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Social Media, Language, and Identity in Migration

Relatrice/Relatore
Ch.ma/Ch. Prof.ssa/Prof. Monica Banzato

Correlatrice/Correlatore
Ch.ma/Ch. Prof.ssa/Prof. Graziano Serragiotto

Laureanda/Laureando
Maria Pia Fuoglio
Matricola
899081

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Abstract

This study analyses the cultural and linguistic adaptation processes of migrants residing in the Venice area, with particular attention to the role played by social media. The aim is to understand how migrants living in the Venice area — divided into under 30 and over 30 — use social media to adapt to their new cultural and linguistic context. The research aims to answer three main questions: Are there differences between young and adult migrants residing in the Venice area in terms of their socio-cultural adaptation processes, as measured by the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire (ICSSQ; Kuusisto et al., 2015)? Are there differences between young people and adults in their use of social media for information, socialization, production, acculturation and learning the Italian language? What differences emerge between young people (under 30) and adults (over 30) in the use of social networking sites (SNS) and cultural integration? This research will contribute to understanding how young and adult migrants perceive a new context and how they adapt to it.

Introduction

This present research focuses on the immigration phenomenon and its implications related to identity and cultural changes, with particular reference to the Venetian context. Immigration is a complex and multidimensional process that involves not only geographical shift, but also deep transformations in the individual and collective identities of migrants. Individuals who emigrate constantly face the challenge to adapt to a new social context, while at the same time having to renegotiate their sense of cultural and linguistic belonging. Over time, the Mestre and Marghera areas have seen an increase in foreign communities, which has changed the local social and cultural landscape, making it necessary to examine the dynamics of acculturation and adaptation in greater depth.

Among the many aspects of the immigration process, cultural and linguistic adaptation plays a fundamental role, affecting migrants' ability to integrate into the host society and build new forms of belonging. The scholar Berry (1980, 1984, 1997) has emphasised how acculturation strategies—integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization— reflect the ways in which migrants renegotiate and manage their relationship with their culture of origin and with the host society. Although there are numerous studies dedicated to these issues, one aspect that remains largely unexplored is the role of digital technologies, and in particular social networking sites (SNS), in relation to cultural and linguistic adaptation processes. In fact, SNS help individuals maintain contact with their community of origin, but at the same time they give them the opportunity to build new relationships with the host society, learn the local language, and acquire intercultural skills. The main aim of this research is therefore, to investigate cultural and linguistic adaptation in relation to the use of social media. In particular, it will investigate:

(1) the stage of intercultural sensitivity reached by migrants; (2) whether there are differences between the two groups (under 30 and over 30) in the use of SNS in relation to information, socialization, production, acculturation, and finally in learning the Italian language; (3) what are the differences between the two groups in the use of SNS and cultural integration.

The research paper is structured in four chapters. The first chapter provides a theoretical framework on the phenomenon of migration, with an investigation into the themes of acculturation, adaptation, and cultural identity, with particular attention to the Model of Intercultural Sensitivity Development developed by Bennett (1993, 2004, 1986). The second chapter explores the role of SNS in relation to the migration process. In particular, it analyzes the ways in which digital platforms influence intercultural communication processes, promote the maintenance of transnational ties, and stimulate new forms of social participation. In addition, the chapter also discusses learning the language of the host country. In particular, it examines the dynamics of linguistic integration (motivation, access to education, basic skills, economic and social costs, linguistic distance between L1 and L2, age of migration, and cultural capital). The third chapter presents the methodology used and the sample of individuals analysed. In addition, the tools used to collect and implement the data are also presented in detail. Finally, the fourth chapter presents the results of the research and discusses them in light of the theoretical framework, highlighting practical implications and future prospects.

The expected results of this research are on two closely connected levels, one theoretical and one practical. On an academic level, it is the aim to enrich the analysis of intercultural adaptation processes by examining the impact of SNS on language learning and cultural integration processes. In fact, this research helps to clarify how acculturation no longer takes place only in physical and institutional contexts (school, work, local communities), but extends to virtual spaces where identities, languages, and cultures evolve. On an applied and social level, the aim is to provide useful guidelines for the development of inclusion policies and practices that take into account the potential of digital technology as a resource for linguistic and cultural integration. In this sense, the thesis emphasizes how the promotion of conscious and inclusive use of digital technologies can contribute to building more open, multicultural, and interculturally competent societies.

1. Migration, Acculturation, and Identity Formation

1.1 The Immigration phenomenon

According to the World Migration Report (IOM, 2024), it is estimated that there are approximately 281 million migrants worldwide from every corner of the globe, which amounts to 3.6% of the global population compared to 128 million in 2020. According to data reported by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (2025), in the first quarter of 2025, the number of irregular migrations to the external borders of the European Union decreased by 31% compared to the same period the previous year, reaching approximately 33,600 people. On the shores of the Mediterranean, however, there are approximately 8,500 irregular border crossings, a decrease of 26% compared to the previous year.

According to the investigations of the Operational Data Portal (2025), about 414 people lost their lives at sea in the first four months of 2025, compared to the year 2024, with approximately 715 deaths. In February 2025 (UNHCR, 2025), it was estimated that clandestine boats traveling to Europe traverse the maritime routes of the Mediterranean and Northwestern Africa.

Regarding the situation in Italy, the data shows that approximately 11,474 individuals have landed compared to 16,090 last year. During the year 2024, Italy seems to have been the first country of arrival for refugees and migrants in Europe. In fact, during the year 2024, over 66,600 people arrived mainly by sea, compared to 157,600 in 2023 (UNICEF, “Rifugiati e Migranti in Europa”, 2025). Operational Data Portal (UNHCR, 2025) reports that approximately 6,327,500 refugees from Ukraine arrived in Europe by the end of January 2025, setting a record in Europe, while outside Europe, around 560,200 arrivals were reported. In Venice, a remarkable 68.6% of non-EU foreigners hold a long-term residence permit. This figure is significantly higher than the national average, which stands at 59.3%, as reported by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies (2023). In the local context of the cities considered in this case study, Mestre and Marghera (located near Venice), there has been a significant increase in the resident foreign population over the past twenty years. In particular, from 2002 to 2024, the foreign population in Mestre grew by 631%, while in Marghera it increased by 867%, rising from 5,700 to approximately 40,500 residents.

According to the data ("Città di Venezia," 2024), the people who migrate the most to Venice are those coming from Europe (18,748 people), with a strong presence of Romanian citizens (6,581 people). However, it is from Asia (17,252 people) that there are the most significant numbers in terms of countries migrating to the Venetian territory. In particular, Bangladeshi citizens are the largest group, with 8,835 individuals, followed by those from the People's Republic of China (3,985).

Immigration is a complex and ancient phenomenon due to numerous socio-economic, political and environmental factors. This phenomenon manifests itself through the relocation to other countries of individuals or groups driven by the need or desire to seek a better life in terms of economy, wealth, security, health, or due to conflict, persecution or natural disasters.
The data previously reported, testify to the significant growth of migration, often in response to crises and persistent inequalities. In terms of gender distribution, it is estimated that there are currently more male migrants than female migrants worldwide, and this gap seems to have increased over the last 20 years (IOM, 2024). Conflicts in recent years have contributed to the expansion of migration flows, including the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in early 2022, conflicts in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, and, more recently, the Hamas attack and conflict in Gaza in October 2024. These episodes have resulted in the forced displacement of millions of people who have been forced to leave their home countries in search of safe refuge. In addition, in recent years, events such as droughts, floods, desertification and other environmental disasters caused numerous mass forced migrations. People from North and Southern Africa, South-East Asia and the Middle East, on the other hand, are pushed to migrate due to worsening economic conditions (Allison et al., 2023).

The experience of migration, in addition to geographical change, implies a change in identity. When individuals move to a new country, they have a strong sense of cultural identity in their country of origin rooted in language, traditions, values and social norms. Over time, the sense of identity evolves in response to the interaction with the host society, the learning of the local language, the social and cultural norms of the host country, and the need to integrate into the new context (Phinney, 2003). Indeed, as will be seen later on, migrants' sense of cultural belonging is in continuous negotiation between the culture of origin and that of the host society. At the same time, the sense of belonging to one's cultural group can change, because an individual may feel part of an ethno-cultural group in a broader context. In this dynamic, individuals may assume a double label and see themselves as part of two distinct cultural realities, their native culture and that of the host country. This is a form of bicultural identity.

The evolution of cultural identity in migrants is strongly influenced by the interaction between three fundamental components: the mother country community that may continue to influence them through family ties, cultural, religious or linguistic practices, the host community that may

show more or less inclusive attitudes, and the quality of the relationship between these two realities (J.W. Berry et al., 2023). There are various ways in which migrants can relate to the host society. Some migrants may integrate fully to the point of becoming indistinguishable from the population; others, may retain their cultural roots and at the same time actively participate in the social life of the host country, contributing to the creation of a multicultural society; others, although culturally vital, may remain outside of society's life; and others may remain alienated from their cultures, becoming trapped in social situations that are problematic both for themselves and for society. Finally, some migrants may experience alienation, in which they may feel excluded from both their culture of origin and that of the host country. In this case, they become trapped in socially uncomfortable situations that have negative consequences for both the individual and the social context as a whole (J.W. Berry, 1997). For adolescents, developing an identity becomes more complex. Adolescents who are born or arrive in a new country at a young age will find themselves developing a cultural identity based on both their family's culture of origin and that of the host country. In this scenario, cultural identity can be primarily 'ethnic', that is, based on one's own cultural group, 'national', based on the host society, or 'bicultural', based on a balance or fusion of the two cultures (Phinney & Navarro, 1997).

Numerous studies in the field of intercultural psychology and the social sciences demonstrate the existence of different ways in which individuals adapt to culturally plural societies. One of these is the study of migrants' acculturation strategies, which include: integration, assimilation, separation and finally marginalization (Berry, 1980, 1984). Other researchers (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001; Zhou, 1997), however, have proposed a process called segmented assimilation in which four types of acculturation are distinguished: consonant acculturation, consonant resistance to acculturation, selective acculturation, and dissonant acculturation. Although these models provide an important theoretical contribution to the analysis of the migration phenomenon, in this study we will refer in more detail to the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) developed by Milton J. Bennett (1993). This model, which focuses on the growth of intercultural awareness, is based on the idea that adaptation to culturally different contexts is not an automatic process, but requires a progressive development of the ability to perceive, understand and appreciate cultural differences.

1.2 The process of Acculturation and Adaptation

One of the results of immigration is the creation of a culturally plural society, a society composed of people and groups belonging to different cultural traditions living in the same

context. In the majority of cases, unequal cultural groups are formed in these culturally plural societies in terms of numerical, political or economic power. These differences are formed on the basis of migration motivations. Many cultural groups decide to migrate to a new country voluntarily - such as immigrants who move in search of better economic or living conditions - and others who are forced to leave their country of origin - such as refugees or asylum seekers fleeing risky situations in their countries. In addition, another factor that diversifies these cultural groups is the permanence in the host country. Many people decide to migrate temporarily, as in the case of international students, workers or asylum seekers who will leave the country after a specific time; others decide to migrate to another country permanently (W. Berry, 1997). Regardless of these factors, it has been concluded that for any cultural group, the adaptation process does not change (Berry & Sam, 1996).

In recent years, cross-cultural psychology has been interested in migrants' development and behavioural manifestation during the adaptation process in different cultural contexts. However, although this approach has seemed valid in many respects, it has been criticised for considering cultural contexts as static (Berry, 1997). Consequently, a line of research has emerged over the years in the field of transcultural psychology that considers cultures as constantly changing contexts due to both natural dynamics and contact with other cultures (Berry, 1980). In this context, cultural adaptation to the context, and contacts between different cultures, provide variables on variable human behaviour. A central concept in this theme, is that of acculturation, defined as the set of changes that occur as a result of prolonged contact between individuals belonging to different cultures. Acculturation is also seen as a bidirectional process that produces changes in the original patterns of both cultures (Redfield et al., 1936). Graves (1967), in the course of his research, distinguished the phenomenon of acculturation into: a collective or group phenomenon in which it refers to cultural changes that occur within the group. This change may be experienced differently by each individual despite being part of a group; and psychological acculturation, in which it refers to the change that occurs in the psychological sphere of the individual during the process of cultural adaptation.

