners and includes 6 levels of linguistic competence. The same university also issues the “Commercial Italian Certificate” (CIC), a certification of knowledge of commercial Italian of two levels (CIC Intermedio and CIC Advanced) which is intended for anyone who wishes to work or already works in organizational or business areas where knowledge of the Italian language is one of the necessary qualification requirements. Perugia University for foreigners also offers exams, such as the “CELI Immigrati” (immigrants) and “CELI Adolescenti” (adolescents), targeted at specific groups. In this case, based on the needs and characteristics of each type of user, the most suitable textual genres and tasks are chosen, always respecting the methods adopted within the examination tests. The exams are held in three annual sessions (spring, summer, and autumn) in Italy and also abroad at the Italian Cultural Institutes.
- CILS (Certificate of Italian as a Foreign Language) is a certificate issued by the University for Foreigners of Siena which includes six (6) levels. The university also offers exams aimed at children, adolescents, and immigrants with poor education. The exams are held twice a year (June and December) at national offices in Italy as well as at authorized centers abroad.
- PLIDA (Progetto Lingua Italiana Dante Alighieri) is a certification issued by the Dante Alighieri Society which includes 6 levels. The institute also offers business Italian exams which certify three (3) levels. All exams are held twice a year and are held at authorized centers worldwide.
- CERT.IT (Certificate of general competence in Italian as a foreign language) is a qualification issued by the University of Roma Tre, which is divided in 4 levels (A2 base.IT, B1 ele.IT, B2 int.IT, C2 IT) and the exams are held three times a year in Italy and abroad at authorized centers [13].

4.2 Language Certificates Not Internationally Recognized

In addition to the linguistic certifications for the Italian language which are internationally recognized, there are also those which are recognized at European and/or national level. A characteristic example is the “The Greek state certificate for Italian language proficiency” (KPG) which is issued by the Greek Ministry of Education (<http://kpg.cti.gr/>) and is recognized by all members of the European Union. Another case is the “Ail Firenze diploma” of Italian language, issued by the Italian Language Academy (AIL), which certifies five (5) levels of knowledge and also offers business Italian exams of two-levels (DILC-B1 and DALC-C1). Even if the certification issued by AIL is not yet recognized by the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR), more and more universities recognize the “Ail Firenze diploma” as a valid certificate for all those who want to enroll in the first year of degree or postgraduate courses. In 2007 the Swiss Federal Office for Vocational Training and Technology (UFFT) acknowledged the second level exam DILC - B1 as the final Exam as a second national language in all professional commercial vocational schools of the Swiss Confederation [12].

5. Conclusions

The main aim of this module was to inform readers on the Italian language certifications but also on the reference instruments provided by the European Council, CEFR, and EPL for the promotion of multilingualism as well as for the transparency and consistency in learning and teaching of modern languages in Europe. It is true that nowadays learning one or more foreign languages is necessary in order to meet the needs dictated by society. The new technological era has reduced distances and brought huge changes to the way citizens communicate, study or work. Everyone should acquire not only linguistic and cultural skills in order to manage complex interactions, but also many other skills such as the transversal ones which include digital skills, communication skills, research skills, collaborative skills and many others. This new perspective has also brought a transformation in the way that language teaching as well as its educational environment is conceived. For this reason, the Council of Europe has proposed a more communicative teaching and has provided a common reference base (CEFR) to facilitate the elaboration of linguistic syllables, curricula, textbooks, and exams which is often updated in accordance with the new linguistic and communication needs of the European citizens. In addition, the Council of Europe promotes teachers' training which focus on the correct use of the CEFR and invites all stakeholders (teacher training programs, administrative managers in the education sector, curriculum designers, textbook authors, creators of education programs and certification bodies) to implement the CEFR [1].

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Module 2 – History of Italian Language and History of Pastille Project

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Abstract

The following pages focus on the most important moments of the history of Italian language: 1) the origin of Romance Languages, from Vulgar Latin; 2) the very first Italian non-literary documents; 3) the birth of poetry and literary prose; 4) Pietro Bembo's proposal: Petrarch as model of verse composition, Boccaccio as model of prose; 5) the modernization of Italian by Alessandro Manzoni; 6) after the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy (1861): Italian finally becomes a language spoken by everyone. Chapter 2 will show the Pastille project's history and introduce the universities and the agency that are collaborating for its realization. In chapter 3 the problem of linguistic variation will be thematically discussed, by highlighting the complex questions related to the choice of which "Italian" to present in a language learning path.

Keywords: Bembo, Italian, L2, Language competences, Language pedagogy, Latin, Dante, Manzoni, Sociolinguistics, Vulgar, Pastille Project, Erasmus, sociolinguistic competence, Italian as a FL, norms and practices, colloquial Italian

1. Short history of Italian Language

1.1 From Latin to Romance Languages

From a language initially just used in Rome and in the Latium, over the centuries Latin followed the fate of its community of speakers. Through the military successes and the territorial expansion of the Republic first (509-31 BC) and of the Empire then (31 BC - 476 AD), the Latin language initially spread in the Italian peninsula, then in Europe and in the northern part of the African continent.

Although favored by the political and war fortunes of Rome, Latin never became the only one language of the empire. The Romans, in fact - even if Latin was obviously the official language of public administration, justice and education - did not impose its adoption on the subjugated peoples of the provinces: on the contrary, with the significant exception of the Greek-speaking and Eastern areas, it was rather them, especially their upper classes, who aspired to linguistic and cultural integration, driven by a desire for social advancement. This is what happened, for example, in Gaul - a territory corresponding roughly to present-day France, whose inhabitants spoke Celtic - where Galloroman elite was formed within the Roman Empire, bilingual at first and then mainly speaking Latin.

The emergence of Latin led to the gradual disappearance of the pre-Latin languages (of which we have notion thanks to the substrate phenomena) in favor of that of the rulers. Some areas, however, proved linguistically less permeable than others: this is the case in some areas of southern Italy (the so-called Magna Graecia) where Greek coexisted with Latin for centuries by virtue of its great cultural prestige.

1.1.1 Which Latin?

Literary Latin, especially the one of the greatest authors of classicism (Cesare, Cicero, Virgil, etc.: we talk, indeed, about *Classical Latin*), became a uniform, codified, stable language from both a grammatical and lexical point of view. The situation of the so-called *Vulgar Latin* (i.e. spoken Latin) was very different: as all spoken languages, it was subject to variations, depending on various factors:

- the area in which it was spoken: even though generally uniform, the Latin spoken in Rome was not exactly the same, for example, as the Latin spoken in Gaul, in the Iberian Peninsula or in North Africa: some semantic and phonetic variants may have persisted, although not recorded, as it nowadays happens for Italian, how it is spoken in different regions;
- the social class to which the speaker belongs: educated people were plurilingual for a long time, and certainly mastered several linguistic registers, one of which, the *sermo urbanus*, perhaps closer to the scholastic precept, unlike less educated people who expressed themselves exclusively using the *sermo plebeius* or the *sermo rusticus*.

Finally, another kind of variation can be seen in a diachronic perspective. Vulgar Latin changed with the succession of generations, distancing itself more and more from classical Latin. As long as the Empire kept its borders together, resisting the pressure exerted by the peoples (especially Germanic ones) who inhabited the neighboring territories, the differences kept contained: Latin continued to be a language, albeit (like all living languages) in motion.

Things changed after the fall of the Western Roman Empire (476 AD): without political unity, the administrative structures (schools, justice, etc.) that were keeping Latin together disappeared. At the end of a slow process, which lasted roughly five centuries, Vulgar Latin gave way to Romance (also called Neo-Latin) languages: Iberian-Romance languages (Portuguese, Castilian and Catalan) and dialects, Gallo-Romance (Provençal, Franco Provençal and French) and dialects, Rhaeto-Romance languages (Ladin, Romansh and Friulian) and dialects, Italo-Romance languages (Italian and Sardinian) and dialects, Balkan-Romance languages (Romanian and Dalmatian, the latter extinct in 1898; Dardano 2017: 213) and dialects.

1.2 From Latin to Italian

When was Italian born? Impossible to say: above all because, as we have said, the spoken language evolves more rapidly than the written one; but the spoken language, unfortunately, leaves no traces directly usable by linguists. Based on written evidence, however, we can put forward some hypotheses.

1.2.1 The Veronese riddle

At the turn from the 8th to 9th century, an unknown copyist wrote the following text on a Spanish manuscript: *se pareba boves / alba pratalia araba / et albo versorio teneba / et negro semen seminaba* ('He pushed oxen forward, plowed white fields, had a white plow and sowed a black seed': the so-called *Veronese riddle* talks about writing). These few words exhibit various linguistic "mistakes", i.e. differences from standard Latin: for example, in *pareba*, *araba*, *teneba*, *seminaba*, *versorio*, *negro* the final consonants (typical of the Latin morphological flexion) are missing; moreover, there are some words which do not exist in Classical Latin (but it do in Venetian dialects): *versorio* 'plow', *pareba* 'pushed forward'. This short apostille is accompanied by a line written in standard Latin instead. The hypotheses, therefore, are two: if the two notes have been written by two different people, it is possible that the second one was just less educated than the first one; thus, therefore, he simply committed some mistakes. In other words, we would be in an intermediate phase between Latin and Romance. On the other hand, if the two notes have been written by the same hand, then we can say that the Veronese riddle is not simply a clumsy execution of Latin, but a text written in a new language, chosen by a writer who also knew Latin (Marazzini 2004: 52-53).

1.2.2 The *Placito di Capua*

In order to be sure to read a Romance text in Italy, we have to wait until 960 AD. In this year, the so-called *Placito di Capua* was drafted: a deed, drawn up by a notary in Latin, containing a formula that had to be repeated by some witnesses of a trial: *Sao ko kelle terre, per kelle fini que ki contene, trenta anni le possette parte Sancti Benedicti* ('I know that those lands, within those boundaries that are described here, thirty years the patrimonial administration of San Benedetto held them'). In this case, the differences with respect to Latin are even more significant: there is no longer any trace of the final consonants; the demonstrative pronoun *kelle* is formed, like the Italian ones, from the Latin demonstrative *ILLAE* preceded by the reinforcer *ECCUM*; the syntactic construction of the sentence, with the content clause introduced by *ko* 'that' and the left dislocation (i.e. the anteposition of a noun phrase; Bianco 2017: 113-117; Faloppa 2010: 385-387), it is now very distant from the Latin one. But above all, in this case, there is no doubt that the author of the formula is the same author of the text that contains it: therefore, the *Placito* can be considered the "birth certificate" of the Italian language (Marazzini 2004: 55-59).

1.3 Between XIIth and XIVth century

The first texts written in 'Italian', from various areas of the peninsula, were not of a literary nature. At the beginning, the *volgare* (*volgari* is the term used to designate the geographical varieties of medieval Italy, to distinguish them from Latin) was used above all to draw up documents of a practical nature or in any case without the literary intentions that were present in French epic-chivalric poetry and Provençal lyric poetry.

1.3.1 Sicily and Tuscany

For an Italian literary production comparable to the French and the Provençal ones, we must wait until the 13th century. It was Frederick II (1194-1250), a highly cultured man and patron, who gave life to the so-called Sicilian school of Poetry within his royal court in Palermo. The poets of Federico's court (among which the name of Giacomo Da Lentini stands out, who is credited with the invention of the sonnet; Beltrami 1996: 116) had the merit of "inventing" a language for lyric poetry (mostly love poetry): they did so by embellishing their own vulgar, the Sicilian, with Latinisms and Gallicisms (language elements of French and Provençal origin), borrowings from languages that had an already solid literary tradition behind them.

The lyrics of the Sicilian school were successful and soon spread to other areas of the peninsula, mostly thanks to manuscripts written by Tuscan people. This data is very important, because medieval writing practice required a copyist to adapt the language of the text he was reading to his own use (Folena 1961: 17): the language who came to northern Italy through Sicilian poems, therefore, carried many Tuscan elements (e.g. the vowels).

1.3.2 Dante Alighieri

In Tuscany, during the second half of the century, it was born the so-called *Stil novo*: a literary movement that renewed the forms of the poetry. Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) was also a member of it. Dante is considered, with good reason, the "father" of the Italian language. He has many merits: he was the first one to provide a classification of the Italian dialects (in his work *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, 1303-1305). Animated by ambitious literary intentions and convinced it was essential to write also about the most important topics in the vernacular language (i.e. not in Latin), in order to get understood in his own geographical area by a wider audience, socially less homogeneous, he was looking for a fairly illustrious linguistic variety to be able to compete with Latin (which not everyone was able to understand). Dante, in fact, was the first author of "art" prose in the vernacular (Florentine): narrative prose in the *Vita Nuova* (1292-1294) and didactic prose in the *Convivio* (1304-1307). The best of his work, both from literary and from language viewpoint, is *The Divine Comedy* (the *Commedia*, whose drafting involved him deeply in the last twenty years of his life): a poem, which contains words from technical vocabularies (military, astronomical, medical ones, etc.), literary and theological elements, and even foul language expressions: *E mentre ch'io là giù con l'occhio cerco, / vidi un col capo sì di merda lordo* (*Inf.* XVIII, vv. 115-116: *merda* 'shit'); *Ed elli avea del cul fatto trombetta* (*Inf.* XXI,

v. 139: *culo* 'ass'). A good example of Dante's language creativity is given by the parasynthetic verbs (parasynthesis is a derivational phenomenon, which consists in the simultaneous addition of a prefix and a suffix to a base: *in* + *piatto* + *-are* = *impiattare* 'to put [food] on a dish'): *atterzare*, *immiarsi*, *infinitarsi*, *inlearsi*, *intrearsi*, *intuarsi* (Iacobini 2010: 1038; Giovanardi 2020).

1.3.3 Petrarch and Boccaccio

The immediate success of the *Divine Comedy*, which the author completed shortly before his death, guaranteed its author fame and glory in the following years: among those who admired Dante's work, we have especially to mention Petrarch (Francesco Petrarca, 1304-1374) and Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375). Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio are also known as the *Tre Corone*: three distinguished authors, who made the 14th century a fundamental period for the fortune of Florentine language.