The concept of adaptation refers to the changes that occur in individuals who migrate in response to the demands of the host society (Berry, 1997, p. 13).

In order for the concept of adaptation to be fully understood, it is useful to briefly illustrate what the concept of acculturation includes. According to Berry (1970), questions that help us understand how migrants relate to the new cultural context include: ‘To what extent do people try to maintain the identity and cultural characteristics of their own country and consider them

important', and 'To what extent should individuals who migrate to a new country be involved in other cultural groups or remain among them' (Berry, 1970).

The answers to these questions refer to four distinct strategies: integration, assimilation, separation, and finally marginalization. Assimilation occurs when individuals do not want to maintain their cultural identity and its characteristics, preferring to identify exclusively with the culture of the host society and participate fully in the social life it offers. Conversely, separation occurs when individuals value their cultural identity and avoid integration with other groups. When it is the host society group that values its own identity by avoiding contact with newcomers, it is appropriate to speak of segregation. Integration occurs when individuals show interest in maintaining their own cultural identity while at the same time interacting with other cultural groups on a daily basis. This strategy is associated with individuals with bicultural identities. Finally, when there is little possibility or interest in maintaining one's cultural identity, often due to forced cultural loss, exclusion or discrimination, it is referred to as marginalization (Berry et al., 1989). In this strategy, two groups are identified: the first refers to individuals who do not identify with any culture, probably due to traumatic events such as a forced departure from their country, a negative effect of globalization that erodes identities, or, due to negative experiences such as discrimination that leads to the rejection of one's own culture; and those who do not have a strong connection to a specific culture and are strongly oriented towards the achievement of their own personal goals, even at the cost of neglecting social and cultural ties. It is important to specify that this model is based on the fact that both groups (the migrating individuals and the receiving individuals) have a choice. When the host society imposes certain strategies or restricts them, other terms must be used. Specifically, if the strategy of separation is imposed by the host society, it is segregation. On the contrary, if the assimilation strategy is imposed by the host society, then it is 'melting pot'. Rarely the strategy of marginalization is chosen, rather, it may be the result of forced assimilation with forced exclusion (segregation). In the case of integration, it can only be freely chosen when the host society is multicultural (Berry, 1991).

The phenomenon of acculturation has been the subject of numerous studies on migration. These studies were conducted to understand the main factors that influence adaptation in individuals who migrate. To better clarify the concept of acculturation, Berry (1992) proposed a summary framework on the characteristics that influence acculturation. In Figure 1, one of these is presented (Berry, 1992).

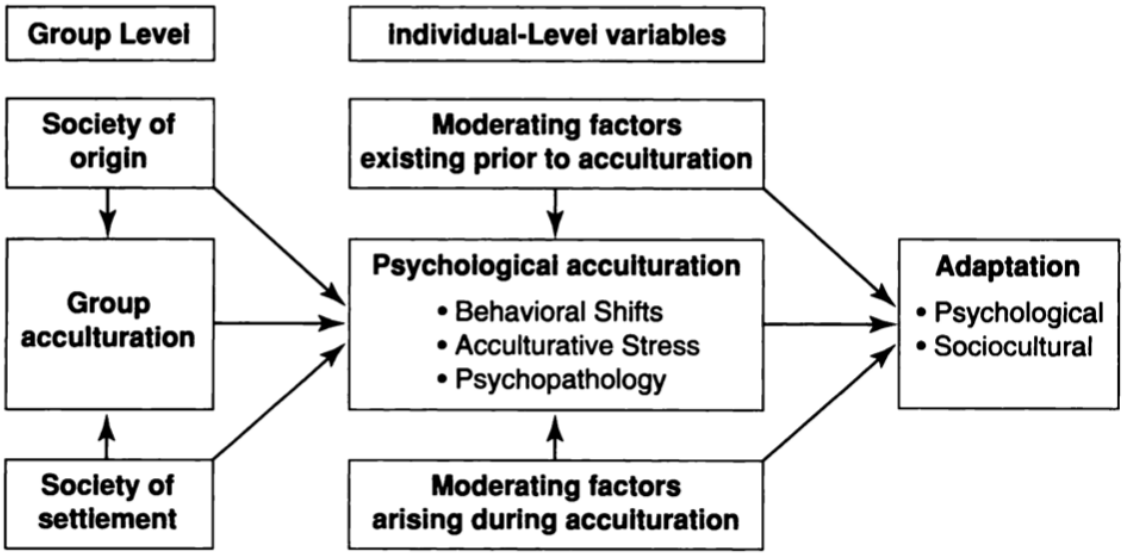

Figure 1 *A framework for acculturation research (Berry, 1992)*

On the left, group-level acculturation phenomena are illustrated, while on the right, individual or psychological phenomena are illustrated. At the top, the characteristics identified before acculturation are illustrated, while at the bottom, those during the acculturation process are depicted. In the center of the model, the main phenomena of acculturation at the group and psychological levels are illustrated: these flow from left to right, starting from the cultural groups in contact that bring about changes in their cultural identity as well as in their political, economic, and social structures. These changes influence the individual going through acculturation with the risk of numerous possible further behavioral changes, resulting in acculturative stress and psychopathology, ultimately leading to adaptation both at the psychological and sociocultural levels (Berry & Sam, 1996, pp 300). This helps to understand the main points that should be considered when conducting studies on acculturation and adaptation. Similarly, in order the study to be comprehensive, it is necessary to also consider the main characteristics of the host society such as demographics, immigration policies, and attitudes towards immigrants. However, there is no study that has referenced all these aspects. What is shown in the diagram of figure 1 is the result of numerous studies.

Table 2 more specifically summarizes the characteristics that influence the process of acculturation and adaptation;

Variable	*Specific features*
Society of origin	Ethnographic characteristics (e.g., language, religion, values) Political situation (e.g., conflict, civil war, repression) Economic conditions (e.g., poverty, disparity, famine) Demographic factors (e.g., crowding, population explosion)
Society of settlement	Immigration history (longstanding vs. recent) Immigration policy (intentional vs. accidental) Attitudes towards immigration (favorable–unfavorable) Attitudes towards specific groups (favorable–unfavorable) Social support (availability, usefulness)
Group acculturation	Changes in acculturating group: Physical (e.g., rural to urban) Biological (e.g., nutrition, disease) Economic (e.g., loss of status) Social (e.g., isolation) Cultural (e.g., dress, food, language)
Moderating factors prior to acculturation	Demographic (e.g., age, gender, education) Cultural (e.g., language, religion, distance) Economic (e.g., status) Personal (e.g., health, prior knowledge) Migration motivation (e.g., push vs. pull) Expectations (e.g., excessive vs. realistic)
Moderating factors arising during acculturation	Acculturation strategies (Assimilation, Integration, Separation, Marginalization) Contact/participation Cultural maintenance Social support (appraisal and use) Coping strategies and resources Prejudice and discrimination

Figure 2 ***Specific factors affecting the process of acculturation and adaptation (Berry & Sam, 1996, pp 301)***

According to researchers Berry and Sam (1996), the preference for one strategy over another is based on a choice that varies depending on the context and the period. For example, in more private contexts such as family or a particular ethnic community, there may be an interest of maintaining a cultural identity compared to when the individual is in public settings such as workplaces or schools. The choice of strategy is also influenced by the level of discrimination perceived from the host society. Obvious physical characteristics, such as skin color or somatic traits, can expose individuals to discrimination to a greater extent. Other factors that influence this process, include the age at the time of migration, gender, reasons for migration (voluntary or forced), level of education, and the personal and social resources available in the new environment.

The host country's approach to cultural diversity also plays a significant role. A multicultural society is based on the acceptance of the value of different cultures, low levels of prejudice (ethnocentrism, discrimination, and racism), and a shared sense of belonging to society by all

groups (Kalin & Berry, 1995). An effective integration therefore requires the willingness of both groups to welcome and enrich each other through the different cultures (Berry et al., 1989). In countries where institutions actively support multiculturalism, migrants tend to have a more positive adaptation experience, feeling encouraged both to participate in social life and to maintain their cultural identity. On the contrary, in contexts where an assimilationist logic prevails, adaptation is easier only for those who are willing to abandon their original culture to fully conform to the dominant one. This approach, however, can generate significant discomfort, as it restricts individual freedom in choosing the acculturation strategy (Phinney, 2003).

Indeed, in societies that impose a single cultural identity as an ideal of national belonging, integration can become nearly impossible. The pressure to renounce one's cultural origins can create confusion in individuals about their social position and sense of identity, leading to experiences of exclusion and the perception of being a threat to the dominant culture.

To prevent such negative effects, it is essential that host countries promote the active and inclusive participation of migrants, avoiding both marginalization and self-segregation. Promoting integration not only enriches the entire society but also has positive effects on the psychological well-being of migrants, facilitating a more harmonious and lasting process of acculturation.

To fully understand the phenomena of acculturation and adaptation, it is essential to analyze both social contexts involved: both the society of origin and the settlement society, in order to assess the cultural gap existing between the two realities (J.W. Berry et al., 2023).

Regarding the surrounding cities of Venice considered in this case study, Mestre and Marghera, as mentioned earlier, there has been an increase in the migration phenomenon in recent years (see the first paragraph of this chapter). According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies (2023), through the analysis of migrants' residence permits, Venice ranks at the top among Italian metropolitan cities for the percentage of non-EU foreigners with long-term residence permits, standing at 68.6%. This rate significantly exceeds the national average, which stands at 59.3% (Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, 2023). In light of the data collected for the present case study, which highlight a predominance of Bengali migrants, it is appropriate to delve into the historical and cultural characteristics of this group. Bangladesh gained independence in 1971, following an armed conflict with Pakistan, from which it had previously been united. From this painful war, Bangladesh, despite being victorious, remained a country devastated by hunger and war. In 1974, there were massive floods that led to numerous famines. Consequently, the Bengali population was driven to seek alternatives for survival by emigrating.

These structural difficulties have pushed a significant part of the population to emigrate, initially for survival needs, and later in search of better economic opportunities. In recent decades, Italy has become one of the preferred destinations for Bangladeshi migrants, partly due to the presence of already established migration networks that encourage new flows through word of mouth and support among compatriots. In the past, it was the men who moved to then support their families economically from afar, but now women are also emigrating. Even young people, driven by low wages, job insecurity, and little stability, are emigrating to Italy in search of a better life (Manzo, 2023).

Other factors to consider are age, gender, and education. When acculturation begins at an early age, such as before entering primary school, a regular acculturation process occurs (Beiser et al., 1988). This happens because, probably, the young individual, not having yet consolidated the culture and habits of their country of origin, will not experience a major cultural conflict when confronted with the culture of the host country; or, this could occur because during early childhood, levels of flexibility and adaptability are high. However, greater problems may be encountered in adolescents. Adolescents might face demands and pressures both from their parents to maintain the identity of their country of origin and from their peers. Moreover, the transition from childhood to adulthood may be exacerbated by cultural changes, multiplying the questions about identity that are typical of the adolescent period (Phinney, 1990).The choices that adolescents make regarding the level of adherence to their original culture and that of the host country, friendships, relationship with their mother tongue, etc., will be the result of contextual factors (for example, the community), their experience with discrimination, but also personal characteristics such as gender. These factors will change over the course of their experience in the host community (Jean S. Phinney et al., 2023).I n later age, when elderly parents decide to join their children and family, it seems that there are more problems adapting. This, unlike what happens in childhood, occurs because it is more complicated for the elderly to change their habits and views of a culture they have lived in for a long time.

Regarding the gender factor, this is variable in the process of acculturation. Numerous studies have highlighted that, compared to men, women may face greater difficulties in the process of cultural adaptation. Such difficulties, however, are not intrinsic to gender but often stem from differentiated treatment related to the cultural norms of the country of origin. Indeed, if there is a significant gap between the country of origin and the host society, women's attempts to assume certain roles and positions within the society could lead to conflicts with their culture of origin,

putting them at risk (Moghaddam, Ditto, & Taylor, 1990). According to a study on adaptation (Ataca & Berry, 2002), Turkish women living in Canada, especially those with low economic status, seem to have encountered greater sociocultural adaptation problems compared to men. According Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2023), in Italy, there has been a gradual improvement in female participation in the labour market, contributing in part to reducing the gender gap. However, migrant women remain at a disadvantage, especially in relation to native women and migrant men. They often emigrate for family reasons, in many cases to join their partners, and this means they receive less attention from integration policies, which are usually more focused on migrants who arrive for work or humanitarian protection reasons. Migrant women face greater obstacles in accessing employment, balancing work and family life, and building social networks. Added to these problems are prejudices and stereotypes that limit their opportunities. While these disparities were once associated with lower levels of education, today they appear to be more closely linked to the role of childcare, which often forces migrant women to reduce their working hours, earn less, or even give up work completely (OECD, 2023).

As mentioned above, migrant women emigrate mainly to join their partners and start a family. This trend makes it more difficult for them to gain work experience quickly. Native women, on the other hand, tend to have children later in life and after achieving professional stability. Consequently, this could be one of the explanations for the gap between native and immigrant women. Another factor that increases the gap between native and immigrant women is job preference. Native women find it easier to find work in the public sector, where they can benefit from flexible hours, longer parental leave and higher wages. Immigrant women, on the other hand, often do low-level jobs where it is difficult to balance work and family life (OECD, 2023).

The level of education of the migrant individual can serve as a positive resource for various reasons. First of all, education is a personal resource that contributes to overcoming obstacles encountered throughout life; moreover, education relates to income, occupational status, support networks, etc.; finally, education helps to increase alignment with the characteristics of the host society. However, it is important to emphasize that a high educational or professional status in the country of origin is not always recognised or valued in the host country. This happens both due to objective differences in educational and work systems and due to phenomena of prejudice or ignorance on the part of the host society. This lack of recognition can generate frustration, loss of status, and psychological stress, compromising the individual's adaptation to the new social context (Aycan & Berry, 1996).

In considering this, it is essential to introduce the concept of intercultural adaptation. It depends on individual and situational variables (Kosic, Mannetti, and Sam, 2006), and it is bidimensional because it is articulated by two components of psychological and sociocultural adaptation (Searle and Ward, 1990).Psychological adaptation includes subjective well-being and refers to psychological changes such as the sense of identity, both cultural and personal, mental health, and finally the achievement of personal satisfaction in the new host context (Berry, 1997, pp13).Psychological adaptation has been primarily studied in relation to stress and coping strategies. Sociocultural adaptation refers to the learning and the way of dealing with the cultural aspects of a country, such as language, customs, and social norms (Ward et al., 2005).Recently, economic adaptation has also been introduced, which refers to economic satisfaction in the new cultural context (Aycan & Berry, 1996).

Table 3 will summarize the characteristics that influence the process of acculturation and psychological adaptation (Berry & Sam, 1996, pp 301).

Variable	*Specific features*
Behavioral shifts	Culture learning (e.g., language, food, dress, social norms) Culture shedding (e.g., changing social norms, gender attitudes) Culture conflict (e.g., incompatibility, intergroup difficulties)
Acculturative stress	Problem appraisal Stressors Stress phenomena (e.g., psychological, psychomatic, anxiety)
Psychopathology	Problems Crises Pathological phenomena (e.g., depression, schizophrenia)
Psychological adaptation	Self-esteem Identity consolidation Well-being/satisfaction
Sociocultural adaptation	Cultural knowledge, social skills Interpersonal and intergroup relations Family and community relations

Figure 3 ***Specific features of psychological acculturation and adaptation (Berry & Sam, 1996, pp 301)***

In the field of adaptation research, various theoretical approaches have been identified that involve different levels of difficulty for the individual. Berry (1980, p. 298) proposed a

behavioral perspective, according to which the psychological changes accompanying acculturation can be interpreted as a process of learning a new repertoire of behaviors and social norms typical of the destination culture. However, such learning may require a form of "culture shedding," that is, the renunciation of certain cultural aspects deemed no longer functional or compatible with the new context. This aspect could lead to a cultural conflict where incompatible behaviors between the host culture and the home culture create difficulties for the individual. In this case, individuals might experience "culture shock" (Oberg, 1960), a more common and widely used term compared to "acculturative stress" (Berry, 1970, p. 239-252), a more appropriate term because it is linked to psychological stress models in response to environmental stressors. If individuals experience greater difficulties that they are unable to cope with, it is referred to as "psychopathology" or "mental illness," where severe psychological disorders such as clinical depression and debilitating anxiety are observed (Malzberg & Lee, 1956; Murphy, 1965).

According to Lay and Nguyen (1998), there are three main categories of stressors during the acculturation process. These factors are related to outgroup, intergroup and family context. The first factor refers to difficulties in communicating with members of the host community, including language barriers, cultural integration issues and perceived discrimination. These factors may hinder integration and foster a sense of social exclusion. The second, refers to difficulties related to communication with compatriots and feelings of non-acceptance in the community of origin. The third, refers to the stress factors arising from the conflict between the values transmitted by the family and those of the host country. Within this system, the experience of acculturation and adaptation differs across generations. According to a study on Asian immigrants in Canada (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001), it was found that the second generation has more difficulty in relating to their compatriots than the first generation; however, there seem to be no differences in terms of relationships with people within the host society. Furthermore, it emerged that the second generation is more stressed because they have to deal with their community of origin, the people in the host society and finally the demands of their own family. Parents, on the other hand, face gaps with their community of origin that lead to psychological difficulties. In a study on Italian immigrants in Belgium (Matera & Strafile, 2011), it was found that the first generation experienced more problems with the Belgian community related to integration into the cultural context, language use and perceived discrimination. In fact, the interviewees stated that they experienced discomfort and communication difficulties related to their children's integration at school and lack of

understanding of Belgian cultural customs. The second generation also stated that they had experienced uncomfortable situations with members of the host community, but to a lesser extent than the first generation. However, the second generation stated that they had experienced problems with members of the community of origin. In fact, respondents stated that they felt discriminated against and not accepted by Italians. It seems that stressors referring to the family context did not matter much. Finally, this case study emphasizes that both generations seem to have achieved a good level of adaptation by stating that they know how to access the services offered, even if to a lesser extent for the second generation. In addition, both generations state that they prefer relationships with their Italian compatriots, claiming that they feel closer culturally.

Another relevant factor in intercultural adaptation processes is the cultural distance between the migrants' country of origin and the host country. The literature on the subject emphasizes how greater cultural similarity between the two contexts tends to facilitate integration and reduce the difficulties associated with change. According to Smith and Bond (1999), when the cultures of origin and destination share common elements, individuals experience a less problematic transition, as the process of acquiring new norms, values and behavior is less demanding. Cultural similarity, in fact, contributes to improved intercultural communication, decreasing the ambiguity and uncertainty that often accompany entering a new social context. This translates into reduced performance anxiety and increased effectiveness in everyday interactions. Conversely, a greater cultural distance requires the acquisition of more specific skills and knowledge, making the adaptation process longer and more complex. This can include not only linguistic aspects, but also implicit social norms, ways of thinking and acting, daily habits and, finally, value systems. As a result, the adaptation process becomes longer, more complex and more stressful for the individual. Therefore, a significant cultural gap can lead to greater “culture shock”, which manifests itself in disorientation, frustration and difficulty in interacting with the local population.

Other factors that influence the success of adaptation can be prejudice and discrimination towards a cultural group, the degree of contact and support from the host society that mitigate cumulative stress. Although it has been little studied, the factor of discrimination is also an obstacle to adaptation: a person who feels discriminated against will hardly adapt to the host country (Phinney, 2003).

In fact, the study on Turks in Canada mentioned earlier also demonstrated that perceived discrimination limited the adaptation of migrants. Contact with the host society, therefore, provides the opportunity to learn the new culture and its skills. Also, the immigration plan, understood as the intention to stay in the host country, is important to analyze.
Even the immigration plan, understood as the intention to stay in the host country, is important to analyze.
Consequently, it has been concluded that during the migratory experience, the psychological and emotional condition of individuals who migrate is strongly destabilised, and this impact can vary over time. Generally, adaptation to a new culture tends to improve if the country of origin and the host country are culturally similar, if individuals identify with the host country, and if migrant individuals choose acculturation or biculturalism strategies.

1.3 The negotiation of identities

The cultural identity of the migrants changes during the acculturation process. Although the sense of belonging to an individual's own culture may remain stable throughout time, behavioral identity tends to change because individuals gradually adopt the habits and behaviors of the host society (Basabe et al. 2004, p. 10). Cultural attitudes, on the other hand, are usually bicultural because there is a desire to maintain one's own cultural characteristics while also adopting those of the host country. It is considered that the adoption of bicultural attitudes represents the most effective strategy from a psychological perspective, because it allows for greater flexibility and adaptability in different cultural contexts. However, this largely depends on factors related to the society of origin, the host society, and its organization (Basabe et al. 2004, p. 12). In the past, the common belief was that to successfully adapt, an individual had to use the strategy of complete assimilation into the host society. According to past studies, it was thought that adaptation was a linear process: the more time an individual spent in the host society, the greater the well-being experienced; the more time one spent with the natives, the greater the identification with them, the agreement with their values, and the subsequent loss of one's own. With the evolution of studies, it has been understood that adaptation is not a linear process, but varies based on multiple individual, cultural, and social factors, as previously highlighted (Basabe et al. 2004, p.73). The aforementioned Berry model has proven particularly useful for understanding the complexity of such dynamics. The model is based on two dimensions: the first concerns the degree of preservation of one's original cultural identity, while the second refers to the attitude of individuals migrating towards those of the host society.

Cultural identity acquires a particularly significant meaning when an individual emigrates, since belonging to a cultural group constitutes a fundamental component in the definition of the self. During the migration process, the most commonly observed phenomenon is the change in cultural identity, characterised by a conflict between attachment to the country of origin and the development of new ties with the host context (Sonn, 2002). Every individual who emigrates, therefore, seeks strategies to resolve this conflict. Even in this case, the resolution of the conflict depends on both internal factors (personality and resilience) and external factors (social support and the attitude of the host society) (O'Donnell et al., 1993). In this scenario, bicultural individuals identify with both cultures, considering them as sources of empowerment and cultural innovation. Assimilated individuals mainly identify as members of the host culture, but there may be cases where they do not feel accepted. People with a separate identity identify more with their country of origin and benefit from the presence of compatriots in the host society, which allows them to recreate a familiar environment. Finally, marginalised individuals could be divided into cosmopolitans and those who do not identify with any culture. The first refers to individuals who manage to feel comfortable anywhere in the world because they do not place much importance on cultural identities. The second refers to individuals who experience a state of alienation and social exclusion. All these elements draw attention to the development of cultural competence (Basabe et al. 2004, p. 75). Cultural competence refers to cultural sensitivity, that is, the ability to recognize and possess skills that promote cultural differences by acknowledging their uniqueness within a multicultural community ("American Psychological Association", 2002). In the current literature, there are studies that address cultural sensitivity based on the identification of research strategies, techniques, and methodologies that are sensitive to the realities of individuals and communities (Hughes et al., 1993). However, there do not seem to be many studies that address the power relations between different ethnic groups that influence the process of acculturation. In order for there to be intercultural education, multiple perspectives must be considered. Many scholars, for example, emphasize the importance of pluralistic religious education in schools as a fundamental component of multicultural education. This type of teaching would be based on three pillars: the acceptance of pluralism, dialogue based on reasoning, and the recognition of fundamental rights (Holm et al., 2012). Since humans tend to spontaneously interpret the world through the lens of their own culture, it is essential to acquire specific relational and cognitive skills to interact in intercultural contexts (Holm et al., 2012). A key concept in this area is that of ethnorelativism, which describes the tendency to consider one's own culture as a benchmark against others. However, this does not preclude a negative attitude towards diversity, because

it can go ignored. Despite this, attitudes that are too oriented towards one's own culture and reality can lead to distorted attitudes towards the cultural beliefs of other cultures (Bennett, 1993; 1998). On the contrary, the term ethnorelativism refers to the tendency to perceive and value different cultures (Bennett, 1993).