1.4 The so-called *questione della lingua*

1.4.1 Pietro Bembo's *Prose of the Vernacular Tongue*

In the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (which remained unknown to most people for over two centuries), Dante had given rise to the so-called "questione della lingua": an intense cultural debate, that engaged intellectuals until the 19th century, about which model should inspire the Italian literary language.

At the beginning of the 16th century, three currents were established, referring to the theories supported by three prominent people:

1. Gian Giorgio Trissino (1478-1550), from Vicenza, thought that the literary language had to be composed of elements coming from various Italian vernaculars;
2. the Venetian Pietro Bembo (1470-1547), on the other hand, supported the primacy of the Florentine language of the 14th century, especially Petrarch's and Boccaccio's language;
3. Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), from Florence, expressed himself in favor of the contemporary Florentine.

Among the three theories, it was Bembo's one to win. This result was partly favored by the fact that Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533), in preparing the third and final edition of his masterpiece *Orlando furioso* (1532), was inspired by Bembo's theories, which had been exposed in his *Prose della vulgare lingua*, published a few years before (1525). Bembo pointed to Petrarch's *Canzoniere* (*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*) as a language model for the poetry and Boccaccio's *Decameron* as language model of prose: the first one, in particular, for the selected, precious, elevated lexicon; the second one (especially in the narrative framework) for the complex and Latin-like syntax. Bembo liked Dante and some parts Boccaccio's novellas not as much, since they were too close to the spoken language and to multilingualism (e.g. the novella about Andreuccio da Perugia, set in Naples: *Dec.* II, 5).

1.4.2 Alessandro Manzoni

Bembo's ideas had two fundamental consequences: 1) they established the Florentine as the base of Italian language. At that time, the Florentine (in its archaic and literary variant) rises to a "national" language (long before Italy became a country), and all other Italian varieties became just "dialects"; 2) they made Italian a more conservative language as other European ones. This is why an Italian, nowadays, can read the *Divine Comedy* with greater ease than a French and an Englishman who engage in reading, respectively, the *Chanson de Roland* (11th century) and the *Canterbury Tales* (14th century).

Three centuries later, a similar problem returned to Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873), eager to write a great modern novel like it happened in other European countries. How could Bembo's Italian carry out such a task?

The first edition of Manzoni's *The Betrothed* (*I promessi sposi*) dates back to 1827; in that same year, the author was in Florence and could directly listen to the real Florentine, spoken by well educated people: this experience inspired him to renew the language of the novel for the next edition (1840). Many years later, Manzoni pointed to contemporary Florentine as a language to be taught at school, idea which provoked the reaction of the glottologist Graziadio Isaia Ascoli (1829-1907), who rather suggested a language model inspired by various dialects.

The Ascolian proposal did not arouse great enthusiasm, while the language Manzoni's masterpiece gave Italian a decisive turning point, projecting it into modernity (among the most successful Manzoni's innovations, we recall the use of the complement pronouns *lui* 'him' and *lei* 'her' in subject function: 'he' and 'she'; Coletti 2010: 1414).

1.5 Italian between present and future

What about the spoken Italian? Reading the previous pages, one could think that the oral dimension of the language has been forgotten. This depends precisely on the history of Italian, which was born as a literary language and which remained, for centuries, a written one, codified by writers, grammarians and dictionary compilers (in particular, the members of the *Accademia della Crusca*). Meanwhile, both rich and poor people, both educated and illiterate people, continued for centuries to use their own dialects, in more or less local forms, according to the situation.

In 1861 (the year of the unification of Italy) few spoke and understood Italian, especially due to the very high rate of illiteracy of Italy. Paraphrasing a famous sentence, this can have been said by the statesman Massimo D'Azeglio (1798-1866): once Italy has been made, Italian speakers remain to be made. What were the factors that, in the following century, made finally Italian a language known, understood and used, both in written and spoken form, by everyone in Italy? Let's try to give at least a partial list:

1. The compulsory school, which reduced the percentage of illiterate people, so that the number of Italian language users increased;
2. the compulsory military service: people from different regions (speaking, therefore, different dialects) had to spaces and situations. To communicate to each other, they were forced to look for a common language, which could be Italian (or, at least, an italianized version of some dialect);
3. bureaucracy: the administrative documents of the new state were drawn up in Italian. Everyone, even who never used to read a book or a newspaper, was forced to read such documents (e.g. a fine);
4. migrations: both migrations from one region to another and migrations overseas (where it often happened to meet with other Italians from different regions) favored phenomena of linguistic convergence, as we just described about the military service. Furthermore, to keep relations with distant relatives, the emigrants had make efforts to send letters, which could only be written in Italian;
5. radio (from 1923) and television (from 1954) provided, for the first time, models of spoken Italian accessible to everyone.

These factors led, after the WWII, to the disappearance of mass illiteracy and to a widespread diffusion of Italian: the latter became, as a written language, a common heritage for the whole nation; as a spoken language, it flanked dialects, to which it contends and still contests more and more areas of use. In its spreading and "democratizing", however, Italian has had to transform itself, to become flexible, open to the influence of various factors that have produced (as it had been, centuries before, for spoken Latin) situational, social, geographical varieties: the linguistic registers, from the least to the most formal, offer an articulated variety of options for the most diverse contexts (*passare a miglior vita*, *morire*, *schiaffare*); jargons, youngster's Italian and technical vocabularies characterize groups of people linked by age, activities, common interests, keeping them together and marking the difference between who is inside and who is outside a certain group; the dialects, far from "dying", as many linguists and intellectuals had already predicted in the second half of the 18th century, still resists and exists. Even more: dialects, influence the

Italian spoken in different areas (the so-called *Italiano regionale*: e.g. *cocomero* - Rome -, *anguria* – North -, *melone* - South -, all used as 'watermelon'; *bucare*, *bigiare*, *fare sega*, *fare filone*, etc. 'to skip the school'), marked above all at vocabulary and intonation level.

The medium is also a very important element of variation, partially new: not only the written language (in general more supervised, conservative and adherent to the "norm") differs from the spoken one, as it has always been for the past phases of our and other languages: the means of distance communication - mass media (radio, television) and non-mass media (telephone) - have urged the adoption of new varieties of Italian (*Italiano trasmesso*) with their own features (e.g. television catchphrases, which finally influence general trends; opening and closing formulas for telephone calls). This is even more true for the Internet, which mixes in new forms written and spoken language, formal and informal situations, words, images and videos.

2. History of the Pastille Project

2.1 History of the First Idea, and First Contacts

In 2016 Wrocław, a splendid Polish city, in Silesia, rich in art and history, where the leading University of the Pastille project is based, became the European Capital of Culture. This privilege has led to a large increase in the city's cultural initiatives which have faced the need to promote the city abroad with greater effort, create a program worthy of the European epithet and respond to the expectations of citizens and the many arriving tourists.

The cultural and cosmopolitan ferment of the city has inspired Gianluca Olcese, lecturer of Italian language and literature at the University of Wrocław and at the Wrocław headquarters of the Dante Alighieri Society, to develop another initiative that has its centre in Wrocław but whose irradiation could be European or even global: creation of a new teaching method for teaching Italian as a foreign language.

During some meetings between teachers and technicians of the participating organizations, who have been collaborating for some time now, we have begun to develop a project that combines the strengths and skills of each one by making them available to a growing number of users and using them to develop innovative teaching methodologies. Furthermore, during two general meetings of SIFR members which took place in September 2014 and 2015, professors from the University of Wrocław, the Dante Alighieri Society and the SIFR-School, confronted each other, also hoping for an exchange of personnel the development and promotion of new didactic choices, which has led to an even closer bond between the organizations, now associated with Pastille, united by the desire to jointly carry out a project in the didactic field. The organizations are in close contact for educational and cultural initiatives in the city of Wrocław, which has established scientific relationships with partner universities supported by exchange agreements and has also hosted numerous SIFR members and members of the management committee of the SIFR-School section for scientific projects and on the occasion of international conferences.

At the Palacký University Olomouc, in addition to almost thirty years of experience in teaching Italian as L2, under the supervision of prof. Jiří Špička is born the initiative to publish the volume *Letteratura italiana del Medioevo e del Rinascimento* (Olomouc, 2015), a brief history of Italian literature aimed at communicating contexts and meanings rather than lists of names and titles of works. The volume was also written in a very sober and simple Italian to make it understandable to students who have been learning Italian for one or two years. The idea derives from the same basic idea of the project: to use Italian literature for teaching Italian both to increase the students' cultural skills and to enrich their linguistic skills thanks to contact with the literary text or with a text of literary criticism and historiography. The Department of Italian Studies of the University of Olomouc has an online platform for the promotion of cultural initiatives focused in the area of Central and Eastern Europe (www.nodit.upol.cz). Finally, the Società Dante Alighieri has an online newsletter that every week informs 500 PLIDA committees and certification centers around the world and all registered members and enthusiasts about the initiatives. Therefore, for the realization of the Erasmus+

project it was decided to join the forces of these institutions, strengthened by highly trained teachers, solid organizational structures and similar cultural environments to employ and make possible an exchange of teachers between the various institutions and to create and develop new methods of teaching the Italian language and culture which can then be used at a later time within the participating institutions.

Gianluca Olcese managed to win the consensus of numerous colleagues from various European universities. The adhesions to the project have evolved and changed over time and finally five universities decided to participate in the consortium, together with the University of Wroclaw (Poland): University of Vilnius (Lithuania), Palacký University Olomouc (Czech Republic), University of Genoa (Italy), and University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki (Greece). The geographical distribution of these universities has made possible the exploitation the experiences of various linguistic and cultural areas of Europe: the Mediterranean one, Greek and Romance one, and the north-eastern Slavic and Baltic ones. In the final form, the Pastille project involves more than 25 teachers and academic experts in the realization of the teaching tools, which will be introduced in the courses for over 200 university students.

2.2 The Collection of the Project in the Structure and in the European Idea

Such a consortium has found the interest of the European institutions that funded the Pastille project under the Erasmus+ program, more specifically in its Key Action 2, dedicated to the "Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices". In fact, international and interdisciplinary collaboration are fundamental for the realization of the initiatives: at the local level the Pastille project offers participants the access to a high-level education that broadens the knowledge of the Italian language and culture in a context of continuity with the European and international ones. This type of training, which takes into account the reciprocal influences even in geographically distant areas, fosters a sense of belonging and familiarity that goes beyond national borders, embracing a multicultural perspective and overcoming the concept that sees societies as formed by closed cultural structures.

Together with a teaching plan structured in Teaching Units, practical demonstrations of their possible use will be presented in the reference book for teachers (most evident in teaching activities focused on cooking, for example). The didactic approach places the direct experience with the Italian tradition at the center of each unit through the use of authentic material of artistic value, as a learning vehicle and to stimulate further the starting motivation of the participants. On a personal and professional level, the transposition of one's educational experience in a real context allows to improve directly the quality of life in accordance with the European Action Plan of the year 2000 and the Memorandum, Lifelong Learning program, which aims to improve knowledge, skills and competences on a personal, civic, social and professional level.

The project also reflects European quality standards relating to e-learning and distance learning (2001 European modernisation program for higher education). High training standards are prerequisites that allow an institution to actively participate in building a European research area in the field of teaching and distance learning. The Pastille project aims to contribute to the formation of high teaching standards, using the latest technologies and actively involving the participants during the acquisition process. Participants will thus develop knowledge, practical and intellectual skills that will have direct repercussions on peaceful coexistence and understanding both within the European Union and in a Mediterranean and international perspective.

2.3 The Main Principles of the Pastille Project

2.3.1 Local and Global

The Pastille project takes into account the need to promote research through local media, local events, and on the other hand through a specially created website, contributing to the development of joint initiatives at the international level.

Cooperation through partner organizations intends to develop its own initiatives starting from the already active network of contacts and therefore broaden the catchment area in the direction of greater openness. The networks of cultural institutions already existing at national and international level are the basis of the Pastille project. The entities involved include the Società Dante Alighieri, the Società Italiana di Filologia Romanza, the EUNIC network, and the whole area of the countries participating in the Erasmus+ program. The activities are open and also aimed at the fruition and contribution by other university institutions, research and language teaching centers, institutions specialized in theater and cinema, those structures that favor the formation of new skills and the enrichment of those already acquired.

The added value for the participants and for the development of the areas involved provides for the dissemination of knowledge of the territory, relations with other geographical areas and cultural exchanges; further development will derive from a better knowledge of new technologies, of how to introduce them and define them as a tool for growth. The promotion of a local and European plus-value can enrich and increase the reality in which the recipients of the Pastille project are normally inserted, within which it will promote multiculturalism, a European vision centered on tradition and mutual understanding. Students and teachers will be able to better cope with the new problems of everyday life thanks to new tools and a perspective of international cooperation.

2.3.2 A New Communication and Accessibility

The project respects the political choices to enhance the use of new technologies in the educational process. Several European public actions and initiatives encourage and influence the development and application of the new potential offered by new technological means aimed at teaching, including the educational process through e-learning. The materials in digital format have different peculiar characteristics compared to traditional libraries, including the absence of an hourly limit for the accessibility of materials and the removal of geographical and physical barriers, with a consequent reduction in costs due to the open nature of the tools and didactic and cultural insights (OER).

2.3.3 New Ideas and Methodology

The guidelines are designed to meet the needs of Italian language teachers and university students by integrating the curricula of the language courses having adapted their contents to the specific correlation with the cultural background and to the mutual influences between the different cultural areas. Each Teaching Unit will include an explanation of the didactic choices and instructions on how to get started. In order to manage the lessons in a motivating environment, we will provide appropriate information and details on the different techniques that can be used. Teachers, especially the younger ones, will find in the Methodological Guidelines and in the Reference Textbook a modern methodological orientation, they will improve their management skills and class motivation, a better vision of the context and of the theoretical approach with which the method was developed. They will learn from the experience of the most popular methods of the past to greatly increase the ability to produce new effective teaching materials; at the same time these tools will increase the student's awareness of how a new language is to be learned, stimulating the process of meta-knowledge. Reading a guide will help teachers get used to the classroom practices in a functional way, much faster than in a trial and error process. The writing of the reference materials will be structured in an understandable way: the highly technical language will be followed by useful definitions of the terms along with clear and simple explanations for young teachers and students.