In the last thirty years, the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) developed by Milton Bennett (1986) has been used in intercultural education and training programs with the intent of raising individuals' awareness of diversity by developing their cognitive and behavioral skills facing cultural differences. The DMIS is a model that theorizes intercultural sensitivity and intercultural competence. Intercultural sensitivity refers to the ability to recognize and experience cultural differences, and it is considered a tool for explaining the evolution of an individual's perception of the world. Intercultural competence, on the other hand, refers to the cognitive and behavioral skills that are put into practice when facing cultural differences. The model is divided into six progressive orientations of cultural difference, divided into two main categories: three ethnocentric orientations and three ethnorelative orientations (Hammer et al., 2003). With the model, Bennett argues that intercultural competence develops in parallel with lived experiences of cultural differences. Moreover, as this experience becomes more sophisticated, competence in intercultural relationships increases (Bennett, 2004). It is important to specify that the DMIS does not refer to changes in individuals' behavior and attitudes, but rather to the development of cognitive structures. The transition between the various stages is not static since it involves an experience that requires the change of individual mental frameworks and complex intercultural experiences. Nevertheless, this movement is considered unidirectional because in various previous studies it has been found that individuals rarely regress in the process (Hammer et al., 2003). The six orientations described by the model represent the stages through which a person can evolve in their relationship with cultural diversity. In fact, the orientations are called: Denial, Defense, Minimization, Acceptance, Adaptation, and finally, Integration (Bennett, 1993).

The first stage of the model (DMIS) is called ‘denial’ and manifests itself as a closed and negative attitude towards cultural differences. Migrants are perceived as unreal or marginal by the host society. The second stage is called ‘defence’ and consists of perceiving one's own culture as unique compared to others that could threaten its uniqueness. The third stage is called ‘minimisation’ and consists of minimising the perception of cultural differences as a threat to its own. However, the individual continues to perceive their culture as universal. This means

that individuals see other cultures as similar to their own, not recognising their differences (Bennett, 1993). If recognised, cultural differences are not evaluated negatively, but rather banalised. Consequently, emphasising the similarities between cultural differences generates a kind of tolerance in which the small differences that are noticed are recognised as minor variations on shared universal themes. The fourth stage is called ‘acceptance’ and consists of perceiving and recognising the cultural differences of one's own cultural group but also those of other groups. The person is curious about other cultures and cultural differences, but that doesn't mean they can't be judged negatively. Judgement towards other cultures changes but doesn't disappear. In fact, the person no longer sees their own culture as superior or simplifies the differences, but starts to notice that there are differences and justifies them as simple variations. The fifth stage is called ‘adaptation’ and refers to the individual's ability to consciously modify their behaviour in order to communicate and interact effectively in different cultural contexts (Bennett, 2004, 153). Bennett (1998) adds that adaptation could also be considered a kind of empathy towards cultures different from its own and is similar to assimilation, but adaptation is intentional (Bennett, 2004, 157). The final stage is called ‘integration’ and refers to the individual's ability to live naturally within different cultural systems, integrating their perspectives, values and modes of behaviour.

2. Linguistic Adaptation and the Use of Social Media

2.1 The media and migration

In recent years, social media has become a fundamental part of our everyday lives. It has radically transformed the way we communicate, find information, work, build relationships and meet new people (Allen, 2009). Social media were originally created with the intention of facilitating connections between individuals and information, becoming one of the main sources of entertainment, information and communication, in which a significant part of social, cultural and economic life takes place. This profound technological evolution has had a profound impact on many aspects of contemporary society, even influencing the perception of time and space (Allen, 2009). In this sense, numerous studies have analysed the role of social media in intercultural adaptation processes, especially in relation to migration phenomena. According to Croucher and Rahmani (as cited in Yiping, 2017), migrants use social media to facilitate their integration into the culture of the host country, exploiting digital platforms as tools for emotional, informational and relational support. At a theoretical level, in the study of social media, many researchers have chosen to adopt a socio-cultural approach rather than a

media-centric one, which focuses primarily on the study of the technological characteristics of platforms. This approach considers digital platforms as an integral part of everyday life and embedded in social, cultural and political contexts (Khalifeh, 2019).

As Leurs (2017) points out, it is not possible to fully understand the use of social media without also considering the offline dimension of individuals' lives, their personal history and the socio-political context in which they find themselves, relate and interact with others. From this perspective, social media reflect the ways in which people live and interact with others and with the world (Leurs,2017). Studying its use therefore, means analysing practices and habits that vary according to social contexts and the often implicit rules that characterize them (Pertierra, 2018). Research shows that, for migrants, social media is a useful tool not only for integrating into their new cultural context, but also for maintaining ties with family and friends who have remained in their country of origin (Dekker & Engberser, 2012). Digital platforms enable the creation of real online communities, where individuals from different backgrounds can meet virtually, share experiences and reduce their sense of isolation (Khoja, 2020). In particular, those who emigrate for work use social media to build professional networks, find people with common interests and exchange information about events and economic opportunities. In this regard, social and professional networking helps migrants to successfully integrate into their new host country (Khoja, 2020). In a study on the role of digital technologies in the social and cultural inclusion of immigrants in the Netherlands (Khalifeh, 2019), one migrant interviewee confirmed the importance of online networking. In particular, he stated that he builds and maintains professional working relationships through tools such as LinkedIn. But that's not all, he also uses LinkedIn to learn to communicate in Dutch and bridge the gap between his country of origin and his host country. Other interviewees said that social networking groups helped them interact with university colleagues. In particular, they helped them improve their Dutch language skills and learn about the country's culture (Khalifeh, 2019). Consequently, these digital networks contribute to strengthening the sense of belonging to a community, while at the same time, promoting connection with other geographical and cultural realities (Dekker & Engberser, 2012). As Polson (2015) observes, online communities not only facilitate interactions between individuals in the digital world, but also extend into real life, transforming the concept of “place” into something dynamic, fluid and transnational. In this sense, “place” is no longer confined to a limited physical space, but becomes mobile, traversable and digitally co-constructed. All this, shows how today's migration experience is greatly influenced by the possibility of maintaining relationships with the country of origin, with the host country, but

also with other “places” – real or imaginary – through social media. And this sense of multi-local and digitally connected belonging allows migrants to build hybrid identities and transnational relationships (Polson, 2015). Alencar (2018) highlights how the use of digital media to obtain information, communicate and participate in the social life of the host country is a key element in integration processes. In particular, the way in which an individual perceives its own integration refers to an individual's use of social media, which thus becomes a mirror of their experiences and their position within society. Furthermore, information spreads rapidly through unofficial channels on social media, sometimes acting as a form of resistance to restrictive migration regimes and influencing migrants' migration strategies, for example, by spreading information about informal job opportunities or easy ways to cross borders (Khoja, 2020).

The question then arises as to how the use of social media facilitates international migration and how it influences migrants' social networks. According to Tilly (1990), migration networks are important for understanding the phenomenon of migration. It would be more accurate to study migration as a phenomenon involving groups of people connected by friendship, kinship and work experience, rather than focusing on individuals or families who emigrate alone. Thanks to the use of global social networks, migrants are more likely to move to certain countries. In fact, migrants are driven to emigrate by the presence of links between their country of origin and their destination country (Samers, 2010). This phenomenon is called *chain migration* (MacDonald & MacDonald, 1964). Having contacts in migration networks, moreover, reduces the costs and risks for the individual who emigrates. The network itself can become the main reason why people continue to migrate, even if the initial reasons for migration become less important (Samers, 2010). Usually, these connections are based on strong ties such as family relationships, friendship and common origin, but there are also weak ties, such as sporadic contacts (MacDonald & MacDonald, 1964). According to Granovetter (1973), weak ties are more useful in finding new information before emigrating to a new country. This is because they are in communication with different social groups that have different information – usually more useful – compared to strong ties, which tend to be between similar people with the same information.

According to researchers Rianne and Engbersen (2012, pp. 9–13), who conducted a study on students who emigrated to the Netherlands, social media has four functions in migrant networks. The first three refer to the use of social media to help create or re-establish social ties within the community. The fourth, on the other hand, refers to the use of online platforms

to create a system for collecting and sharing information. In fact, many participants said they used social media to seek information about migration while still living in their country of origin. Others, describe how social media made their lives easier in their destination country immediately after immigration and during the settlement process. The first of the functions mentioned, refers to maintaining ties even many years after migrating to a different country. The social support provided between migrants and friends and family in the country of origin can eliminate negative feelings such as alienation (Komito, 2011). People who move far away feel "virtually present" in the lives of their dear ones thanks to tools such as video calls, instant messaging and the ability to share various multimedia content such as photos and videos. In fact, one of the migrants interviewed stated that although he feels very comfortable in his host country, most of his social media contacts are from his country of origin. The interviewee also stated that his friendships from his country of origin are much closer than those made in his host country, despite having the opportunity to have a closer bond in terms of physical distance (Rianne & Engbersen, 2012). According to scholars (Rianne and Engbersen, 2012), the immediacy of communication strengthens the message and bonds. In fact, the interviewees confirm that instant communication allows bonds to be strengthened and made more intimate by reducing geographical distance. In addition, messages are not only more instantaneous, but also much richer in terms of content: in addition to written and spoken communication, there is also visual communication through video calls or the sending of videos and images. The second function refers to the possibility of reactivating contacts with "weak ties" through the transmission of useful information to migrants. Weak ties, as mentioned before, are much more useful in terms of basic information for migrants than strong ties, which are more closely linked to relationships with the community of origin. In some cases, however, these ties, although less intense, evolve and strengthen over time until they become strong. The third function refers to the creation of new knowledge through the use of social media. In fact, many interviewees confirmed that they had been contacted through various platforms by many compatriots seeking information about the host country. Others also stated that online platforms have sections dedicated to people from specific countries who are moving to other specific countries. The last function refers to social media as a primary source of information for migrants. Consulting online platforms is part of the migration process (Rianne and Engbersen, 2012). A Brazilian interviewee who moved to the Netherlands revealed that immediately after arriving in the country, he sought a lot of information about the life of Brazilians in the Netherlands, the habits of local citizens, food, public facilities, costs, migrants' rights, etc. This information is immensely valuable, especially for irregular migrants. Due to their legal status, they cannot turn

to immigrant advisory services for information or assistance in finding a job or a home. In this sense, social media forms a clandestine communication structure where information can be shared.

In addition, migrants also use social media to keep in touch with their home country by reading the latest news about it (Andrade & Doolin, 2016). This confirms the role of social media in transcending geographical and temporal boundaries once again. This continuous updating of news from countries through social media, could be a positive resource for social inclusion (Allen, 2009). Reading news from their country of origin could help migrants maintain some contact with it and with their compatriots (Komito, 2011); for locals, on the other hand, this could help them fully understand the situation that migrants are forced to live in, leading to greater empathy with the reasons that drive them to emigrate (Khalifeh, 2019).

However, in the context of migration, it is important to note that social media also has some limitations and challenges (Khoja, 2020). First, although it is an important resource for immigrants, there is a digital divide that affects migrants' opportunities for connection (Rianne & Engbersen, 2012).