2.4 Italian Culture

The project starts with the use of materials of artistic value. Not only those present in Italy and in the countries that have collaborated in the project, but also globally: the most important reason why people start studying the Italian language is the interest in Italian culture, both contemporary and all the great artistic heritage of the past. With the use of materials of artistic value our Teaching Units meet the expectations and interest of students and are aimed at a better understanding of the texts in Italian also through their cultural implications. The use of objects of cultural value does not aim to broaden a static knowledge of culture but is

closely linked to the communicative objective of the Teaching Units and helps the learner to achieve language skills that can be used in various communication occasions. On the cultural level, the elements of Italian art and culture allow learners from various countries to discover Italian traces in their local culture and, on the occasion of the visit to Italy or the use of Italian cultural products, better perceive specific traits of the cultural tradition Italian.

3. Italian language and its varieties. Which Italian to teach?

3.1 Introduction

Language is a multi-layered system rather than a monolithic phenomenon and it takes different forms according to a variety of criteria. Italian is known as an extraordinarily rich and stratified language, thanks to its historical and social development. Besides its codified form, it has a number of more or less distinct variants³. The teacher of Italian as a L2⁴ therefore faces the dilemma created by the tension between the standard language and the way a native speaker would speak in real life based on their geographic origin, social group, and the degree of formality in the given communication situation.

As far as didactics is concerned, in the second half of the twentieth century is observed, under the influence of communicative-pragmatic turn in linguistic theory, the progressive distancing from the perception of language as a static system of interconnected units towards a perception of language as a means of communication. The focus shifts from the internal characteristics of the language system towards its use due to the contribution of new disciplines (e.g. pragmalinguistics, sociolinguistics, and psycholinguistics). It is reflected also in the field of applied linguistics. In the context of the FL teaching the privileged place begins to occupy the descriptive grammar at the expense of the prescriptive one. The grammatical approach is enriched by the sociolinguistic perspective. The norm is no longer perceived as a fixed rule but as a dynamic concept. The goal of teaching foreign languages becomes communicative competence and in this perspective the ever wider space is ascribed to the teaching of varieties.

Linguistic varieties have been at the center of the attention of linguists since the 1980s and, given the dynamism of the phenomenon of language; it remains current until the present (see for example Corbucci, 2007; Cutri, 2016; Manili, 2008; Sobrero – Miglietta, 2011). In the context of the varietal approach it is emphasized that the teaching of an FL should not be based on the teaching of a single variety, but it should embrace the whole linguistic repertoire. Such an approach makes possible a progressive but at the same time overall acquisition of the language taking into consideration the real communication needs of the learner. Highlighting linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence, Italian linguists Sobrero and Miglietta (2011) explain that it should not be understood as an alternative or contrastive approach to the previous ones, but rather as complementary.

3.2 The architecture of contemporary Italian

The neutral variety of the contemporary Italian language is considered standard Italian (*l'italiano standard*), also known as the common, normative, literary Italian (*l'italiano comune, normativo, letterario*). It represents the most prestigious variety; it is based on the literary tradition; we find it in grammars and it acts as a reference model for speakers. However, the stability of the norm contributes to certain rigidity. This variety is therefore used in very formal, mostly written situations; it can be heard in presentations of TV actors or presenters or in dubbed audiovisual products.

³ *Linguistic variety* is a coherent set of elements (forms, structures, traits, etc.) of a linguistic system that tend to occur in conjunction with certain extralinguistic and social characteristics (Berruto 2004). The set of linguistic resources available to a linguistic community or a speaker is designed as a *linguistic repertoire*. It is represented by the standard national language and its varieties and by the dialects and their varieties (Sobrero-Miglietta, 2011: 234).

⁴ Usually are distinguished the mother tongue (L1) and then on the basis of the territorial criterion the second language (L2, it. *lingua due*) acquired in the country of origin of a given language and the foreign language (FL, it. *lingua straniera*) which is acquired outside the natural territory of this language.

The variety that is closer to real communication is the so-called *neostandard* (Berruto 2012) or *italiano dell'uso medio* (Sabatini, 1985). Both concepts date back to the 80s of the twentieth century and arise as a reaction to the changes that the language has undergone due to progressive penetration of the substandard traits to the standard⁵. This has led to the approach of the written and spoken form of the language. Nowadays this variety is also designated as semistandard (Santipolo, 2002, 2003). It is used by the majority of educated and moderately educated speakers in the written and spoken form in formal and modio formal situations. It is the variety also used in the media. Compared to the standard, it differs from simplified morphosyntactic structures especially as regards the verbal and pronominal system.⁶

However, the stratification of Italian is much richer. On the basis of three variation criteria Berruto (1987) represents it as a three-axis model. We thus have the diaphasic, diastratic and diamesic variation.

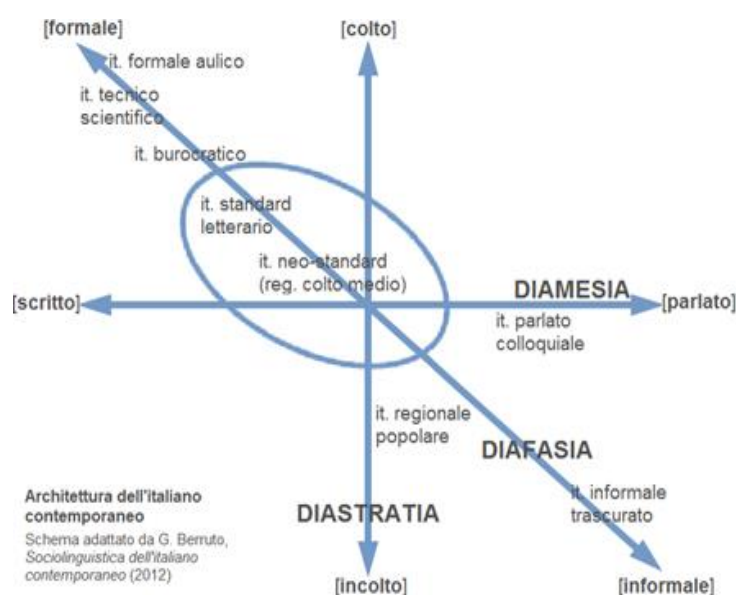


Fig. 1 Modello dell'architettura dell'italiano, G. Berruto (1987)

The **diamesic** variation concerns the change of language according to the physical medium or the transmission channel. The two fundamental varieties concern the spoken and written language to which other varieties are added due to technological development: with the arrival of the radio and television language *l'italiano trasmesso* was added, with communication through the internet and social networks, *l'italiano dell'internet* o *l'etaliano*.

The **diastratic** variation refers to the changes that the language undergoes due to differences in the stratification and identity of social groups. The factor that interests us here is the level of education. The possibility of acquiring Italian at the standard or neo-standard level depends on it. On the opposite side of the diastratic axis is placed *l'italiano popolare* whose traits deviate from the norm. The factors that influence language also include those relating to the difference in sex (the language of men and women) or age (generational differences) (vd. e.g. Cerutti 2013).

The **diaphasic** or situational variation concerns two levels: one related to the communicative situation and the relationship between the interlocutors (formal to informal registers); the other concerns the theme of communication: on the one hand there are sub-codes or special languages on the other jargons. The so-

⁵ This trend is present in the dynamics of the majority of standard languages and is known as destandardization or restandardization (see Cerruti - Crocco - March, 2017).

⁶ Sabatini (1985) presented the list of 35 phonological, morphological and syntactic traits previously considered as substandard.

called high register typical for (very) formal situations is placed on the upper part of the diaphasic axis; it tends to coincide with standard Italian; in the middle of it is placed the medially formal register which coincides with the neostandard. The informal registers are placed at the lower levels (e.g. colloquial Italian).⁷

To the variations described above must also be added the **diatopic** variation relating to the geographical area in which the language is used. Since this variation is part of all other varieties it is not marked as a specific axis. Today we can speak of four diatopic varieties: standard Italian, regional Italians, regional dialects and local dialects (see for example Cini 2008, Telmon 2004).

The varieties described above do not constitute the discrete entities, but they are rather segments collocated in the space between the axes mentioned, often overlapping and influencing each other. Each variety has some characteristic traits at various levels of the language, but these traits are not exclusive to a given variety, but they are present in two or more varieties, what changes is their frequency.

3.3 Didactics of Italian as a foreign language

The problem that is often discussed in language teaching is which of these varieties should be offered in teaching Italian to foreigners as it is obvious that not all varieties are didactically relevant. When deciding, a series of factors must be taken into consideration, including (i) the characteristics of the learner, individual or a group (motivation, level of teaching, age, general or specific communication purposes) and the context of the teaching of the FL (type and duration of the course, teaching in the natural context or in the simulated context of the class outside the natural environment in which the language is spoken).

The learner should obviously acquire the basic rules of the Italian language. From this point of view the starting point remains the standard Italian for formal contexts and that of the new standard for the language spoken in medially formal situations. In the last decade, the trend has been confirmed that it is precisely the neostandard that is offered by Italian manuals for foreigners abroad (see for example Cutri 2016). It is then enriched, to a lesser or greater extent, with other varieties. Didactically relevant is the diatopic one, especially the regional Italians. Given that the vast majority of speakers use one of them, it is important that the student is able to recognize the basic phonetic and prosodic characteristics, or is aware of some linguistic phenomena (e.g. of a different frequency of use of the perfect past tense and of the distant past, of the existence of geosynonyms).

One of the most important variations is that relating to diaphasia, especially the changes on the axis of formality and informality of the communicative situation. These differences are usually included in the manuals starting already at the beginner level. From this point of view it is important to insert some traits of colloquial Italian that shares the traits of *italiano dell'uso medio*, *italiano popolare* and *italiani regionali* (e.g. phrasal verbs, marked sentence structures, for eg. dislocations) (see Scaglione 2016). These are traits that learners will hear in everyday conversations between friends, in filmic dialogues, in songs, blogs and chats or in the literary texts of contemporary authors.

3.4 Conclusions

In conclusion, we can say that at the time of preparation, the choice of teaching material that is appropriate to the type of recipient (thus exploiting his motivation) and taking into consideration current trends in foreign language teaching must be carefully evaluated.

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Module 3 – Methodology

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Abstract

Modern glottodidactics is a scientifically researched discipline, with its own historical evolution represented by the great glottodidactic methods that have influenced teaching practice. Today, it transversally includes the results of different scientific subjects, passing through an in-depth knowledge of neuroscience, language science and learning. The principles that have allowed this evolution see the student at the centre and the teacher as mediator, within an international social context based on interculturality, multilingualism and online teaching, elements at the heart of the common European policy.

Keywords: *Overview of Italian language didactics tools, Terminology and theoretical principles, Historical evolution, Methods and theoretical suggestions for didactic planning, Orientation towards Italian language in a European perspective, Questions and answers (interaction), Sources and scientific resources on the Internet*

1. Theories and disciplines influencing glottodidactics

The contribution of research in the field of linguistics, specifically its sub-disciplines that have been developed in recent years, including sociolinguistics, ethnoinguistics, pragmalinguistics or psycholinguistics, led through specialist studies to the development at the end of the 20th century of the communicative approach in language teaching. With this approach, the focus shifts from knowledge of the language code (grammar, vocabulary, etc.) to its communicative effectiveness in specific contexts and uses. Furthermore, the social sciences have made it possible to develop models and dynamics of interaction, which also concern speakers and writers of different origins, and to integrate them into the communicative situations and objectives of learning.

Descriptive linguistics provides the categories and rules for the grammar of language use. Frequency studies allow the selection of words and grammatical structures in order to plan the progression of language learning to structure the teaching units of the manual.

Sociolinguistics examines the phenomena of language in relation to different social situations – diglossia, bilingualism, *dilalia*⁸ – for which monolingualism is the exception, the greater awareness of which is fundamental in teaching: a community is made up of speakers who reflect the linguistic stratification of a territory, resulting in situations that vary from the coexistence of languages belonging to different families (which all or part of the population speaks), to the use of varieties of the same language whose differences may be minimal (regional uses). The use of varieties that do not perfectly overlap is often found in different social groups, such as in youth culture or in the recovery of dialect. William Labov has shown how the relationships between speakers, on the one hand, move towards imitation and, on the other, towards

⁸ The term *dilalia* indicates a linguistic variety belonging to formal and informal contexts, as well as oral and familiar uses.

linguistic differentiation, sometimes voluntary, between social groups living together in a given space [1]. For the didactic process, in addition to colloquial spoken language, which is already suggested for the initial lessons, there are dialect expressions that can be heard during the lessons for the advanced levels, in order to show the variety. Likely useful for didactic theory is the research work of John Searle, who develops the general theme of 'speech acts' [2], and Roman Jakobson's study on 'language functions' [3] in the different forms they take within different cultures, which is one of the fundamental aspects to be taken into account in mediation.

Applied linguistics is the main discipline in education: it studies the dynamics of language learning. This discipline has led to an increasing shift in the mode of language teaching from a more systematic orientation to a communicative language use approach. Conversation and discourse analysis is useful for developing language through discussions so that they are functional for the realisation of communicative goals at university, school and in adult education.

Psycholinguistics is the discipline that studies linguistic phenomena, such as the acquisition, comprehension and use of human language, in relation to the psychological processes that determine them, as well as learned language in relation to knowledge of the world. From a psychological and neuroscientific perspective, learning psychology experimentally analyses and provides more general information on the acquisition of knowledge and changes in mental representations and psychological processes. The obtained results form the basis for educational applications. This discipline deals with learning processes in order to identify the elements and conditions that have an influence on the mechanisms of memorisation, application and forgetting: i.e. social, environmental or mental situation, motivation, etc. The different approaches to this discipline can be grouped into three main areas, consisting of behaviourist, cognitivist, and formalist theories. The cultural and regional studies of the country where the language being studied is spoken are always reflected in different aspects of language teaching. Thinking is shaped and supported by the brain and the body simultaneously. The more the body is involved and stimulated in thought processes and emotional states, the richer the brain connections are. In learning, the communicative component is central, to express and transfer knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experiences, which are continuously reworked and intertwined; the learning pathway is therefore the result of a work in which language connects different components so that they interact with each other. Among the strategies in the field, that of "communicative learning" has a decisive impact in the final phase of the learning process, when students move on to effective learning and final understanding. It is an aspect of education that concerns the ability to express logical ideas, narrate, validate, justify, argue, demonstrate concepts (both orally and in writing) and represent them also visually. The development of language skills is therefore fundamental in the individual, in order to make the ability to process information effective, not only in the study of languages, but also necessary in other fields of knowledge.