This gap manifests itself in terms of access to social media, because not all migrants have the same opportunity to connect to the Internet and, consequently, to social media (Norris, 2001). This inequality can stem from various personal, economic or infrastructure-related issues in the country of origin or transit (Khoja, 2020). For example, lack of economic resources, housing instability or language difficulties can negatively affect the ability to connect. In other cases, the digital divide stems from limitations related to technology in countries of origin or transit where the digital network is weak or subject to censorship (Rianne and Engbersen, 2012). In this regard, a study (Khoja, 2020) highlights these limitations, pointing out that although WhatsApp and Messenger are the most widely used digital communication tools globally (Statista 2024), many refugees in Syria, for example, use alternative applications such as IMO and BOTIM. This is because these online apps seem more effective in a context such as Syria, where access to the internet is limited and controlled by the regime. In this context, communication with family members becomes a priority. However, online communication apps are unstable, with many ceasing to function after a certain period of time, forcing individuals to continually seek alternative solutions. As a result, this is a process that requires time, energy and technical skills that not everyone possesses.

Another tool that is widely used throughout the day is Instagram. Instagram, through its “stories” feature, allows individuals, especially migrants, to interact with the daily lives of

relatives and friends who live far away (Khoja, 2020). The “stories” feature therefore allows for a more instantaneous and less demanding function through the viewing of images and videos, rather than resorting to traditional messages and calls, which could be considered more time-consuming and complex (Khoja, 2020). This allows for more immediate interaction and contact with others.

In addition to technical accessibility, there is another factor linked to the possibility of accessing social media for transnational communication: regularity of access. Communicating and maintaining long-distance relationships through digital platforms requires time, energy and adequate emotional stability. In fact, in Khoja's (2020) research on migrants in Sweden, it is observed that the frequency of cross-cultural communication varies depending on several factors. Some of the participants maintain communication with their distant families thanks to old habits established in their country of origin, such as persistent daily communication. Others, however, change these habits due to changes in their host country, such as less frequent communication due to limited time due to a busy work or school situation. It is also important to consider the emotional aspect. Maintaining transnational communication with distant friends and relatives can also be a stressful factor and cause significant psychological distress (Khoja, 2020). One participant in Khoja's study (2020) pointed out that communicating with family members who have migrated to Turkey and other countries neighbouring Syria, or with those who have been displaced within Syria, creates a condition of “communication stress”. Furthermore, the participant stated that his life in Sweden is so different from that of his friends and relatives that it becomes difficult to find common topics of conversation. In addition, it is difficult to share events from his new life, which is better than that of his loved ones living in difficult conditions. As a result, this emotional and material distance could become an obstacle to communication and the maintenance of transnational relationships. It is not simply a matter of logistics or technology, but also of emotion, which is accentuated by distance (Khoja, 2020).

The quality of social media use also influences the gap. In fact, to communicate remotely, it is not enough to simply have access to the internet, it is also important to know how to use it effectively (DiMaggio et al., 2004). Digital literacy is one of the crucial factors. Not all migrants have the basic computer skills to navigate online, install and use communication applications. Alongside language proficiency. Most online information and content are written in official languages, and for those who do not know them, it can be difficult to understand such information (Khoja, 2020). The availability of suitable devices also plays a crucial role. An

obsolete phone or a lack of credit can limit online communication (Khoja, 2020). The ability to critically evaluate the information one reads is also important. It is essential that migrants know how to distinguish reliable information from misleading information, as they may be exposed to risks such as scams or bad decisions. In these scenarios, socio-economic status, level of education, urban or rural residence, and age can cause significant differences (Rianne & Engbersen, 2012). Individuals who grow up and live in more disadvantaged environments often have fewer opportunities to develop such digital skills. As a result, this digital divide also affects access to new opportunities and information crucial to migration, such as job opportunities, ways to cross borders, etc. (Rianne & Engbersen, 2012).

In addition, studies on social media have also taken into account the global digital divide in terms of access to and use of social media between countries. In Italy, approximately 90% of the population uses the internet, of which 42.2 million out of 53.3 million are registered on social media. This represents 71% of the population in Italy according to statistics compiled in January 2025 (Datareport, 2025). The population living in Italy tends to spend around 5 hours and 39 minutes a day on the web, of which 1 hour and 48 minutes is spent on social media. Among the main reasons that drive Italians to surf the internet are searching for general information (about 71.5%) to stay up to date on news and events (64.7%) or to learn something specific (62.2%). This is followed by searching for inspiration or ideas, and then searching for holiday and travel destinations. As for the use of social media, the main reasons are related to "reading new stories" (47.1%) or spending free time (46.4%). This is followed by keeping in touch with loved ones (43.4%) and seeking inspiration for things to do in the future or related to purchases (30.8%). Among the most used social media platforms, WhatsApp ranks first (89.8%), followed by Facebook (75.5%), Instagram (75.4%), Messenger (47.7%), Telegram (47.2%), TikTok (43.6%), Pinterest (28.7%), LinkedIn (26.7%) and X (formerly Twitter) (21.8%). TikTok remains the platform on which users spend the most time: almost 30 hours per month. YouTube follows with 17 hours and Instagram with just over 15 hours.

2.2 Social media and socialization

According to scholar Kim (2008), communication is a fundamental aspect of the immigrant adaptation process. In this sense, as will be seen in this section, social media play different roles in this process, serving as important tools for social connection, learning and maintaining ties. Ager and Strang (2008, p.169), in their research on the factors for successful integration, proposed a conceptual framework that highlights a series of key indicators. However, these

indicators will be considered as possible means of integration rather than actual "markers". This clarification is made because the authors do not want to reduce integration to the mere achievement of various objectives such as having a job, a home, access to education and health services. The conceptual framework includes four indicators, ranked in order of importance, with communication and social relations being the main ones. The first indicator, *Means and Markets*, refers to obtaining employment, housing, education and, finally, access to healthcare, all of which, according to the authors, indicate successful integration into a new country (Ager and Strang, 2008). The second indicator highlighted by the authors, on the other hand, refers to social connections. The authors discuss various social ties between immigrants during the settlement process in the host country. These include "social bonds", connections that exist within a group or community (ethnic or religious); followed by "social bridges", social connections outside one's own ethnic group. These facilitate interaction with society and its networks; and finally, "social links", which refer to connections with governmental organisations (such as public bodies and social services) and non-governmental organisations (such as voluntary associations). These provide access to services and opportunities for civic participation. The third indicator refers to the role of facilitators, distinguishing between two main domains: the role of language and cultural knowledge, and safety and security. According to the authors, in this context, the role of the state in implementing inclusive policies to remove barriers to integration is fundamental. Language is a vital element in successful integration into a foreign country (Mulvey, 2015). Cultural knowledge is bidirectional because it refers both to knowledge of national and local procedures, customs and structures, and to procedures concerning immigrants themselves (Ager and Strang, 2008, p.182). Very often, immigrants feel a sense of alienation and isolation due to the stark contrast between their cultural background and that of their host country. Consequently, the authors emphasise that individuals in the host society should seek to understand the history, challenges faced, motivations for migration, and finally the culture—traditions, values, and beliefs—of immigrants. Such understanding would facilitate empathy and aid integration (Ager and Strang, 2008).

According to scholars, the development of social networks in the host country increases the success of integration (Walker, Wollersheim, & Liamputtong, 2015). Social support counteracts migrants' perception of isolation (Kelaher et al., 2001). In closing, the authors highlight the elements of safety and security where, experiences of racism, harassment and racial intimidation have a particular influence on safety and well-being. Finally, the last indicator refers to the rights of migrants within various services offered by the country, such as the right to vote, citizenship and welfare (Ager e Strang, 2008). This happened because, social inclusion

allows migrants to participate fully in the social, cultural and economic life of the host country and to benefit from the rights and quality of life it offers (European Union, 2000). According to Warschauer (2003), social inclusion allows individuals to participate in society and, at the same time, to control their own destiny independently. However, many government institutions focus on social inclusion almost exclusively in economic terms, neglecting other aspects of social structure, including social interaction, participation in political and civic life, and cultural identity (Phipps, 2000). Very often, the notion of an "inclusive society" is associated with that of an "information society" (Andrade & Doolin, 2016), and the lack of information related to the sphere of social interaction leads to increasing deprivation (Phipps, 2000). In this context, social media can improve social connection (Phipps, 2000). However, some authors argue that the use of online media does not always guarantee or improve the social inclusion of individuals (Andrade & Doolin, 2016). This happens for various reasons, which generally concern the economic and infrastructural possibilities of countries, technological skills, but also the level of commitment on the part of individuals, as there is no guarantee that individuals will commit to feeling socially included (Andrade & Doolin, 2016).

The use of social media influences the migration experience of migrants who settle in a new country, accompanying every stage of the migration process, from planning the trip to building ties in the destination country. In fact, Lo Verde (2017) observes that online platforms are fundamental tools for seeking primary information such as planning the journey, searching for information about the destination, establishing contacts, finding work or reuniting with family members. Migrants' use of information and communication technologies (ICT) has been classified into three modes according to the different stages of the migration experience (Lo Verde, 2017). The first, pre-departure, refers to the use of social media even before emigrating to the new country. Technology is used to gather practical information about the destination, from bureaucracy to the social context. The second, refers to the use of technology once they have arrived at their destination. In this phase, social media is used to maintain relationships with close people, but also to start building a new social routine. This phase can be related to the processes of cultural and social adaptation in the host society. Finally, the third phase concerns migrants who have been living in the host country for several years and who use social media to talk about themselves and their journey. In this sense, the use of digital technologies takes on a narrative and identity-building function that allows them to tell their own stories, describe their journey and share their experiences, creating a shared feeling of inclusion.

Consequently, the use of social media should not be seen as a simple tool for mediation between the country of origin and the country of destination, but represents a real social practice, a key concept of the theory of practices introduced into sociology by Pierre Bourdieu and subsequently reworked by other authors, including Reckwitz (2002). According to the theory, practices (or *practies*, as defined by Reckwitz, distinguishing them from *praxis*, more reflective action) refer to routine forms of behaviour involving physical activities, mental activities, objects and their use (such as digital devices), emotional states and motivations. The use of social media, as it is rooted in the daily lives of migrants, thus becomes one of these routine practices that intersect within well-defined social fields, such as family, work, education or the community of fellow countrymen. In this way, these practices not only reflect adaptation but also actively contribute to building the legitimacy of the migrant's social role in the host society, including through sharing in digital spaces.

In this context, Lo Verde (2017 pp. 139-169) identifies different forms of online relationships developed through ICTs. The first is *transnational parenting*, which refers to the maintenance of the relationship between parents and their children at a distance thanks to digital communication. The second, called *digital togetherness*, refers to the support and unity among fellow migrants, especially among unaccompanied migrants. Following this, *ICT-based co-presence* refers to the feeling of closeness and connection despite physical distance thanks to the use of technology. *Virtual intimacies* refers to the deep emotional bonds maintained thanks to technology. Finally, *digital diasporas* refers to those migrant groups, often forced to leave their country due to conflict or adversity, who find a virtual space of belonging and communication online. These digital diasporas allow them to build a collective identity even from a distance. All these forms represent expressions of media socialisation in diaspora, that is describes as the use of social media by migrants living far from their country (Lo Verde, 2017). This, contribute to the active construction of a cosmopolitan digital environment, i.e. a sense of global belonging mediated by the use of technologies that allow migrants to overcome the limits of physical space and build transnational and local relationships (Verde, 2017).

In addition to interpersonal dynamics, social media also play a significant role in terms of information, access to rights and civic participation (Ager et al. 2008). As highlighted above, social media help people, especially migrants, to feel involved in the public sphere, access services, understand political mechanisms and actively participate in public and collective life. In this sense, integration into the host country should not be perceived according to the “one-

way" assimilationist model, according to which the only person required to change and adapt is the migrant (Ager et al. 2008). According to this model, it is the migrant who abandons or hides the values and distinctive features of their culture of origin, completely adopting those of the new one, while the host society remains unchanged. Instead, reference should be made to the "two-way" model, in which, in addition to migrants, the host society is also called upon to transform itself. This transformation takes place through interaction with migrants, recognising and valuing their cultural, social and economic contribution (Ager et al. 2008).