Education sciences include pedagogy and deal with the contexts and forms of the educational, psychological, and social processes involved in the formation of an individual.

General didactics revolves around teaching and learning strategies of different subjects, today with a special focus on the interconnection between the different disciplines of the course of study.

Current areas of research concern autonomous and self-controlled language learning and are mainly based on:

- radical constructivism (Ceccato 1961; von Glasersfeld 1995) [4]
- multilingualism
- knowledge of one's learning strategies
- the foreign language teacher's training
- innovative concepts such as bilingual and multilingual learning
- early foreign language learning
- intercultural learning and multi-ethnic learning groups

- reading in a foreign language
- the use of different new media in language teaching.

1.2 The language acquisition process

Before the question of didactic methods was raised, the prevailing approach to language teaching was the formalistic one, which took shape from the 18th century onwards and which continues to condition didactic choices to this day. When Latin ceased to be a lingua franca, losing its usefulness in commercial exchanges, while maintaining a discrete importance in literature, it passed from the status of a language learnt for communicative purposes (living language), to a persistence almost exclusively realized in written form (dead language); in the same period, the conception of translation developed as the ability to render the original text, respecting its structure, and therefore a translation based on grammatical and morphosyntactic rules. Latin remained a subject of study in schools, losing its function of dialogical communication linked to orality, and therefore no longer evolved, crystallising in the form of the language of the classics. The teaching remains the traditional one, intended for the mother tongue, maintaining the path of knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and logical analysis of the period, which, however, without a creative and practical use, aimed at the realisation of communicative acts, develops as an ordered study of rules.

There are three theoretical models on which past and current communicative didactic methods are based:

- behaviorism
- nativism
- cognitivism / constructivism.

1.3 Behaviorism

The basic thesis is that language acquisition is triggered exclusively by the environment. This theory is based on the stimulus-reaction-based learning scheme (reinforcement in the glottodidactic context), and stems from the famous experiment on dogs (1905) conducted by the Russian psychologist Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936); the results of the analysis on animals were compared with human behaviour and it was found that comprehension occurs as an imitative form. Learning, according to the behaviourist model, therefore consists of copying and reproducing an expression or structure in a trial-and-error fashion, repeating it until success is achieved, with the result – success or error – acting as reinforcement. Gradually, therefore, learners adopt those expressions and behaviours that they perceive as positive and successful and use them until they become habit-forming (automation / habit-forming as an educational process). In the specific case of languages, the reference basis is the one proposed by the American psychologist B.F. Skinner (1904-1990), in his text *Verbal Behaviour* (1957). In a natural learning environment, children imitate the language they hear around them, are encouraged to reproduce it successfully through praise, or practical feedback, and then conditioned to remember the expression and structure; at the basis of linguistic observation, Skinner consequently proposes the structuralist approach (synchrony and immanence), which concerns aspects linked to the everyday life of the civilisation whose language is being studied. This theory has as its precursor Aristotle, who, in the *Poetics*, considers poetry as an imitation of reality (*mimesis*).

The practical application in glottodidactics is developed through a form of supervised learning by the teacher, who provides feedback, offers visual and auditory stimuli, evaluates the effects of conditioning, and directs them for practical use in situations that mirror real ones; the use of a *drill* model – a method initially used in the army – makes it possible to provide a constant series of stimuli and practical feedback. It is also planned from the outset to practise through different media, for example in a language laboratory, which allows contact with different linguistic, visual, and auditory stimuli.

The contrastive hypothesis shows that the comparison with the first language (or with other languages already known) and thus the similarities and differences between them, play an important role in learning a

further language. In the case of similarities, the transfer is positive, easier to adopt, whereas when differences occur, negative transfer (interference) can be a source of error, so differences – not similarities – should be the focus of teaching.

2. Nativist Theory of Language Acquisition (Chomsky)

The thesis of this theory is based on the assumption that human beings possess a genetic programme that enables them to acquire languages (acquisition of the first language, acquisition of other languages). Noam Chomsky (b. 1928), in his work *A Review of B.F. Skinner's Verbal Behavior* (1959) critiques Skinner's thesis.

This interpretation would explain how children manage to gain confidence in their use of language in a relatively short period of time, despite learning takes place on the basis of the confusing, complex and contradictory range of languages to which they are exposed. It also takes into account the dynamics whereby children master the structures of a language under different social and cultural conditions of growth and without being taught. Finally, it studies children's ability to formulate utterances that they have never heard before.

To sum up, the points proposed by Chomsky to answer the questions raised about language acquisition are the following:

- Throughout the world, people have developed languages that, despite their diversity, share fundamental characteristics.
- The richness and creativity that are discernible in language activities suggest a basic system of generative language ability to develop competence.

According to Chomsky, linguistic competence is therefore not only acquired by using language, but is already innate as a *Language Acquisition Device* (LAD) that has its own basic characteristics, considered universal by its theorist. This mechanism is activated in the process of language acquisition, during which children compare language production by generating and testing hypotheses through a 'universal grammar'. Chomsky hypothesises for this, a controversial theory nevertheless, the presence of a kind of speech organ in the left cerebral cortex.

Nativism is based on the hypothesis that there is no fundamental difference between the acquisition of the first language and the acquisition of other languages: the psycholinguistic processes are similar or even the same, so that the dynamics work identically. Consequently, there is a profound criticism of the effectiveness of the foreign language teaching methods used up to that time. According to the theory of nativism, there is a difference between 'learning' a language and 'acquiring' it: acquiring a second language means proceeding in the same way as acquiring the first, it leads to linguistic competence, it occurs intuitively, it generates implicit knowledge and, in a nutshell, teaching does not help. 'Learning', on the other hand, passes through the formal knowledge of the language (grammar, syntax, lexicon, etc.), leads to formal knowledge of the language, occurs consciously, generates explicit knowledge, for which frontal teaching is indispensable.

2.1 Nativism: *Natural Approach hypothesis* (Krashen & Terrell)

According to this theory, the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) makes lifelong language acquisition possible [5]. Krashen has identified a number of assumptions that underlie this approach:

- Learning acquisition hypothesis: Language acquisition occurs not through instruction (which only leads to formal knowledge of the language), but preferably through immersion (language skills).
- Monitoring hypothesis: Knowledge of the rules creates an orientation towards the absence of error, which has a negative effect on language acquisition.
- Natural order hypothesis: Grammatical structures are acquired in an order that can hardly be influenced.

- Input hypothesis: The acquisition of first (native) languages takes place through input (i), not just through teaching and explicit introduction to regularities. Ideal case: $i+1$ (slight overload through comprehensible input; not overload).
- Affective filter hypothesis: A wealth of stimuli and an environment of language acquisition without stress and fear of judgement are decisive prerequisites for language acquisition.

Both behaviourism and nativism, therefore, do not see any positive influence on language acquisition through rule knowledge, reasoning about language, meta-linguistic reflection, etc. While behaviourism is based on the principle of providing a series of stimuli to the mind (the acquisition of environmentally inspired behaviour, teaching through imitative language models), nativism develops teaching following principles considered natural, whereby humans have a gift and are considered genetically designed for generative linguistic creativity, and teaching takes place through immersion and comprehensible input in an environment without stress or fear.

3. Cognitivist-Constructivist Learning Hypothesis

The base of this theory is the belief that learning is based on the human capacity to engage actively and creatively with the world. The acquisition of language is therefore part of this capacity, rather than the mechanism of language acquisition, which is linked to a specific organ.

Jean Piaget (1896-1980) identifies four stages of learning in children under the age of 11: the *sensorimotor* stage runs from birth to 2 years; then there is the *preoperational* stage, from 2 to 7 years; then the *concrete operations* stage which runs from 7 to 12 years; the last stage is the *formal operations* stage. [6]

In order to grasp unknown structures of thought and insert them into their own and imaginary patterns, children resort to two mechanisms defined as *assimilation*, to integrate what is new into a known pattern, and *accommodation*, which consists in modifying the known pattern to adapt it to new situations. These two processes alternate to seek a form of balance on the basis of existing schemas, in search of balanced mental structures to incorporate the newly acquired knowledge: the imbalance of schemas is perceived as a crisis. The concept of error should be linked to this dynamic, as the first expression of this mechanism, and therefore considered a necessary part of the teaching process, and therefore addressed to achieve the objectives.

3.1 Cognition e cognitivism

Cognition makes it possible to determine whether or not an object is suitable for solving a problem; it is achieved through one's confrontation with their environment in an active and shaping form. Students select, order, network and process information on the basis of their cognitive structure, which they continue to develop by differentiating or reorganising (accommodating) when faced with new phenomena that cannot be assimilated into pre-existing patterns. They do not internalise the world in a mimetic way, through imitation, but rediscover it through creative information processing.

The active, conscious engagement of brain processes and structures favours an optimisation of the memory, the language system, the formation of new knowledge networks. It does not contemplate an organ in charge of it, but shapes man in relation to the environment. There are two types of knowledge: declarative knowledge, which consists of true or false propositions, and procedural knowledge, which concerns the performance of a task. Learning is therefore about remembering and applying (instructions, tasks, schemes), so learning strategies depend on learner autonomy, which can be fostered by metacognitive reflection, i.e. awareness of one's own mental dynamics.

Learning is therefore an active process requiring the adoption of emotional, social, and situational strategies, which is creative and does not take place, as far as foreign languages are concerned, through traditional teaching based on knowledge of grammar and translation of passages. Students will develop different individual learning styles which are based first and foremost on the principle of "learning to learn": knowing

one's own learning strategies. A further development of this approach is that of "learning by teaching" (Jean-Pol Martin) [7], since, in order to be able to explain a concept one has to master it, in this way implicitly one has feedback on one's competence. Finally, the concept of lifelong learning comes into play in this approach, which does not set age limits and is based on an awareness of the different strategies employed by the learner.

3.2 Constructivist theory

Constructivist theory supports the hypothesis that the learner's construction, therefore, is determined by one's perception of it: "The environment, as we perceive it, is our own invention" (von Foerster) [8]. Constructivism therefore implies that there is no pre-existing real world that is independent of the observer; rather, there are different 'visions' of the world that depend on the point of view from which it is observed. The processes of knowledge construction are individual and subjective and depend on the individual's prior knowledge: perception is a cognitive operation, value judgement is a procedural operation, involving the construction of meanings, and hence truths, by the observer to which he or she adheres through a self-referential process that takes account of prior mental schemas. This is why interaction with others leads to the agreement and understanding of schemes of action and conceptual structures that will be useful in relations with society.

Specific to language teaching, there is a criticism of the textbook, which is one-sided, with a closed structure, and therefore not suitable for learning groups. Teaching through a process called "perturbation" is therefore aimed at challenging the pre-existing mental constructions that learners have of reality, if they are not suitable for dealing with and interpreting new situations. Learning is therefore a continuous effort to resolve the irritation that is created when faced with them. In groups, learning offers a richer, more varied, open and stimulating environment. Learning, in conclusion, is like a form of development of cognitive structures. The natural learning environment focuses on the authenticity of situations, through immersion in the target language and culture, simulations of real situations, in this way the brain constructs reality, the senses can modify it. The acquisition of knowledge occurs as a subjective construction, leading to a modification or adaptation of previous knowledge, which also develops through the interaction between cognition and emotion.

3.3 A summary of theories of language acquisition

Direct models of stimulus-reaction and reinforcement, which originate from behaviourism, are held in low regard in current opinion, one of the main criticisms being that they ignore the contribution of brain processes.

The focus of modern theories is mainly on internal processes during language learning; on the external environmental, social, and technical conditions that stimulate acquisition.

The presence of an organ such as the LAD, as the nativist hypothesis suggests, is not necessary to explain the structural basis for language acquisition, but it is sufficient to consider a general mental capacity and with it the awareness of learning, possibly in a socially stimulating, pleasant and stress-free or fearful environment.

Language acquisition, without making sharp divisions between the first language and the subsequent ones, is understood as a dynamic mental activity, driven by interaction, dependent on affect and environment, and at the same time self-organised, which cannot be controlled or observed in a focused way from outside, but which can certainly be stimulated.

3.4 The Interlanguage Hypothesis

An interlanguage is a language in the process of being acquired, which includes elements of knowledge of the previous language (usually the first language, but could be a second language belonging to the same language family as the one being learned), as well as elements of the target language and elements

independent of both. This test language is continuously revised and reorganised during input processing. The interlanguage hypothesis complements and transcends the contrast or identity hypothesis (see above) and is thus well suited to account for the diversity of language acquisition factors. The learning process necessarily passes through error and proceeds at a different speed depending on the student's condition: analysing linguistic progress more carefully reveals a tension on the part of the student towards correctness, which passes through attempts to elaborate on previous patterns and knowledge in a continuous process of adaptation and improvement of skills.

The three theories offer foundations that provide interesting insights into teaching activities.

Behaviourist theories envisage imitation of the linguistic environment at the heart of new language learning, starting from the basis of the known languages, particularly the first language, in contrastive form, with particular attention to deviations, the teacher is the model to imitate, learning takes place through reinforcement as a consequence after the reaction to the stimulus.

Nativistic theories assume that linguistic ability is innate, because human beings – if given the right conditions – produce regular and independent linguistic expressions. Teaching is based on comprehensible oral and written input, regardless of language form and correctness. The teacher's role is to provide his or her own input, i.e. information through expressions, cultural elements.

According to cognitivist-constructivist theories, language acquisition is a mental activity for which learners have their own motivation and which everyone organises according to their own mental structures (schemes) (self-motivated and self-organised). Teaching stimulates the formation and development of one's own hypotheses, which start from previous (linguistic, cultural) schemas, and initiates processes of reflection and learning. Thus, learning takes place both through the interaction between teacher and students, but also between learners: specifically for cognitivism, learning is considered to take place through intuition and recognition, while for constructivism, learning is developed through personal experience, one's own experience, the interpretation of information.

Before the development of these theoretical models, in the West, the only system of language teaching was the grammar-translation system (circa 1780-1880), which had been developed for the teaching of classical languages. Since the "natural" turn brought about by modern theories, the main glottodidactic methods have been introduced and have contributed to modern practices: the direct method (circa 1880-1910 and 1960-1980 and still used today in Berlitz schools); the audiolinguistic (circa 1950-1970) and audiovisual (circa 1960-1975) methods with pattern drills; the mediation method; the communicative approach (since 1973); the intercultural approach (since the 1990s) and finally a number of alternative methods sometimes better suited to a particular group of users, which offer interesting insights and integration.

The term *methodos* in Greek (and the corresponding *methodus* in Latin) means *to go behind* or *follow a road*; the path or way that leads to a goal, a place, or a purpose. By method we therefore mean the set of teaching-learning procedures that structure and shape the teaching, in our case, of Italian. This includes the definition of priorities in relation to certain contents, procedures, media, objectives, or theories of language acquisition.

3.5 The Grammar Translation Method

In this method, grammar is the supporting element of the learning process and the general learning objective, translation is the field of application. The basis is a policy linked to a historical tradition with the aim of formal education. The typical course of the lesson follows three phases: the introduction phase, in which the teacher explains the grammar, each rule in the mother tongue; the new vocabulary is presented as a translation in the form of vocabulary; the speaking phase, in which example sentences in the foreign language are presented and the student translates them into the mother tongue; finally, the practising and practising phase, during which the student translates individual sentences into the foreign language. The lesson therefore revolves around the teacher, who organises the reading of texts of which he gives

explanations and translations of vocabulary and provides a grammar introduction of which he explains the rules. The tests are dictation, grammar exercises, translation of passages.

The characteristic elements of the grammar-translation method are the work of deductive grammar, which goes from rule to example, the use of two languages, the precedence of written activities over oral ones, the role of the teacher as the bearer of knowledge, the content drawn from the cultural heritage of the country of which the language is an expression and from literature of high value.

The conception of language that underlies this method predates the work of De Saussure (1857-1913), for whom language is conceived as a system of rules, describable with categories developed for the teaching of Latin, oriented mainly to the written form. The concept of learning reflects the cognitive one, focused on understanding, memorising and applying the rules. The main criticism of this system is that it does not take the motivational factor into account: pupils receive explanations in their mother tongue, but speak little in the foreign language, there is a lack of references to the use of the language in everyday life, and recent studies show that the application of a system of rules, such as that used in the past for classical languages, to a living foreign language is not central to the acquisition process.

The general result is therefore the student's inability to understand and speak the foreign language and therefore the lack of preparation to carry out communicative acts of daily use due to the lack of aptitude to interact in real situations. The grammatical-translational method has been and still is very successful because of the learned tradition of the classical languages transposed to the knowledge of modern languages, which over time has become a stereotype according to which structural knowledge has more dignity than practical knowledge; not to be underestimated is also the absolute ease of teaching that greatly simplifies the work of the teacher, limiting his role to an exposition of grammatical structures, vocabulary and to the verification of mnemonic learning by the students, without further effort to adapt the lesson to the present themes and dynamics of the class. This approach for those who do not teach professionally, in many cases both by the students themselves and by their families of origin, is still linked to tradition and, therefore, there is a lack of awareness of the fact that this type of approach distances a person considerably from the objective they have set themselves by pushing them to learn a foreign language.

3.6 The direct method

The educational policy of this method arose as a reaction to the earlier tradition in Europe and the USA and is well summarised in the title of Wilhelm Viëtor's (1850-1918) 1882 appeal which reads "language teaching must be reversed". Viëtor, a phonologist and language teacher, was at the centre of the movement that arose at the end of the 19th century for a methodological reorientation and a different emphasis on the teaching of modern languages, in the direction of favouring their function as a means of communication and therefore, as living foreign languages, they should first and foremost be spoken. For this reason, the foreign language should be taught directly through use, without passing through the student's mother tongue, with the aim of developing knowledge starting from linguistic skills in speech, with active control of oral language by the teacher. Morphology, i.e. the rules of grammar, is not taught in the direct method, and syntax, sentence structure, phonetics and semantics are learned by the students through the repetition of sentences, and the performance of concrete tasks. The structure of the lessons includes an introduction to monolingual vocabulary by the teacher with the help of pictures; students repeat words or phrases or name things in the foreign language; finally, students describe the details of the proposed picture. Some examples:

- The Nuremberg funnel (German: *Nürnberger Trichter*) is an ironic representation of a mechanical method of learning and teaching, represented by the image of a student who, through a funnel above his head, learns the knowledge that the teacher pours into it. This model of teaching is presented both as an advantage for the student, who learns without effort, and for the teacher, who can teach anything, pouring information directly into the brain of even the laziest students;
- teacher's reading;
- lectures, presentations.

Therefore, in a secondary way, the declarative and structural knowledge of the language is internalised, the form of learning is passive with the teacher at the centre of the lesson to provide the expressions to be repeated, the images to be known in order to develop the vocabulary and correct errors.

The main features are situated learning, monolingualism, teaching grammar inductively, imitation of the teacher and habit of structures. Situated learning implies that knowledge is derived from a dynamic process, through active participation in a context, stimulating interaction with both the teacher and others present and exploiting the potential of the surrounding situation.

Underlying this is the notion that since language is a means of communication, teaching should be oriented towards the use of everyday language in oral form. One therefore learns by listening and imitating the models provided by the teacher.

The criticism is that the direct method renounces conscious cognitive engagement, learning with this method does not activate the ability to reflect on the learning process in progress, but only stimulates the memory: the use of predefined formulas does not make the structures of the language transparent, which are not productive enough to express thoughts in an autonomous form.

The central feature is work with practical vocabulary in everyday use and grammar should be learned deductively, without explanation, through simulated real communication situations. The focus is on speaking and learning takes place exclusively in the target language, with the emphasis on oral skills and reading and writing as a complement. This is the principle of total immersion to which Berlitz language schools still adhere today.

3.7 The audio-lingual method

This method is also known as the *military method*, because it has been used since the Second World War mainly in the years 1940-1960. As with the direct method, the emphasis is on practical language skills. The method is based on the theoretical conception of structuralism (Bloomfield 1933) [9], which considers every language as a closed system of signs.

Learning follows the model of behaviourism, based on the stimulus-response scheme, thus imitating L1 acquisition. Practice takes place according to the stimulus-response *pattern drills* model, whereby first listening and speaking, then repeating. Historical examples of this method are the language courses to be followed through audio and video supports, with television, with the use of the recorder.

The main features are monolingualism with orality at the centre of teaching, while grammar rules are not taught, although inductive discovery is not excluded. The exercises are mainly aimed at memorising the dialogues, taken from the models. The teacher is still the bearer of knowledge, has the function of director, as initiator and manager of the timing of the activities, for which the use of media is central.

The audio-oral method is criticised above all for the use of structures and phrases which are not authentic, but structured to reflect situations and models which the author considers suitable for a predetermined objective, as a result of which the information in the dialogues is often stereotyped in order to meet what the teacher considers to be the student's expectations, and is therefore linked to instructions and models, which limits the student's autonomy in production.

The situation presented in the exercises often only serves as a hook for the didactic work centred on pre-set models, so that the dialogues seem "wooden" as the linguistic structures are forced into them. Students are invited to imitate the characters in the dialogues in the textbook, but they do not determine what is said themselves, so they do not speak 'as themselves'.

Although it is necessary to plan the course of the lesson, the human factor must also be taken into account, which may favour prolonging an activity, carrying it out in a shorter time or even avoiding an activity, or

closing it early because it is too easy for a category of students or too difficult. In a closed structure, the cognitive and creative potential of pupils is not fully exploited.

Despite the fact that behaviourism and structuralism no longer serve as a model for educational approaches, the audio-oral method has led to the development of a number of activities that are still in force in modern education. These include the tendency for lessons to be monolingual, the orientation towards everyday life and communication, and teaching structured so as to use the four skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing, developing them in the lesson in that order. Italian lessons have long been influenced by simulation exercises. Above all, ideas about the importance of repetition and targeted exercise for language acquisition have led to the maintenance of teaching activity models in the form of repetitive, uniform *drills*, following the same patterns, even beyond the structures of the audio-oral method.

3.8 The mediated method

This method was developed in the 1950s and is the result of combining the three aforementioned methods which, in their respective pure form, have a number of disadvantages.

3.9 The audiovisual method

A characteristic of this method is the use of different media. Its basis was the development of new media around the middle of the 20th century. In the visual field, these include slide projectors, overhead projectors and video recorders and auditory media such as the language laboratory, tape recorders and cassette recorders. Language is transmitted by placing it in contexts, situations and dialogues.

A strict exclusion of the mother tongue and elements related to reflection on language structure and the learning process is characteristic of the audiovisual method. Emphasis is placed on authentic speech modes and a wide range of exercises, such as substitution and filling exercises, as well as a precise structure of the lesson phases. Visual impulses are clearly considered for their verbal function, so some images are related to the Italian sentences they are intended to develop.

3.10 The communicative method

Underlying this method is the aim to enable students to express themselves in real everyday situations in the target language by playing specific roles and enabling them to interact in a relevant way with linguistic autonomy. Emphasis is placed on who speaks (with whom, about what, where and with what intentions). The theory from which it takes shape is pragmalinguistics, according to which language is more than a system of forms: it is an aspect of human action, thus focusing on the relationship between the linguistic signal and its user. In practice, the act of speech can be a 'comment', the intention for which to speak, e.g. to "express displeasure": the moments of communication reflect authentic situations. Didactics is moving towards a democratisation of knowledge based on communicative competence (Habermas) [10] in a system in which the teacher no longer has an omniscient role and linguistic forms can vary outside a predefined standard structure, with the aim of acquiring competence on the model of use in the mother tongue, proposing a constructive role of a student aware that learning is a process.

The communicative method is based on the theory of cognitivism, learning is an activity of comprehension that implies creativity, so the activities are oriented towards the peculiarities of the student and dialogue aimed at achieving communicative objectives, the grammatical and lexical progression must follow the practical needs of the frequency of language use, which see the forms of socialisation in first place, so the teacher's role is that of a mediator and the exercises are aimed at facilitating comprehension and the management of typical real-life situations. The activities include viewing and describing images and films, preparatory activities for understanding, and then global and selective comprehension of the individual expressions and linguistic structures presented in the texts and audiovisual works; other exercises are aimed at developing an aptitude for basic communication and also include the reproduction of sentence patterns, grammar exercises, set in contexts inspired by real-life situations; in order to develop the ability to

communicate, dialogues are planned in a controlled way, a text is created from key words; finally, there is room for free production, to express one's own opinion, comment and compare information and situations, *role-playing*.

Therefore, communicative competence does not mean the attainment of theoretical knowledge of certain norms, but the ability to communicate one's own thoughts without fear and complexity, with linguistic means that one has learnt to understand and to evaluate their effectiveness, and to know how to understand the communicative intentions of our interlocutor or of information that has reached us through the media, even when they are expressed in a code that one does not master and that is only partially present in one's own idiolect (Hans-Eberhard Piepho, 1974) [11].

4. Methodological Principles and Class Management Activities

4.1 Neo-communicative approach

With the shift to communicative didactics since the 1970s, there have been further developments. The most recent turning point was a further development of the communicative method, which takes into account the characteristics of contemporary society. The main features are: didactic principle orientation, student orientation, activity orientation, acquisition process orientation, holistic orientation, competence orientation, task orientation.

On the whole, the main aspects of contemporary glottodidactics are: the consideration of interculturality, multilingualism and multiculturalism, as well as the fact that focusing on cognitive aspects enhances learner autonomy, learning strategies are taken into account and the importance of personal perception derived from constructivism. In this direction, PASTILLE also takes into account the aesthetics of reception as a factor of integrated learning of language and culture that proceed in parallel. The integration of new technologies and the form of blended teaching and e-learning guarantee greater variety both to counteract any problems of student mobility and to provide an additional mode of learning, which also allows greater possibilities for the development of technological skills and is open to communication, thanks to which the orientation is directed even more towards *task-based language learning*.

4.2 Intercultural learning

Intercultural teaching has developed on the basis of recent theoretical debates, approximately since the 1990s, when the transition from multiculturalism through interculturalism to transculturalism was already evident: **multiculturalism** is the coexistence of different peoples, **interculturalism** implies a commitment to integration, valuing diversity, the idea of **transculturalism** stems from the awareness of the red thread that binds every culture in relationships of exchange and continuity with a common origin of languages and cultures. The intercultural aspect that is taken into account in language lessons also includes individual factors that influence the teaching process, such as the learning environment, the type of learner, the individual learning style and strategy, which are influenced by age and experience, gender, the methodological tradition widespread in the learner's area of origin, the mother tongue and other known languages, the culture or cultures to which they belong. In relation to cultural development there is the underlying perception, the possibility of participation and sharing aimed at acquiring different information and skills, the awareness of cultural issues, the stimulation of interest, all of which influence learning.

Even the concept of competence itself is changing from the dichotomy proposed by de Saussure, between *langue* and *parole* [12]: in the era of communicative competence an even stronger distinction is made between competence and performance (cf. Chomsky) [13], that is, between competence as ideal knowledge of language and performance as action in language, the ability to produce utterances. Current debates try to find a point of contact between these two theories, to understand knowledge as one of the prerequisites of the ability to express oneself and to focus on it rather than on theoretical knowledge in language classes.

While communicative didactics focuses on the appropriateness and relevance of situations in communication per se, intercultural didactics also takes into account the different communication styles between interlocutors with different cultural backgrounds. Sometimes encounters can generate conflicts, so it is necessary to use the language in a way that reflects the uses of the interlocutor.

4.3 Didactics through multilingualism

Multilingualism is a reality of modern European society. Its implementation also depends on the EU's education policy, which conditions the choices of the member countries. The valorisation of linguistic diversity is considered a tool for maintaining peace, favouring the mediation and respect of the different cultures in which the language was formed and expressed; Italian can act as a bridge language to favour the acquisition of other Romance languages, just as its learning can be traced back to languages already learned, because of common structural roots. If included in a course of study, this aspect can have a favourable impact on the teaching and conscious use of language learning strategies and techniques. The teaching of multilingualism depends on the education policy of the various countries to encourage the study of different foreign languages inside and outside school. Optimising and making more effective the learning of foreign languages and experiencing the richness of languages and cultures improves intercomprehension.