In this regard, there are numerous online initiatives that offer direct support to migrant communities. These include Facebook groups, Instagram pages and dedicated websites that serve as points of reference. In Italy, for example, the Instagram page "Giovani Mussulmani d'Italia" (@gmi.italia) stands out. This association promotes Islamic social and cultural events and acts as a space for connection between Italian and international Muslims, but also for people who want to learn about a context different from their own. The page offers informative content ranging from religious practices to civil practices such as voting, as well as workshops open to all. The goal of these digital tools is not only to provide access to useful information, but also to foster a deep sense of belonging and solidarity within the community. This sense of cohesion is based on the shared experience of marginalization or migration and strengthens the collective agency of migrants. The concept of "agency" refers to the ability to act consciously and autonomously within the host society, despite structural and social constraints (Leurs et al. 2018). Social media, by offering these social and informational networking spaces, become powerful tools for exercising this agency, transforming migrants from passive to active subjects in their integration process (Verde, 2017).

These web pages therefore, offer migrants the opportunity to feel part of a large community, as all members within it share the same condition, religion or origin and can therefore help and provide immediate and continuous support to one another. This phenomenon is explained by the fact that, the public narration of shared experiences in everyday life produces a sense of participation that strengthens individual and collective identity, thus facilitating processes of social and cultural integration (Georgiou, 2006). Furthermore, the use of social media also allows participation in various educational programmes and initiatives of the host society (Khalifeh, 2019). From this perspective, social media are not just a tool, but become social practices that fuel a process of "learning by doing", as migrants acquire linguistic, relational and cultural skills that make them an active part of the host social context (Lo Verde, 2017).

On the other hand, while it is undeniable that the use of social media by migrants provides emotional support, helping them to overcome loneliness and reduce the perceived distance by

monitoring the lives of friends and family in their country of origin, some scholars argue that the use of social media could slow down the process of integration in the host country (Brekke, 2008; Komito, 2011). In fact, studies have shown that maintaining social relationships from the country of origin and joining transnational online communities help migrants overcome the challenges of adaptation in the host country, rather than causing social segregation in a new context (Elias & Lemish, 2009).

In this regard, McLuhan, with his reductionist theory of technological determinism, argues that technologies are not neutral tools, but shape the way individuals and societies think and act, and, in this sense, technology contributes to social change (As cited in Adler, 2008). Others, however, argue that the effects of social media use depend mainly on how it is used, which is already socially determined. Consequently, it is not technology that brings about change, but the way in which it is used by individuals; a use influenced by the social, cultural and political context (Adler, 2008). Consequently, the choice to use social media to maintain ties or connect with the local community, is the result of factors that depend on the context and individual agency (Adler, 2008). In addition, a study conducted by Alencar (2018) revealed that, with regard to the use of communication media, migrants are able to integrate more through the help of local citizens and organizations, rather than relying on information found online, which may also be unreliable.

2.3 The importance of learning the language of the host context

Within the Italian school system, cultural diversity is growing (OrizzonteScuola, 2024). According to data provided by the Ministry of Education and Merit (as cited in Orizzonte Scuola, 2024), there are approximately 864,425 students without Italian citizenship in schools, the majority of whom are in the regions of Northern Italy (Lombardy, Emilia Romagna and Veneto). Statistical data published by the Ministry of Education and Merit (2024), show that in the 2022 and 2023 school years, there was an increase in the number of students without Italian citizenship in schools. This represents more than 42,500 students, or 4.9% compared to the 2021 and 2022 school years, reaching a total of 914,860. Furthermore, while the number of foreign students has increased, the number of Italian students has decreased (-145,000). Despite this increase, information regarding age groups has emerged. It would appear that around the ages of 17 and 18, the number of students without Italian citizenship attending the final years of secondary school decreases compared to that of Italian students. In addition, another disparity in school attendance concerns gender. It would appear that among foreign students, the school attendance rate of female students is higher than that of male students (Ministero dell' Istruzione

e del Merito, 2024). This disparity in educational pathways and gender suggests the presence of different cultural and social dynamics that influence students' educational opportunities (OrizzonteScuola, 2024). With regard to the language and educational pathways of adult migrants, reception centres play a fundamental role in the integration process. In fact, these centres become points of reference and guidance for migrants, as they refer them to the Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA). CPIA are public institutions which, in addition to providing literacy courses and language courses at A1 or A2 level, offer the opportunity to obtain a middle school diploma (Ministero dell'istruzione e del Merito, n.d.). This diploma allows migrants to access job opportunities but also to continue their studies. In addition, there are numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local associations that offer more flexible courses. These courses are held in parishes, libraries or cultural centres, making attendance more accessible and socially inclusive.

Language plays a very important role in the process of adaptation and integration at both the individual and social levels, as it is a means of communication, particularly in the fields of education and work. Consequently, it plays a central role in communication, ensuring coordination and understanding (Esser, 2006). Language is also a resource in which individuals decide to invest time and money, but from which we can also obtain other resources and opportunities (Phillips et al., 2004). It is a symbol through which we describe the world around us, express emotions and feelings, define complex situations and, finally, formulate requests (Esser, 2006). However, language, in addition to representing a bridge of communication, can lead to distorted perceptions. In fact, Esser (2006) emphasizes how stereotypes and prejudices can arise in the speaker from language. For example, the perception of a different accent could lead to prejudices and categorizations that influence social integration. Consequently, language becomes fundamental to integration into the host society.

Based on Berry and Kim's (1988) acculturation model, Esser (2006) proposes categories that refer to the linguistic dimension of the migrant adaptation process. These categories examine the different ways in which the migrant individual relates to both their language of origin and that of the host country and are: *linguistic marginality* or *limited bilingualism*, *monolingual segmentation*, *monolingual assimilation* and *competent bilingualism*. The first category, referred to by Berry and Kim as “marginality”, would be the most controversial for migrants as it implies that they do not feel included in either their ethnic group or the host society. On a linguistic level, Esser translates this concept by seeing the migrant as someone who does not have a good command of either their language of origin or that of the host country. In the case

of “ethnic segmentation” or “separation” in Berry and Kim's model, the individual feels included and maintains a close bond with their ethnic group, but is excluded from the host group. An example of this is when the migrant individual lives mainly within their own community and most of their interactions are in their language of origin. In linguistic terms, this leads to *monolingual segmentation*, where the migrant person speaks only or mainly their language of origin and little of the host country's language. In the case of *monolingual assimilation,* the migrant manages to integrate into the host society by adopting its culture and language, but excluding ties with their culture of origin. In linguistic terms, in *monolingual assimilation*, the migrant speaks almost exclusively the language of the host country, losing the ability to speak their own. Finally, with “multiple inclusion” or “integration”, the individual maintains strong ties with both their ethnic group of origin and their host group. In the linguistic case, in competent bilingualism, the individual is fluent in both their language of origin and the new language of the host country.

According to Esser (2006), linguistic differences can hinder the integration of migrants into various spheres of social life, such as educational institutions, access to income opportunities, central institutions and, at the same time, social recognition. The interest in learning the national language of the host country gives rise to processes of linguistic adaptation that may be hindered by various conditions (Esser, 2006). Consequently, the dynamics of linguistic integration concern the degree of language acquisition in the host society (L2) and the degree of maintenance of the language of origin (L1). There are two basic approaches to language learning, characterised by different motivations and dynamics (Verhoeven, 1987). Passive learning is typically found in the learning of the mother tongue and is classified as learning without particular effort or conscious motivation, almost automatic. Children learn the language of their environment through constant exposure and interaction. (Hulsén et al., 2002). In contrast, active learning is typical of learning a second, third, etc. foreign language. It is a more conscientious and intentional form of learning in which the speaker shows more commitment and motivation, for example by investing their time, money and mental effort (Verhoeven, 1987). In this context, the individual sees the acquisition of a second language as an investment, as they expect a “return” in the form of greater job opportunities, higher income or other broad social and professional prospects (Verhoeven, 1987).

Esser (2006) identifies four basic factors that influence the learning of a new language: motivation, access to education, that is, the possibility of enrolling in courses or meeting people

with whom to practise, basic skills in learning a language other than one's own, and finally, costs. These costs are not only in economic terms associated, for example, with language courses, but also in terms of the time available to invest in study and the pressure to assimilate. In addition to these, in terms of family and migration history, there are factors that affect second language learning (Chswick et al., 1992). These include the individual characteristics and history of the emigrant. The main ones concern the reasons for migration and the length of the sojourn. Another factor concerns the age at which one emigrates to the host country. Children under the age of 10 are more likely to learn the language of the host country more easily. However, this does not mean that it is not possible for others to do the same, but it requires greater motivation and commitment. The age of the parents at the time of migration also influences learning, as it may indirectly influence the linguistic environment in the family and, consequently, support for L2 learning in their children. Finally, there is the level of previous education, where, according to experts, a higher level of education is beneficial for second language acquisition (Van Tubergen, 2004). Migrants with a good education will find it easier to learn quickly. As with adaptation, the cultural capital and habits that individuals possess and consider compatible with those of the host country will make language learning less difficult. The subjective value that migrants attribute to language also affects learning. If the individual considers the second language as a source of personal and professional fulfilment and feels respect and pleasure in learning it, their intrinsic motivation will be strong and facilitate learning. Finally, as with any type of learning, individual cognitive abilities that allow for faster assimilation of rules and vocabulary are fundamental (Chswick et al., 1992). In terms of the context of origin, the characteristics and culture of the country of origin can influence the process of acquiring the language of the host country (Swaan 2001). The linguistic distance between the language of origin and the host language in terms of phonetics, vocabulary and grammar affects the level of difficulty of learning. However, there are also factors that hinder second language learning (Esser, 2006). In addition to linguistic and socio-cultural distance, the global use of the migrant's language of origin (such as English) may also make it unnecessary to learn the language of the host country. Similarly, the level of ethnic concentration in a neighbourhood or community would also compromise second language learning, as people would tend to use their own language for reasons of convenience (Esser, 2006).

Bilingualism, described as the ability to master both the language of origin and that of the host country at a high level, learned simultaneously or subsequently to the first, appears to be an exception among immigrant communities (Verhoeven, 1987). As Verhoeven (1987) points out,

one might think that if a migrant knows their native language well, once they have migrated to a foreign country, they should learn the second language, assuming that their mother tongue will automatically be retained. However, the reality is different: many immigrants risk losing or weakening their mother tongue over time. Verhoeven (1987) defines this phenomenon as language shift or first language attrition, a process in which linguistic competence is reduced or no longer used, often in favour of the dominant or national language of the country to which one has emigrated. This concept distinguishes between two types of language change: individual and social. The first refers to linguistic change that occurs in the individual. For example, a migrant who begins to use the second language and less of their language of origin. Over time, this change could involve larger groups of migrants, based, for example, on nationality or generation. The second refers to social linguistic change, which is broader than the first. In this scenario, the linguistic behaviour of a significant number of migrants influences that of others, leading to a decline in minority languages of origin in the community (Linton, 2004). As described by Linton (2004), if a large number of migrants from an ethnic group begin to prefer and use the second language, this could influence other migrants from the same group to do the same, thus accelerating the process of language replacement. The conflict between the language of origin and the language of the host country arises because there is a clash between the conditions that favour the learning of L2 and those that hinder the maintenance of L1 (or minority language) (Fishman, 1966). Conversely, conditions that help to maintain L1 could make it more difficult to acquire L2 (Esser, 2006).

One example is age. The older you are when you arrive in a new country, the more integrated you are into your ethnic community, and consequently the easier it is to maintain your mother tongue. In this context, older migrants already have a solid foundation in their native language and will have fewer opportunities to immerse themselves completely in the second language (Esser, 2006). Furthermore, if the migrant lives in a community of the same ethnicity, he or she will not feel much need to learn and practise the language of the host country. As a result, the language of origin is more likely to be maintained. On the contrary, in the case of a young migrant, especially a child, he or she will be more inclined to learn and practise the second language. In this case, without a conscious effort, the native language is likely to be lost, resulting in monolingual assimilation of the second language (Esser, 2006). Moreover, the maintenance of the first language refers to variables related to the learning of the second language, such as motivation, access, costs that could lead to social disapproval, difficulty in integrating and, finally, efficiency in preserving the first language (Verhoeven, 1987).