Foreign language learning is most effective when it can consciously draw on existing language skills and learning experiences. This principle should be adopted in teaching practice, since the mind of a person who has already learned a second language has elaborated learning experiences as such, on the other hand is more familiar with the structure of language. When these experiences are enhanced, they help to learn other languages more quickly.

Intercomprehension is the ability to understand a language variety or language without having acquired it through teaching or coming into contact with the target language environment. It is a practice that has very ancient roots and predates the birth of our modern languages, whose process of standardisation and social diffusion within populations dates back a few centuries. Intercomprehension takes place whenever people of different languages want to communicate with each other. Teaching methods must assume that speakers of languages of the same family are able to understand at least the global meaning of a written text and, at least partially, that of an oral production, in another language, without having studied it.

In order to develop these skills, two projects have been most successful: *EuroComRom - The seven sieves: Learn to read the Romance languages!* (2005) and *EuRom5: Read and understand 5 Romance languages* (2011). The first *EuroComRom* includes 6 Romance languages such as Portuguese, Italian, Romanian, French, Catalan and Spanish (Castilian). The seven sieves are based on the following principles: 1) the *International Lexicon of the new language*; 2) the *Pan-Romance Lexicon*, the knowledge of even one Romance language opens the way to the understanding of the others; 3) the *Phonological Correspondences*, based on a reduced number of formulas, allow the identification of lexical kinship through the knowledge of the phonological transformations occurred over time; 4) the *Graphs and Pronunciations*, concern the knowledge of the different orthographic outcomes to facilitate the recognition of lexical and semantic kinship; 5) the *Pan-Romance Syntactic Structures* allow to identify the fundamental types of sentence, structurally identical in all the Romance languages and therefore to recognise the elements of the sentence; 6) the *Morphosyntactic Elements*, are those different grammatical elements of the neo-Latin languages that maintain a common denominator and it is possible to deduce their function during reading; 7) the *Prefixes and Suffixes*, which are of Latin and Greek origin, favour the comprehension of the words.

The *EuRom5* project, starting in 2011, builds on an earlier project that started in 1997 and covered four Romance languages and now includes five. *EuRom5* refers to Portuguese, Italian, French, Catalan and Spanish (Castilian), but not to Romanian, which has more structural and lexical differences than the others. The project demonstrates how a learner who is a native speaker in one of them can acquire in 40 hours of lessons a passive competence (reading and listening) of level B2 in the other four simultaneously.

EuRom5 allows reflection on one's mother tongue and its relationship with others, and contributes to a linguistic awareness of considerable interest. Since the learning process is based on a system of regularities and expectations linked to the notions of language family, language correspondence and the nature of the similarities of the languages encountered, the learner has direct experience of the phenomena of linguistic change (EuRom5, p.52).

Intercomprehension is also very broad for English, which shares over 50% of the lexicon with Italian. The advantages of multilingual teaching lie in the fact that the parallels between languages (Romance and non-Romance) facilitate the acquisition process, parallels that are not only found in vocabulary, but also in grammatical and syntactic structures. It is therefore necessary to pay particular attention to interferences when they lead to wrong conclusions in the handling of a linguistic phenomenon in a foreign language.

5. Principles

Learning as a whole is now regarded as an autonomous process for which the learner is responsible. In this context, there are various concepts and stimuli for foreign language teaching that focus on learner awareness: learner autonomy, awareness of the language and its relationship to culture and other languages, the importance of learning to learn and, in general, learning strategies.

5.1 Student's autonomy

Autonomy is therefore understood as interdependence. The concept also refers to the complexity of learners and teachers, to the learning processes and outcomes produced, and to the situations in which it takes place. Autonomy must be provided first and foremost to promote authentic learning situations. This also leads to a change in the role of teachers as accompanists, mediators and advisors in the language acquisition process.

Learner autonomy requires the introduction of structurally different methods, e.g. through the promotion of group work as in project-based learning, or with tasks requiring greater responsibility as in learning by teaching. Assessment is process-oriented, focuses mainly on learning progress and includes the self-assessment of learners. Autonomy presupposes learner motivation, so learners with a greater interest in the activity or topic of the lesson are much more likely to work responsibly and autonomously than others, and is therefore closely related to methods that promote awareness of strategies and techniques in place as well as linguistic awareness and reflection.

5.2 Language awareness

The concept of language awareness has emerged in Great Britain since the 1980s and focuses on a neglected aspect of communicative teaching, namely reflection on language. It introduces a concept of integrated teaching and learning that has implications both on the affective area where it includes the promotion of curiosity for language, and on the social area, where it develops behaviours in which language is used differently depending on the contexts, showing the differences in social relationships during communication. Politics and propaganda are also the subject of critical attention, which focuses on the strategies of language and texts, for example in the uses of advertising or political communication. In addition, the cognitive component is taken into account, aiming at the recognition of linguistic rules and norms, linguistic variation and correctness. The importance of errors in the learning process is also consciously reflected upon.

In particular, the idea of misunderstanding and the approach to error is the starting point for a radical change towards the conception of the learner whose learning process is put at the centre of attention. It is this change of viewpoint in which the student is now seen as an active subject who constructs his own knowledge. More precisely, this model undermines the traditional interpretation of errors. The learner, in fact, interprets the experience with the new language, in particular the messages that the teacher continually sends: the learner gives a meaning to these messages, a meaning that naturally depends on the knowledge

he already has but also derives from many other less obvious elements. The individual continuously interprets the world, the language has the function of carrying out this theoretical elaboration and making it explicit. What is observed is related to previous experiences: in the process of learning a language, too, various factors influence it, which in the production of utterances lead, for example, to overlapping with the linguistic structures of other known languages, while in comprehension the meaning of a text or listening is merged with the expectations of the learner.

Finally, beliefs persist about foreign languages that are the result of previous language learning experiences, which in particular may even prevent the use of appropriate knowledge and resources. Beliefs and misconceptions act as a filter or as a simplification of a theory as well as of the idea one forms of reality itself, sometimes affecting the learner's motivation or influencing methodological choices, and at the same time determining the patterns with which the individual approaches the language and the culture in which it has flourished and thus how he or she will interpret future experience.

5.3 Constructivist methodology

In moderate constructivism (Wolff 2002) [14], learning is understood as a self-controlled, autonomous, self-responsible construction process. This requires the creation of a learning environment with complex learning content, authentic learning materials, the use of metacognitive elements such as the development of learning strategies and techniques. Thus, teaching takes place through working in small groups, presenting learning outcomes in class, cooperation, making numerous materials available, keeping a student's diary, monolingualism in the foreign language as the working language, mutual and joint assessment in the foreign language on the basis of the effectiveness of the interaction and reflecting the authenticity of the situations. The distinction between the teachability and learnability of knowledge and skills is also a constitutive part of the approach.

This model is based on the widespread experience that, while teachers transmit foreign language knowledge and skills, students do not absorb and practise them to the same extent. The move away from this educational paradigm is in line with current research studies, which rank self-designed learning processes as more fruitful and sustainable than passive educational processes. However, criticism questions the complete move away from educationism in theoretical discourses, and there is particular resistance to open procedures in educational practice.

Radical constructivism gives a further twist to the theory of learning which is configured as the construction and realisation of hypotheses (Wendt 2002) [15] and leads to action-oriented didactics, learner-centredness, process-awareness and language experience involves, holistically, the whole person.

5.4 Heterogeneity and differentiation

In group courses students may present heterogeneous characteristics, which influence the language acquisition process. The main factors are age, ability to challenge oneself, motivation, interest and willingness to learn and expose oneself to others, previous knowledge, including linguistic knowledge, psychological preparation for learning, learning style and speed, memorisation capacity, socio-cultural background and living environment, origin, previous language learning experience, known language register.

For this reason, the lesson must be differentiated in order to keep all the students, who have different peculiarities, at the same level, by varying the social form, with access to media and objects in common use or adapted for teaching, the methodology, procedures, forms and ways of working, the level of difficulty of the activities, the cultural scope of the material and work and the expected results for the students, the forms of aid and support, the learning objective and finally the assessment methods.

The activities must be structured to guarantee variety, thinking both of the personal aspect of the student, so directing him/her to encourage, with different methods, the ability to organise him/herself autonomously in his/her process of language acquisition; and in the way they are carried out so that the authentic material

provided (such as films, texts or listening) and the desired result reflect the different forms of language use (such as letters, presentations, panels, etc.). Finally, this is reflected in the choice of method, in which stimulation of the five senses, reflection and analysis, memorisation and realisation, including physical realisation, are alternated. This orientation puts language production ahead of other aspects, a greater active involvement of the students compared to frontal explanation, guarantees greater freedom in the work done. Working in pairs or groups encourages interaction and cooperation, as in reality, and also develops the ability to recognise mistakes and to be able to correct them: both one's own and those of one's companions, and thus learn by teaching.

5.5 Activity orientation

Teaching is thus more learner-centred and less controlled by the teacher, who proposes activities which are conceptually different from pure language exercises and which aim to reproduce real situations and contexts in which linguistic communication is required. They must mainly contain activities in which language problems arise "naturally" and are functional to the resolution of the task and are recognised as such by the learner. Authentic and natural language is the one mainly used in language learning. Increasingly complex and authentic communicative tasks lead to independent use of the foreign language. Learning tasks are primarily content-oriented, so form-oriented subtasks may be useful before or after the activities, as a supplement to the learning process if, for example, the learner is aware that he or she needs knowledge of a certain language structure or vocabulary to solve the communicative task. The teacher's work focuses on these aspects, so that skills can be honed with the aim of achieving precision in, for example, pronunciation or language structures. Progress is achieved primarily through communication in the foreign language, whereby conscious use of the formal elements of language accelerates acquisition. This process must follow a 'natural order' corresponding to the frequency of use and cannot be manipulated simply by instructions from outside.

The methods considered as alternatives have peculiarities for which they are particularly suitable in certain situations, for example with the total physical response for the use of the imperative, and introducing vocabulary oriented to the present situation or for a specific age group, or with suggestopedia, in its techniques for lowering the affective filter and the total involvement of the student.

5.6 New didactic methodologies and e-learning

New didactic methodologies include programmes that generally conform to the didactic-methodological approach of textbooks, extending their potential, containing emulations of real activities, requiring the solution of a task within a simulated framework, offering access to online encyclopaedias, which can be updated more flexibly than the printed versions, and introducing specific learning concepts for certain types of learners. Finally, there is also educational software for playful learning, which aims to support the motivational side of the learning process (Grünwald 2006) [16].

The tendency is to move away from offline media towards online offerings with a connection to a server-based storage system (cloud computing). Providers of foreign language learning courses such as *Rosetta Stone* or *Digital Publishing*, for example, still offer software on CD-ROM or DVD, but the range of products offered online is wider. In addition to including access to all the content on the DVD, it includes additional mobile applications (apps) for tablets and smartphones, online learning games and live online lessons with tutors, which are now only available in digital form. Competence in the use of IT tools is one of the so-called key qualifications in the communication society and is defined as a general objective in the school context. It is therefore also relevant for Italian lessons, as it fosters the use of and critical thinking about information and media tools and interactive services in a foreign language. Today, the reader of digital sources on the Internet no longer has any guarantee that the contents have been checked beforehand for truthfulness and accuracy. The Internet has become a 'printing press' for everyone and the reader must learn to critically evaluate the information found there. Teaching the use of these tools in the context of Italian lessons should

enable students to use the media to improve their communicative and intercultural communication skills in a foreign language.

Activities include exercises to select in a targeted manner reliable sites and sources of information from those present online; awareness-raising for critical analysis of information from different sources; development of strategies for searching for information on the web in Italian; the ability to critically evaluate information and trace sources, to be able to identify the author's intentions; to be able to carry out an intercultural comparison of information; to know different techniques and methods for making and publishing or sharing one's own contributions through the Internet; to independently include information from the web for better implementation of teaching activities; to carry out effective scientific research; to reflect critically on the role and value of the media in the society whose language is studied, examining its landscape; the development of communication and intercultural action skills through the use of digital technologies in the target language (chats, blogs, WhatsApp, Telegram); the use of software for learning and self-learning.

For foreign language teaching, studies have shown that the use of various digital media does not in itself lead to increased motivation (Hattie 2009) [17] or more effective learning of Italian, but that the use of media in combination with appropriate didactic models and constructive attitudes can increase interest, arouse curiosity or provoke emotional participation among learners (Grünewald 2006) [18]. Decisive for learning motivation is the question of whether pupils recognise the learning objective as a reason for interest in themselves.

The following three functions of the Internet are particularly useful for teaching Italian: information, communication and presentation. The Internet offers teachers quick, location-independent access to authentic Italian-language websites, podcasts, videopods, radio stations in the target language, short films, newspapers in the target language, etc., thus greatly facilitating lesson preparation and contributing to communicative, student-oriented Italian lessons. Research tasks and web quests are an integral part of the Italian lessons. As far as the communication function is concerned, the added value of using newsgroups and forums, chats, wikis and social networks should be emphasised.

The Internet presentation function refers to the active design of one's own web presence in a foreign language context, weblogs or blogs or the creation of podcasts and wikis in a foreign language.

Possibilities for using the chat include exchanges with young people from Italy and abroad in Italian on topics relevant to the interlocutors (e.g. finding accommodation); brainstorming, e.g. with students from a partner university in Italy about the next exchange programme; agreements (appointments, existing ideas, work planning, preparing a visit, etc.); transferring information to several pupils (groups), i.e. rapid exchange of information even in different countries; coaching for a learning group or individual participants in the context of an exchange programme.); transfer of information to several pupils (groups), thus a quick exchange of information even in different countries; coaching for a study group; chatting with a learning group or individual participants in the context of e-learning scenarios, for the preparation of an exam or as a consultation hour; tandem courses with exchange students or tandem learning.

5.7 Transversal competences

Integrative and transversal competences include factors that comprehensively address all aspects of foreign language teaching and learning and thus all functional communicative concepts. Transversal competences include intercultural communicative competence, competence in textual media, linguistic awareness and competence in language learning. There is no distinction between basic and advanced level, moreover, the understanding of intercultural communicative competence is based on the three formative levels "knowing", "knowing how to do" and "knowing how to be", the first one concerns theory, the second one practice, which includes the ability to think and imagine, to learn, to use knowledge, the third one awareness of one's own choices in the use of knowledge, building one's own character and being able to compare oneself. In the specific field of glottodidactics, educational standards refer to the cultural knowledge of the Italian-speaking countries, i.e. knowledge of socio-cultural orientation, cultural imprints of the language and language use, or

strategic knowledge. Textual media competence transcends the receptive sub-competences of reading and listening comprehension and encompasses the dimensions of understanding and interpreting texts in their contexts. This includes consideration of individual prior knowledge, recognition of culturally specific features of texts and media, use of these features in the production of one's own texts, and reflection of the individual process of reception and production. Transversal competences also include language awareness, which is linked to the goal of being able to act sensitively in communication situations and thus promote intercultural learning and personality development. Competence in language learning is related to learning methods and strategies and also manifests itself in the conscious management of one's motivation in language learning. Together with language awareness, language competence is seen in terms of its educational value, i.e. in terms of personality development, so transversal competences go beyond glottodidactics and include further dimensions that also touch on aspects of educational orientation (Fäcke 2017: 132-135) [19].

5.8 Mirror neurons

Human life is embedded in society. From childhood onwards, we develop the ability to understand and replicate what others do, interpret their motives and emotions. This mechanism of understanding, allows one to pick up the actions performed by others, and transfer them to the motor system of the observer, thus allowing him to have the perception of understanding and perceiving the observed behaviour, in a process of identification. This capacity is fundamental for interaction and peaceful coexistence. Between the 1980s and 1990s, research by a group of scholars at the University of Parma led to the identification of the neurons that regulate the function of transforming a sensory perception of an action into a stimulus corresponding to a motor one, so they called them mirror neurons, located mainly in the ventral part of the inferior frontal lobe. One of the researchers, Vittorio Gallese, later showed in his studies that in humans the concept of 'we' develops first rather than, as is commonly believed, that of 'I', and this is linked to a specific area of the brain. Understanding feelings, sensations and intentions is therefore an immediate reflex, for which mirror neurons are responsible. This neurophysiological approach has opened up the medical and scientific study of fields such as learning and communication, which were previously only discussed and studied on humanistic grounds. In the field of communication, therefore, the creation of an immediate link between the sender and the receiver of a message is highlighted, which also largely conditions research into old and new media. The problem arises of the so-called parity between the sender and the receiver of a signal, whether through spoken language, gestures or media. The mirror neuron mechanism makes it possible to explain how the action performed by an individual is represented mentally and with physical sensations, activating the motor cortex of the observer. The link is therefore direct, not mediated, between the two individuals. Actions, attitudes and behaviours become messages understood by the recipient without conscious reflection or agreement.

5.9 Epigenetics and learning

Epigenetics, which is a very recent discipline, is demonstrating with scientific evidence how socio-cultural factors can influence the organism and its functioning to cause heritable phenotypic changes by modifying the activation of certain genes, without altering the sequence of the DNA genetic code. Epigenetics plays a fundamental role in all processes of neural reorganisation or restructuring, including those governing brain plasticity. Crucial epigenetic changes are also involved in the regulation of learning and memory processes; environmental enrichment is also able to cure learning and memory deficits. Exercise and linguistic activity can therefore influence subsequent language learning processes.

6. Correspondence between CEFR levels and Linguistic Competences

6.1 CEFR

In 2001, the Council of Europe adopted the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages with the aim of homogenising and making transparent the curricula, examinations, certificates and teaching materials for language teaching in Europe. Revised in 2018, this European document is intended as a basis

for the planning, design and implementation of foreign language teaching. It is therefore not a curriculum, but a framework for classifying language learning and teaching.

In addition, the four different areas of language communication competence are listed and considered separately: reception, production, interaction and mediation (each oral and/or written). Overall, this document emphasises a constructive assessment of language competence. Compared to previous assessment criteria commonly used in the school system, the descriptions of skills emphasise competences already acquired, and do not refer to gaps to be filled. This orientation allows students to receive feedback that supports their motivation. In addition to this standard, which is oriented towards comparability, further strengths of the framework lie in the emphasis on self-assessment by students or in the support of multilingualism.

6.2 The 2018 update

The 2001 illustrative descriptor scales are one of the most widely used aspects of the CEFR and the relevance of the original descriptors has remained remarkably stable over time. Therefore, the approach taken was to supplement the 2001 series. The modification of a small number of statements at C2 level is intended to better reflect the fact that the illustrative descriptors of the CEFR do not take an idealised native speaker as a reference point for a learner's competence. Between the A1 and C1 levels, the 'phonological control' scale was revised and references to 'native speakers' were removed, as this was a controversial definition from the outset.

In 2018, new scales were added for 'reading as a leisure activity' under 'written reception', for 'use of telecommunications' under 'spoken interaction'. Some existing descriptors defining more monological speech have been moved from the scale 'exchange of information' to 'sustaining a monologue': under the scale 'giving information' in this process.

Pre-A1 represents a 'milestone' halfway to A1 level, when the learner has not yet acquired a generative language skill, but relies on a repertoire of simple and ordinary words and expressions. The existence of a proficiency band below A1 defines more comprehensively the skills of users, for whom the inclusion of a level below A1 was important, to monitor the progress of acquisition. Among the main new features is the inclusion of the "online interaction" scale.

6.3 Mediation

The approach to mediation was already adopted in the 2001 CEFR publication, however, no project had been set up to develop them. An important aim of the current update (project 2013-2017) was therefore to finally provide such descriptive scales for mediation, given the increasing relevance of this area in education. In addition to a focus on text mediation activities, scales for 'concept mediation' and 'communication mediation' have been included, making a total of 19 scales for mediation activities. Mediation strategies (5 scales) concern the strategies employed during the mediation process, rather than its preparation. It is the definition of these new descriptors for mediation, online interaction, reactions to literature and the construction of multilingual/pluricultural repertoires that is the main contributor.

6.4 Phonology

For the 'phonological check', a completely new set of descriptors was developed compared to the existing CEFR scale. Phonology had been the least effective scale in the original 2001 descriptors. The phonological scale was the only illustrative descriptor scale in the CEFR for which a standard based on the pronunciation of native speakers had been adopted, albeit implicitly. In the update, it seemed more appropriate to focus on intelligibility as the primary construct in phonological control, in line with current research, especially in the context of defining functional descriptors for the construction of multilingual/pluricultural repertoires. The main focus of the updates is on "articulation of sounds" and "prosody".

In conclusion, the changes in contemporary society and recent developments in research in various fields have come within the scope of interest of glottodidactics, highlighting the greater importance of language skills for personal and social well-being and have been recorded by European institutions in the development of a modern reference framework, anticipating a unified policy towards common ideals aimed at well-being and international integration starting from linguistic aspects and a common and shared cultural heritage in the various disciplines, of which language is an expression.

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Module 4 – Teaching and Assessment Tools

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Abstract

This chapter is divided in two part. The first part presents the basic structure of the 60 Didactic Units contained in the learning material, which provides one of the two main contributions of the project. Each unit includes seven phases, illustrated through the “operational model” as elaborated by Freddi, Porcelli, and Balboni, but without excluding the didactic models proposed by Vedovelli and Diadori. The seven phases will be analyzed and described in their specific functions (introduction, understanding, analysis, communication, metalanguage and metacommunication, exercise, verification) and contents (skills involved, learning goals and strategies to achieve them). The second part of the chapter focuses on second main contribution of the project, the Pastille-Pixel website, which provides online teaching-learning tools (methodological lines, teaching units, reference manual, audio, video and multimedia materials,) and information related to the project (partners, institutions and people involved, information, contacts, events and press reviews, management and organization).

Keywords: *Didactic Unit, teaching-learning material, operational model, website, output*

1. Didactic Units

The learning materials produced throughout the project is organized into 60 Didactic Units, ten for each language level (A1-A2, B1-B2, and C1-C2). Each unit provides six to eight hours of lessons and is structured in seven phases. The phases will be illustrated below, mainly by following the classic “operational model” approach associated with Freddi, Porcelli, and Balboni inspired by Gestalt psychology. There is also terminological-conceptual references relating to the Vedovelli and Diadori models, which gives the text a central role in communication and language learning. Functions (introduction, understanding, analysis, communication, metalanguage and metacommunication, exercise, verification), and contents (skills involved, learning goals and strategies to achieve them) of each phase will be presented.

1.1. Introduction

The first phase focuses on motivation and contextualization. It provides a general orientation and introduces the learner to the communicative, cultural, and linguistic contents of the Didactic Units. This is accomplished through the appropriate texts and strategies such as the expectancy grammar as well as by previewing the key learning items associated with the units. The learner’s previous knowledge of Italian culture is engaged with preliminary activities such as: brainstorming, collection of ideas, spidergrams, and grouping of words, with the support of audiovisual material (images, video, audio, and music).

1.2. Comprehension

The second phase aims at textual comprehension and gives the learner direct contact with both oral and written materials which consists of a dialogue, a movie, a song with its transcription, or various types of texts (descriptive, expository, argumentative, narrative). Introductory activities, applied specifically to the paratextual level (images, title, form, and genre) will precede the actions of listening and reading. In this way, and thanks to the work already completed during the first phase, the text will already be familiar to the user,

serving as a verification and confirmation of what has been previously learned. This will indeed re-affirm and encourage the emotional-experiential dimensions of the learner and strengthen the learning process.

After the first listening and/or reading component, the textual comprehension proceeds by teaching skimming and scanning techniques. The skill of skimming aims at grasping the general sense, function, and content of the text, whereas the skill of scanning aims at obtaining a more specific degree of information from the text, useful for achieving the objectives of the Didactic Unit. Effective activities and operational tools to instill the desired learning outcomes can be achieved through exercises of (re)listening-repetition and/or (re)listening-silent reading, functional questions (Who? What? Where? When? How? Why?), open questions, multiple choice, true/false, lexical, semantic and syntactic exercises (pairing of words/phrases, cloze), embodiment and transcoding activities (dramatization of textual contents through performance or image).

1.3. Analysis

The third phase, dedicated to a textual analysis oriented to different levels of the text (grammar, function, and contents), stimulates both a metalinguistic and conceptual reflection. This approach helps the learner to develop different levels of analysis, phono-morphosyntactic, lexical, communicative, and intercultural skills. An inductive approach is useful for this purpose, with the support of specific exercises such as targeted cloze, inclusion/exclusion, seriation and explanation. Through this approach, the learner can discover the general rules starting from the particular cases offered within the text itself

1.4. Communication

The fourth phase focuses on communication skills and on the functional use of language. The learner strengthens the pragmatic and textual skills acquired in the previous phases. In this regard, oral and written exercises are suggested, helping to develop both textual synthesis and the growth of knowledge and skills starting from the text. Among oral activities, there are monologue and interaction techniques (role-play, dialogue, group conversation, phone call, etc.). Among written activities, there are summary and textual manipulation (gender change, reformulation, and paraphrasing), correspondences (the writing of letters, e-mails, short messages, chat, and forum), and research (individual and/or group). Also, linguistic mediation activities, both written (translation) and oral (interpreting), can prove useful.

1.5. Metalinguage and Metacommunication

The fifth phase addresses the issue of metalinguage and metacommunication. It provides a space for a more in-depth reflection on language and its use, as well as the linguistic skills of listening, reading, writing, speaking, and mediation. Always through an inductive approach, the learner first acquires the grammatical and functional rules contained in the Didactic Unit starting from their particular use found in the text. What the learner experiences, therefore, is again a process of verification, recognition, and confirmation of what has been previously observed and learned. The facilitator/teacher will proceed to the normative explanation only after the learner has demonstrated independently the ability to reflect and grasp the grammatical and functional rules contained in the Didactic Unit.

1.6. Exercises and Reinforcement activities

The sixth phase focuses on exercises and reinforcement activities aimed at consolidating the knowledge and skills acquired in the previous phases. Activities such as textual manipulation, cloze, structural exercises, playful techniques to develop morpho-lexical, communicative, and (inter) cultural skills, repetition, and minimal pairs are especially helpful in this regard. Individual or group metalinguistic reflections can likewise effectively assist in completing the proposed activities.

1.7. Verification

The seventh and final phase focuses on verification activities, communicative output, and/or action activities (traditional outgoing tests or tests outside the learning environment) in order to assess and confirm the knowledge and skills acquired by the learner throughout the didactic units.

2. Pastille website

Conceived as a multimedia platform for online learning to complement the seminar program, which has been organized by the contractual partners in their respective countries, the website <https://pastille.pixel-online.org/index.php> provides the main deliverable of the Pastille project. The website is an educational, informative, and organizational space that makes available the teaching-learning tools and materials developed during the project. It also provides information relating to the project and allows each partner to manage their work and regularly update their uploaded content. From the home page, you will find seven main headings: Guidelines, Didactic Units, Reference Textbook, Audiovisual and Multimedia Material, Partnership, Communication, Project Management.

2.1. Headings: Guidelines, Didactic Units, Reference Textbook

The Guidelines present the methods, strategies and objectives related to the teaching-learning materials. The 60 Didactic Units introduced by the table of contents, and the Reference Textbook follows. In line with the mission of the project, each unit develops the communicative objectives and grammatical elements through cultural paths that lead the learner to deepen their knowledge of Italian society, art and literature. Finally, the reference textbook completes the teaching method proposed by the Pastille project, and so maximizing the effectiveness of the language learning process.

2.2. Headings: Audiovisual and Multimedia Material

In the Audiovisual and Multimedia headings, users of the website (teachers and learners) can find tools to encourage the educational use from a variety of sources. For instance, one can find activities and resources such as videos, music, and images that can be used during lessons, exercises, and video samples of lessons, preparatory guides, conferences, and methodological lectures on both theoretical and multimedia approaches to language teaching.