According to Levelt's (1989) model of language production, the ability to recognise and use words is fundamental when speaking. Levert (1989) states that linguistic competence is solid when we are able to quickly recall a word from our "mental library", that means, our stored vocabulary. Consequently, from a psycholinguistic point of view, when we talk about language loss or language attrition, we refer to the decrease in the ability to quickly retrieve a word in both listening and speaking (de Bot, 1996). Scholars believe that the part of language most prone to loss is precisely the lexicon (de Bot, 1996). In fact, recent studies on attrition of the language of origin in migratory contexts have examined how words are processed. These studies have confirmed the idea that individuals, particularly migrants, encounter more difficulties in finding words in their mother tongue, confirming the idea of a weakening of vocabulary.

In his study, Ammerlaan (1996) demonstrated that the retrieval of words from the native language, which had not been used for a long time, deteriorated in Dutch migrants living in Australia. Hakuta and D'Andrea (1992), in their study of Mexican-American high school students, noted that their ability to retrieve words was more difficult than their ability to recognise them. In fact, the two scholars concluded that native language attrition often manifests itself in difficulty retrieving words rather than total loss. The vocabulary is therefore still present in the mind, but access to it is slower and more difficult for the individual (Hakuta and D'Andrea, 1992). Individuals who encounter these difficulties use various techniques to retrieve words by using similar terms, more general terms ("water" instead of "pond") (Olshtain and Barzilay, 1991), or they try to translate the word or invent new words (Ammerlaan 1996). However, the use of these strategies does not allow scholars to determine with certainty whether individuals have a real linguistic loss, a temporary difficulty in remembering the word, or whether the word has never actually been understood or used by the individual (de Bot, 1996). To understand this process, researchers mainly use two techniques: naming images and matching images and words, which allow for a more objective measurement of lexical accessibility (Esser, 2006). In this regard, another study related to this issue was conducted on Dutch migrants settled in New Zealand (Hulsen et al., 2000). To understand these issues, researchers examined the network of contacts of the Dutch respondents, focusing on the number of people who speak the same language of origin. This data was correlated with the use of the mother tongue, the importance of maintaining it and real linguistic competence. In addition, the researchers also focused on the frequency of errors made, and reaction times in naming images. The results showed that contact with people of the same origin leads to greater use of the mother

tongue and, consequently, to its greater maintenance. Furthermore, these contacts also influence the speed of word retrieval, but not necessarily their accuracy. In the social network, the number of contacts with the mother tongue compared to those in the second language affects reaction times in the image naming technique. In this regard, the scores of the interviewees showed shorter reaction times if the number of contacts in the mother tongue was greater than that of the second language. Hulsen (2000) states that the importance of close contacts (such as family members) is not related to emotional ties, but rather they allow for more consistent use and maintenance of the mother tongue. In fact, daily interaction with close contacts allows for the maintenance of a protected linguistic environment for the language of origin, counteracting attrition (Hulsen, 2000).

In order to integrate successfully, it is important for migrants to achieve an adequate level of language proficiency (Alencar, 2018). Consequently, depending on their personal goals, many migrants attend language courses or rely on associations that offer free language courses. Social media is a great support, helping migrants to learn the language of their host country. Many migrants use the messaging services offered by online platforms to practise, stating that the immediacy of messages makes the language learning process easier through writing practice (Khalifeh, 2019). In his research on social media Khalifeh (2019) observes how much immigrants depend on the services and opportunities offered by social media pages and platforms themselves. In fact, he states that respondents make extensive use of YouTube to access education and enhance their knowledge of the second language and culture of the host country, rather than using it for entertainment as individuals in the host country do. In this context, Khalifeh compares these two groups of people, stating that the use of social media depends on needs. In fact, the study also notes that immigrants spend most of their time searching for information about the country, such as access to education.

Previously, it has been seen how social support helps migrants learn the language and culture by influencing their perception of isolation (Kelaher et al., 2001). In order to integrate, migrants need to feel included in their new country, staying in touch with locals, but also remaining in contact with members of their family of origin (Kelaher et al., 2001). In this context, non-profit organisations involve volunteers in the development of activities that encourage the participation of all citizens, especially migrants. Consequently, this social cohesion aims to minimise the distances between citizens. For migrant students (mentees), volunteer teachers (mentors) often become guides, due to the fact that they offer practical as well as emotional support (Khalifeh, 2019). In addition, to supporting migrants in understanding the language,

the role of volunteers also extends to accessing the education system and orienting themselves in the new society. In the Netherlands, participants in a study stated that volunteers helped them learn Dutch, then settle into the country, which also had a positive effect on their social life (Khalifeh, 2019). Through a lot of practice, even outside the context of volunteering, some mentees have managed to pass university entrance exams thanks to the help of their mentors. One study participant said that his mentor's support had a positive effect on his social life and personality, as well as his language skills. As a result, the relationship between some mentors and mentees developed into a strong friendship. This means that, it is an equal relationship that creates a sense of inclusion and security (Khalifeh, 2019). In fact, a friendly and supportive environment helps migrants feel part of a society, thus facilitating the building of social bonds and, consequently, integration (Matthews, 2008). More than half of the mentors interviewed in Khalifeh's study (2019) say that, in their opinion, friendship is the most important thing for migrants in a new and unfamiliar society. This need is particularly felt by adult migrants. Usually, by adulthood, locals have already established their family, friendship and professional circles, and this makes it more difficult for newcomers to make new friends (Khalifeh, 2019).
The perception of integration is a concept that varies from person to person (Strang & Ager, 2010). It is interesting to note that many migrants believe that successfully integrating into the host society means, above all, learning the language. In Khalifeh's research (2019), many participants also emphasised the importance of social interaction in counteracting feelings of isolation and developing a sense of belonging in the new society (Khalifeh, 2019). Others, see successful integration in terms of economic sustenance. Cultural adaptation was also mentioned by the participants. In fact, the participants attached great importance to the development of a new cultural model based on their own culture of origin, that is based on that of the host country. Despite different individual perceptions, scholars argue that integration is a two-way process in which both migrants and locals are equally important (Bijl & Verweij, 2012). Both sides must contribute elements of their own culture to enrich the other, understanding and respecting their differences (Bijl & Verweij, 2012). The success of integration therefore, depends on both parties involved (Ager & Strang, 2010). However, the perception of locals towards migrants can limit their integration. Many locals confess that, before coming into contact with migrants, they perceived them negatively because of stereotypes and how they are portrayed in the media. In fact, many, think that migrants are poor and uneducated people who leave their countries to take advantage of others (Khalifeh, 2019). This description therefore influences the image of migrants in the host society and, as a result, affects the social support they receive. Another factor that limits social support for migrants is misunderstandings generated by cultural

differences (Balboni & Caon, 2015). An example is provided by Khalifeh's (2019) case study on the use of social media. A Dutch mentor interviewed stated that she felt overwhelmed by the constant messages and voice calls she received from one of her Syrian students. However, the Syrian student stated that in her country of origin it is very common to send many messages, but this is not the case in the Netherlands. This case shows that even the communication habits of countries can generate misunderstandings and compromise social relationships if they are not mutually understood.

3. Methodology

This chapter will illustrate the case study of this research. In particular, it will illustrate the research methodology and the motivations behind this research. The reference contexts of the study will be described and the tools used to collect data will be analysed.

3.1 Setting

This study aims to investigate the cultural and linguistic adaptation of first-generation migrants in relation to their use of social media. The geographical area of reference is that surrounding Venice, in particular the towns of Marghera and Mestre. Both cities are characterised by migration. Therefore, this research is based on the project "Vie di uscita: storie di scatti e di vita" (Ways out: stories of snapshots and life), which is one of the lines of action provided for in the Project of Excellence (2023-2027). In particular, it is an initiative approved by the Department of Comparative Linguistic and Cultural Studies at Ca' Foscari University of Venice (2023-2027), coordinated by researchers Monica Banzato (2024), Mustafa Marchych, and Graziano Serragiotto. The project aims to analyse the impact of social media on the socio-cultural and linguistic adaptation of migrant adolescents attending Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIA) in north-eastern Italy. In particular, the aim of this project, and consequently of this study, is to explore the role of social media during the process of familiarization with the new host country. The "Vie di uscita" project adopts two mixed research approaches: the first, quantitative, refers to the use of a questionnaire. This tool investigates the use of social media and its influence on learning the new language and local culture, and finally, its contribution to building social relationships; the second, qualitative, refers to participatory methods. These tools explore personal experiences of social, emotional and cultural adaptation. In particular, workshops based on reflective storytelling methods such as "Photovoice" and "Storycrafting" were dedicated to this. Photovoice, through the production of photographic images accompanied by short narratives, allows students to document significant moments in their

daily lives accompanied by challenges due to the adaptation process. Storycrafting (Backman-Nord et al. 2023), on the other hand, allows relationships between professionals and young participants to be built and facilitated through oral narratives by the subject. These narratives are then transcribed and read (and also published) by the researcher with the subject's consent. In this way, an inclusive space is promoted by giving voice to the subjects.

This study was conducted at two social centres located in the areas surrounding Venice, one in Marghera and one in Mestre. First of all, it is useful to provide a brief overview of the current migration situation in Venice. In Venice, 68.6% of non-EU foreigners hold a long-term residence permit. This percentage is significantly higher than the national average, which stands at 59.3%, as reported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (2023). Over the last twenty years, starting in 2002, the neighbouring cities of Venice, Mestre and Marghera have seen a particular increase in foreign residents (Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 2023). In particular, the city of Mestre has seen an increase of 631%, while in Marghera, the increase has reached 867%, from 5,700 inhabitants to 40,500. According to the data (Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 2023), individuals who migrate to Venice come mainly from Europe. However, it has been found that the most significant number of individuals who decide to emigrate to Venice come from Asia (17,252 people). In particular, Bangladeshi citizens constitute the largest group (10,223 individuals). In terms of employment, foreigners represent approximately 6.5% of the workforce, slightly less than the national average (7%), but with a similar gender balance (50.7% men, 49.3% women), in contrast to Italy, where men predominate (62.5%) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 2023). This balance stems from the presence of foreign women in personal care services and domestic work. In fact, in the Venice area, there are an estimated 12,000 non-European female workers (1.9% of the national total). The predominant sector in the Venice area in terms of foreign employment is services, excluding trade, with 68% of non-European workers compared to the Italian average of 52.8%. The second sector is trade, with 12% of foreigners compared to 15.4% of native Italians. In industry, foreigners represent 10.4% compared to 21% of natives. Finally, in the agricultural sector, foreigners represent only 4.5% at the national level, but in the Venice area, they reach about 12.5% (Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, 2023).

The two social centres mentioned above were chosen because, in addition to offering free Italian language courses, they promote social integration events for everyone, especially for the migrant community. Both schools offer Italian courses starting from Pre-A1 (or Alfa) language

levels up to B1. The courses are organised and run by volunteers who structure the lessons according to the participants, who are divided into different classes according to their language level. At the Marghera school, lessons are run by two teachers per class to provide diversity in topics and teaching styles. At the school in Mestre, the number of teachers per class varies depending on the availability of volunteers. The teaching approach adopted by these two schools is intercultural and communicative. Lessons are not limited to teaching grammar but seek to integrate content related to Italian culture. Consequently, these schools aim to integrate students into the host country, as can also be seen from the events they offer.
The aim of this research will be to answer the following questions:
Are there differences between young migrants and adults in the Venice area in terms of their socio-cultural adaptation processes, as measured by the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire (ICSSQ; Kuusisto et al., 2015)?

Are there differences between young people and adults in the use of social media for information, socialization, production, acculturation and learning the Italian language?

What differences emerge between young people (under 30) and adults (over 30) in the use of social networking sites (SNS) and cultural integration?

To answer this research question, the level of adaptation of first-generation migrants will be compared by comparing two distinct groups based on age: the first includes young migrants aged between 18 and 30; the second includes adult migrants aged 30 and over. This distinction is based on the assumption that migrants who decide to attend Italian language courses already have a predisposition towards cultural and linguistic adaptation to the host country. Consequently, it is assumed that these individuals are likely to identify with the ethno-relative stages of Milton Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, rather than the ethnocentric stages, in which one's own culture is seen as central among others.