2.3. Heading: Partnership

This heading presents the institutions and people involved in the project. It also contains four subheadings: Contractual Partners, University Lecturers and Researchers, University Students, and Associated Partners. There are six Contractual Partners, located in five different European countries: University of Wroclaw (Poland), University of Olomouc (Czech Republic), University of Macedonia (Greece), Pixel – International Education and Training Institution (Florence, Italy), University of Genoa (Italy), University of Vilnius (Lithuania). In addition, organizations and institutions interested in promoting Italian language and culture in Europe and abroad are listed as Associated Partners. The Associated Partners share and augment Pastille's mission and objectives through their contribution in improving the impact, use and sustainability of the project.

2.4. Heading: Communication

This heading has two subheadings: Information and Contacts, Events and Press Review. The first subheading is organized into three parts: Brochure, Contacts, and Latest News. The first part contains promotional material. The second part provides the name, institution of belonging, telephone number, and email address of the representatives of each contractual partner. The third part is a space to keep users updated on Pastille's latest activities. The second subheading also includes two parts: Conferences and

Events and Press Review. The first part provides information on the various activities (seminars, monitoring and verification meetings) organized in the five sponsoring countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, and Lithuania). The second part includes links to sites focused on education and language teaching, so related to the Pastille project.

2.5 Heading: Project Management

The last heading of the website contains seven subheadings: Project Description, Results, Project Meetings, Work in Progress, Dissemination, Exploitation, and Download Area.

2.5.1. Subheading: Project Description

The first subheading illustrates the content, objectives, target and results envisaged by the Pastille project. It highlights, among other aspects, Pastille's intercultural approach, aimed at strengthening, through the study of Italian, the awareness of the cultural roots common to Romance, Greek, Slavic and Baltic languages and cultures.

2.5.2. Subheading: Results

The second subheading presents the outputs produced during the project (methodological-didactic material and website). It also provides information and descriptions relating to the activities planned throughout the project (four meetings of the Contractual Partners, crosscutting activities and multiplier events organized and hosted in each of the five countries involved). Finally, the subheading provides planned monitoring actions: three planned evaluation mechanisms for each phase of the project and of the transversal activities, together with the internal evaluation report required from each Contractual Partner in the final report, containing a detailed description and analysis of the activities carried out and the results achieved.

2.5.3. Subheadings: Project Meetings, Work in Progress

The third subheading (Project Meetings) contains useful documents and details on the meetings organized by the Contractual Partners. The fourth subheading (Work in Progress) allows the Contractual Partners themselves to access a private section of the website to manage the site independently updating its contents, in line with the process and project developments.

2.5.4. Subheadings: Dissemination, Exploitation

The fifth and sixth subheadings provide the necessary tools needed to promote and disseminate the project: newspapers and magazines in print and online, websites related to the field of education and vocational training, conferences, fairs, multiplier events and other forms of media.

2.5.5. Subheadings: Download Area

The last subheading provides the opportunity to download document templates and the necessary tools to implement, coordinate and monitor the activities introduced by the project. This subheading brings together nine sections, each focusing on a specific aspect of the Pastille project. The section 1, "Multiplier Events", contains the templates of documents relating to the organization and definition of the events envisaged by the project. The section 2, "Management", provides the templates of documents relating to information on lecturers, researchers and students involved in the activities of the project, on the in progress activities and on staff mobility. The section 3, "Dissemination", provides the template of the report on dissemination activities, and instructions on how to create the report. The section 4, "Exploitation", includes the letter template for non-contractual partners associated with the project, the information template relating to the associated partners as well as the table template for resources and weblinks related to the content and objectives to the Pastille project. The section 5, "Evaluation", provides the quality plan template and three project evaluation questionnaires. The first two questionnaires concern the organization and management of the meetings organized during the project. The third questionnaire aims to know end users' experience and

feedback regarding the content and quality of the resource itself made available via the Pastille-Pixel website. The Evaluation section also provides a tool for questionnaires analysis and guidelines for the evaluation report on testing activity. The section 6, "Training Activities", offers document templates related to Pastilles training activities: the attendance registration template, the course program template and the certificate of participation in the aforementioned activities. The section 7, "Contents for Mobility Europass", provides templates for the description of the Erasmus mobility experience, in which dates, places, objectives, activities carried out alongside skills acquired are indicated. The section 8, "Participant Profiles", provides templates useful for introducing and defining the profiles of the participants involved in teaching, learning and training activities. Finally, the section 9, "Report", provides templates for illustrating the long-term teaching, learning and training activities carried out, by defining the role played by each activity in achieving the general objectives of the project, reporting and justifying any differences between what was planned and what was achieved.

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Module 5 – Monitoring and Evaluation of the Didactic Unit Construction Process

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Abstract

This document intends to explain the rationale behind the adoption of a monitoring and evaluation plan for one of the most delicate phases of the PASTILLE project, i.e., the preparation by each partner of the didactic units for teaching Italian. The contents and relative activities for the preparation and implementation of the monitoring and evaluation plan are intended to initiate a shared path within the consortium for the evaluation of the process of construction and testing of the teaching units and to offer an important tool for the governance of the entire project.

Keywords: *monitoring; evaluation; improvement actions*

1. Monitoring and evaluation: theoretical framework

The processes of self-analysis and evaluation are an essential resource for the qualitative development of each project and its expected products. Through reflection and analysis of the actions taken, it is possible to understand the validity of the choices made, to identify potential areas of improvement and deviation actions, thus favouring the effectiveness and efficiency of the whole process.

With regard to these dimensions, monitoring and evaluation activity is called upon to analyse not only the products and results that are more or less objectively measurable, but also - and above all - the processes activated to achieve them. In this respect, it is an indispensable support for change, since it acts at the same time on two juxtaposed and interconnected levels. At a first level, the longitudinal verification and control of the implementation process is aimed at identifying and correcting possible errors (monitoring activities). At a second level, project evaluation starts with a reflection on the results achieved in relation to the objectives set and leads the actors involved to question themselves - in a process of self-evaluation, dialogue and mutual learning - on the choices made, the instruments adopted and their compliance with the objectives set, the context and the resources employed. These are different levels of reflection, both of which serve to make the experience important not only as an experience in itself, but also as a moment of growth and learning for those who took part in it, and an asset for the future.

Monitoring and evaluation are closely linked. Both are necessary tools for estimating and demonstrating the implementation of projects and assessing their impacts and consequences in quantitative and qualitative terms.

They have some common features: both are based on the collection of information and have the function of analysing the achievements of a given project, in terms of products as well as direct effects on all the people involved and the direct beneficiaries, in order to draw useful conclusions for future implementation.

Monitoring is the decision support tool of the coordinator and the whole consortium during the course of the project. It aims at keeping track of the progress of the action undertaken in terms of resources employed, activities realised and effects produced. The results form the information basis for the subsequent and

complementary evaluation activity. The latter makes it possible to monitor the project during the implementation phase and, if necessary, to redesign its activities.

There are three main stages of monitoring:

- A constant review through useful information to reflect on what is being done and to study modifications and adaptations of the activities under observation.
- Possible re-planning of activities to adapt them to the reality in which they are being carried out (the implementation phase always implies deviations from what was initially planned).
- A reporting system aimed at providing the different key actors with updated reports on the progress of activities. In short, the purpose of the reports is to point out difficulties encountered and suggest actions to be taken to overcome them, and to guarantee the transparency of the process, making it accessible at all stages to external actors.

At all times during the implementation phase, monitoring provides indications of:

- The feasibility of the project, i.e. its ability to continue to meet the set objectives within the timeframe and in the manner agreed between the various actors.
- The progress that is being made in terms of achieving the planned objectives and the ability to use the available resources.
- The quality of project management, especially in relation to the ability to manage risk factors and unexpected events.
- Actions to be taken.

A good monitoring system therefore involves the careful collection of existing information, the identification of missing information and the search for new data in order to complete the overall picture of trends.

The implementation phase of activities, properly monitored, is therefore a virtuous learning process through which all those involved learn from what they are doing and adapt it to the difficulties and/or needs that arise in the course of the work.

The monitoring phase is followed by the evaluation phase which aims, in short, to check whether the set objectives are being achieved and to support decision-making processes concerning actions to be taken in the subsequent phases of activities. It is therefore a punctual activity, divided into 4 phases planned at 4 different times, with distinct objectives:

- *Ex-ante* evaluation takes place at the beginning of the project cycle, before the project is adopted, and helps to ensure that the intervention is as relevant and coherent as possible. For this reason, it is closely linked to the analysis of needs and context.
- The *in itinere* evaluation is carried out at defined critical moments and in particular at transitions from one phase to another or at the achievement of an intermediate result. It uses the information made available by the monitoring system and any other ad hoc findings to identify the need to modify part of the implementation steps or even the original design.
- The purpose of the final evaluation is the conclusive analysis of the results actually achieved through the study of the effectiveness and efficiency of the interventions implemented. It reconsiders and judges the whole process.
- *Ex-post* evaluation takes place some time after the implementation of activities and checks the long-term effects.

In PASTILLE, the construction of teaching units is the core of the project and this process requires special attention as it is crucial for the achievement of all the objectives of the whole project. This is why a plan for monitoring and evaluating the activities planned for the realisation of the teaching units was adopted in order to be able to activate, in real time, any deviation or improvement actions that might be necessary in the product construction phases.

2. Monitoring and evaluation plan for the construction phase of the PASTILLE project's teaching units

The monitoring and evaluation plan of the construction process of the teaching units was prepared by the partner University of Genoa (Italy) before the start of the planned activities and was agreed first with the coordinator of the whole project, University of Wroclaw (Poland) and then shared with the partners.

The plan foresees that, periodically, the University of Genoa, responsible for the monitoring and evaluation process, will submit a report to the PASTILLE project coordinator to be shared and discussed with the partners during the project meetings.

- The following elements are clearly outlined in it:
- The purpose of the evaluation, the users of the results and the end;
- The aspects assessed and against which objectives;
- Indicators, sources of information and methods of data collection;
- The evaluator;
- The timing of the evaluation;
- The recipients of the information.

With respect to the listed dimensions, the following are examples of identified indicators:

- The activities carried out compared to what was planned;
- Compliance with the agreed timetable;
- The degree of participation of the actors involved (teachers responsible for the drafting of the teaching units) in the moments of sharing, comparison and coordination;
- The level of communication of data and information on the progress of the activities within the various groups of teachers involved in the preparation of the teaching units at each partner;
- The ability of the working group to share the critical points encountered in the course of the work and the strengths;
- Co-ordination and the ability to adapt activities in itinere in relation to emerging evidence.

The choice made within a project with these characteristics was to give prominence, alongside a quantitative monitoring, to the qualitative component, able to complete the information where it is difficult to find and to account for the quality of the entire process activated.

The choice of monitoring tools was made in order to make them easier to distribute, understand and compile to ensure objective and rapid evaluations.

Table 1 shows the detailed monitoring plan and related tools set up to obtain the necessary information both during the product construction process and for evaluation following testing activities.

Type of activity	Objectives	Target audience	Tools	Timing
Survey of the expectations of teachers in charge of preparing teaching units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – to reflect on expectations of the proposed experience, – make suggestions 	Teachers in charge of preparing the teaching units	Questionnaire 1 (individual, nominative, closed- and open-ended, administered through the platform)	Start of work
Survey of perceived initial competences in relation to the task of preparing teaching units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – obtaining a profile of competences at the beginning of the course, as well as perceived needs 	Teachers in charge of preparing the teaching units	Questionnaire 2a (individual, nominative, closed- and open-ended, administered through the platform)	Start of work
Survey of teachers'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – obtain 	Teachers in	Questionnaire 3	When

Type of activity	Objectives	Target audience	Tools	Timing
opinion during the construction of each UD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> suggestions for improving overall quality along the way – identify strengths and weaknesses in the preparation to be shared with other teachers 	charge of preparing the teaching units	(individual, nominative, closed and open answer, administered via the platform)	preparing each teaching unit (logbook)
Survey of perceived final competences in relation to the task of preparing teaching units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – to obtain a cross profile of the skills perceived at the beginning of the course and those perceived at the end of the course by the teachers who developed the teaching units 	Teachers in charge of preparing the teaching units	Questionnaire 2b (individual, nominative, closed- and open-ended, administered through the platform)	at the end of the implementation of the learning units
Survey of satisfaction with the training offer at the end of the course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – to ensure continuous attention to the satisfaction of participants, with timely detection of the satisfaction of the training offer – to ascertain the degree of involvement and interest of the participants in the topics covered and the teaching methods used 	Students participating in the pilot	Questionnaire 4 (individual, anonymous, closed and open answer, administered via the platform)	at the end of each pilot edition
Assessment of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – assessing the knowledge and skills acquired (prepared by the teachers and for each teaching unit) 	Students participating in the pilot	Questionnaire on acquired knowledge/skills	at the end of each pilot edition
Survey of teachers' and tutors' opinions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – checking that the planned activities are 	Teachers responsible for	Questionnaire 5 (individual, nominative,	at the end of each pilot

Type of activity	Objectives	Target audience	Tools	Timing
during the testing phases	<p>carried out correctly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – checking the degree of perception of the "classroom situation", – ascertain the degree of involvement and interest of the participants in the topics covered and the teaching methods used 	piloting/classroom tutors	closed and open answer, administered through the platform)	edition

Table 1 - Monitoring activities (objectives, target groups, tools, timing)

The Evaluation Plan is a flexible document in relation to the evaluations to be carried out, the list of which will be updated or completed over time. It makes explicit on which topics the different types of evaluation activities are carried out (ex-ante, in itinere and ex-post), including self-assessments, and links, during the period concerned, the timing of the delivery of the preliminary or final reports to the cadence of the meetings in which the partnership will discuss the progress of the process of construction of the didactic units and of the testing phases.

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The PASTILLE project "European Arts and Traditions in Italian Language Learning" implemented by a consortium coordinated by the University of Wrocław, consisting of the University of Genoa (Italy), University of Macedonia (Greece), Palacky University of Olomouc (Czech Republic), University of Vilnius (Lithuania) and, technical partner, PIXEL Association of Florence (Italy) focuses on the use of authentic materials of artistic value for teaching purposes. It offers an original didactic method, presents the organisation of the learning process based on traditional techniques for memory and the results of modern research in the field of didactics for Italian language as an object and vector of culture and innovative tools, the support of a digital platform. These guidelines support teachers who wish to hone the tools of the trade and students who wish to learn about (their own) learning dynamics.

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