With regard to the use of social media, it is assumed that young migrants are more likely to use it to adapt to Italian culture and language, showing a greater propensity for cultural and linguistic change than adults. Young migrants are expected to use social media to participate in local events, meet and interact with locals. Conversely, adult migrants are expected to be more likely to use social media to stay in touch with family members who live in their country of origin. This difference could stem from greater stability in the working lives of adults, a

tendency to frequent their own cultural groups, and less openness to the changes that the new environment could bring. This study focused on first-generation migrants who attend Italian language courses for foreigners provided by voluntary associations in the area. Consequently, the study aimed to examine how migrants perceive cultural diversity, their perception of their own Italian language skills, and finally, their frequency of social media use in relation to their social and cultural adaptation in Italy, all in relation to the age of the participants. To answer these questions, a series of statistical analyses were conducted. Excel analyses were performed to calculate statistical data (average and standard deviation).

3.2 The participants

This section includes some data provided by the analysis of the questionnaires. In particular, data concerning the gender, age, country of origin and occupation of the students interviewed will be presented. In the chapter dedicated to data analysis, this data will be reviewed and analysed in detail in relation to the questions in the questionnaire.

Both the Italian language school offer courses with no age or gender restrictions. For this study, 18 students agreed to participate in the survey, two classes from the school in Marghera, and one from the one in Mestre, all with an A2 language level. Consequently, there are 10 students in the first group and 8 in the second.

In both schools, there is a predominance of males. Of the 18 students interviewed, 72.2% are male and 27.8% are female, as shown in pie chart 4.

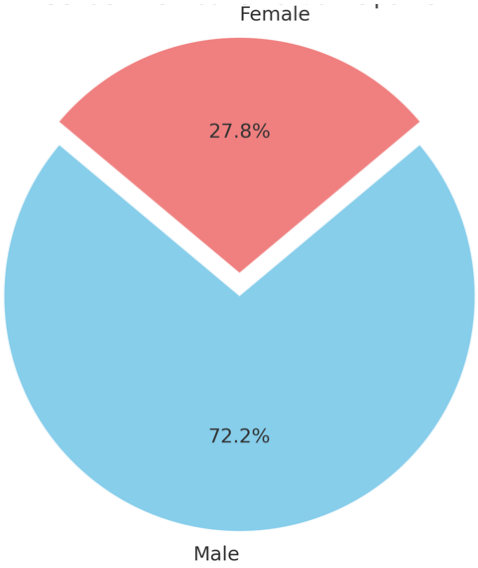

Figure 4 ***Gender distribution of participants***

Among the 18 people interviewed, the average age is 30 (M= 22.3; SD=10.01). With the following division into two groups (the first group from 18 to 30 years old, and the second group from 30 years old and above), it can be observed that the average age of the first group is 22 years (M= 22.3; SD= 2.69), while that of the second group is 30 (M=38.88; SD= 7.90).

As far as the origin of the respondents is concerned, as can be seen from the data presented in this research study and from the graph, it can be noted that the Bengali population is in the majority.

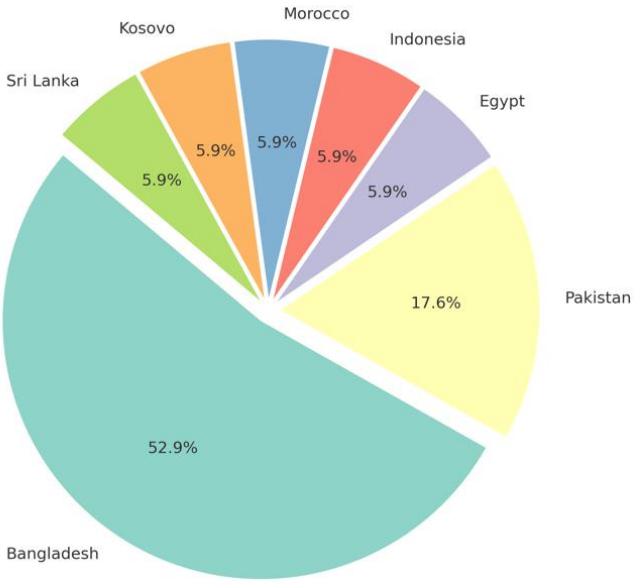

Figure 5 ***Country of origin of partecipants***

Regarding employment, the majority of respondents reported havin3.g had manual work experience or work that did not require specific qualifications. In fact, as shown in graph number 6, the majority of interviewees stated that they had worked in construction (bricklayer), metalworking (welder and labourer), catering (waiter) and logistics (warehouse worker). Others had more skilled experience (tailor, brand expert). However, a significant proportion of respondents stated that they had never worked before (student, “no”, and “I have never worked”).

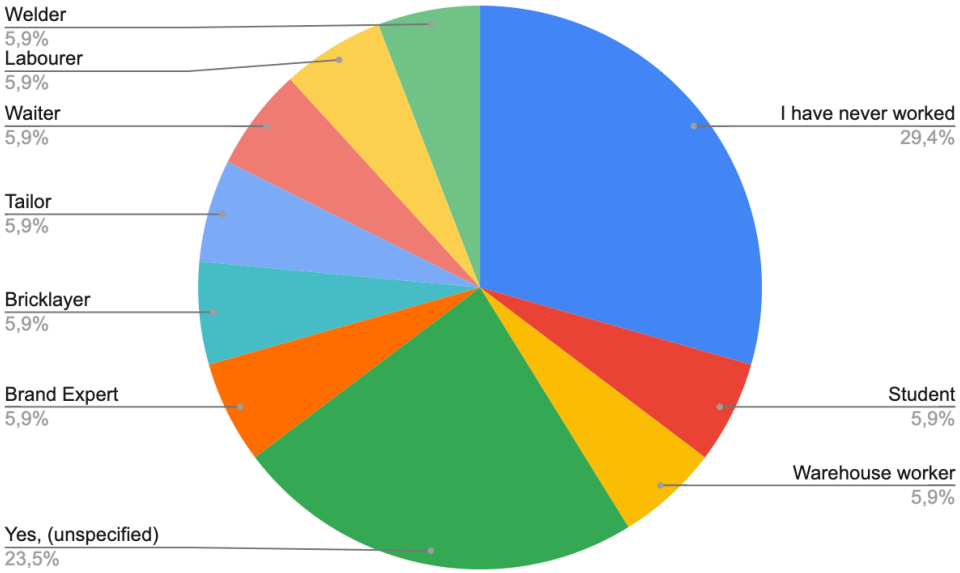

Figure 6 ***Future career expectations***

In addition, the group of migrants who participated in the questionnaire showed very diverse professional aspirations. Among the professional roles requiring specific qualifications, the most notable are teacher, app developer, marketing consultant and accountant (27.8%). However, the majority of responses (55.5%) referred to manual jobs such as welder, bricklayer, waiter, cook, and painter. On the other hand, part of the sample (16.7%) provided vague answers ("I want to work", "any kind of job", "any job"). This could be due to a lack of understanding of the question or uncertainty about their professional position in the country.

3.3 Design

This study aims to investigate the cultural and linguistic adaptation of first-generation migrants in relation to their use of social media. The only tool used to collect data for the research was a questionnaire. A paper version was preferred to allow students to use an automatic translator if the text was not sufficiently understandable, and the explanations provided by the researcher and volunteers were not comprehensive enough. Despite this, the questionnaire was anonymous.

3.4 The tools

The only tool used to collect data for the research was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was written in Italian and consisted of five pages divided into three main sections: general information, questions exploring cultural adaptation, and finally, a section related to language

skills and the use of social networks in relation to learning about the culture and language of the host country (Italy). The questionnaire was completed during class hours, and it took around 50-60 minutes to complete.

The questionnaire presented is the result of two studies: the first refers to the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire (ICSSQ) based on the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) developed by Bennett (1993) and subsequently adapted by Kuusisto et al. (2015). The ICSSQ consists of 23 items on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (see 3.3.2 Second session: Cultural adaptation); The second, refers to The Digital Acculturation Practices Questionnaire for Migrant Adolescents (DAP-QAM) (Banzato, 2025) on a six-point Likert scale for a total of 36 items (see section 3.3.3 Third session: Social networks and L2 learning). From this questionnaire, questions from the sections on general information, cultural adaptation, and finally the use of social media in relation to cultural and linguistic adaptation were taken into consideration, for a total of 103 items.

3.4.1 First section: General information

The questionnaire presented is divided into three sections, each with a different title. The first section immediately presents the title that summarises the thesis project: “Questionnaire on cultural, digital and linguistic adaptation in education”. This is followed by a section dedicated to the presentation of the project, which explains the aims of the research and provides information on the questionnaire to be completed. Next, there is a section on data processing, which includes an analysis of anonymous data for study purposes in full compliance with Legislative Decree 163/2017, pursuant to Article 13 of Legislative Decree 196/2003 and Article 13 of European Regulation 2016/679. This is followed by the references of the researcher and professional supervisors.

Next, this section called “General Information” focuses on personal data to define the students' profile. This section comprises 19 items. The first item is open-ended and allows respondents to answer as they wish. It is a question referring to age.
The second item, also open-ended, asks respondents to state their place of birth.
The third item concerns gender and is divided into three boxes: male, female and other.
The fourth item is open-ended and asks the student to provide information about their arrival in Italy, specifying the month and year.

The fifth item asks the student how many years they studied in their country of origin, giving them the option to choose the most appropriate box from: “up to 5 years”, “between 5-8 years”, “between 9-11 years”, “over 11 years”.
The sixth question is open-ended and asks for information about the length of time the student has been attending the Italian course offered by the association.
The seventh item, also open-ended, asks for information about the student's mother tongue.
The eighth item is open-ended and asks for information about how many languages the student speaks.
The ninth item is more specific and asks which languages are spoken in the family context, like at home.
The tenth item asks which languages are spoken with friends in Italy.
The eleventh item asks whether the student's parents speak Italian. This question offers several possible answers, and the choices are: “Yes, both speak Italian”, “Yes, one of them speaks Italian”, “Yes, both speak a little Italian”, “No, neither of them speaks Italian”, “No, they don't need to speak Italian”, “No, because they only speak their mother tongue”. The following questions are open-ended.
The twelfth item asks who the student is living with. In fact, the brackets suggest whether they live with their parents, relatives, friends, in a community or elsewhere.
The thirteenth item asks what their favourite dish is.
The fourteenth item asks what type of music they prefer.
The fifteenth asks for information about the type of work they would like to do in Italy.
The sixteenth asks for information about their previous job (if they have worked in the past) and what it was.
The seventeenth question asks for information about your parents' jobs.
The eighteenth question asks for information about the future: whether the student plans to stay in Italy; and if not, which country they plan to move to.
Finally, the nineteenth item asks about religion.

3.4.2 Second section: Cultural adaptation

The second section is entitled “Cultural Adaptation” and presents 26 items on a six-point Likert scale (this is a positive consensus in rising order: from 0, which means completely disagree, to 6, which means completely agree). These questions refer to the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire (ICSSQ) (Holm, et al, 2012), adapted by Banzato (2024). Both models take into

account the developmental stages of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Bennet, 1993).
The section is therefore divided into six subsections that refer to the DMIS, a model devised by Milton Bennett (1986). This model is used in intercultural education and training programmes with the aim of raising individuals' awareness of diversity by developing their cognitive and behavioural skills when in contact with cultural differences. Specifically, the model theorises intercultural sensitivity and intercultural competence, like the ability to recognise and experience cultural differences, considered as a tool for explaining the evolution of an individual's perception of the world (Bennet, 1993). The model is divided into six progressive orientations of cultural difference, divided into two broad categories: three ethnocentric orientations and three ethnorelative orientations (Hammer et al., 2003). In this part of the research, the DMIS questions developed by researcher Banzato in the Italian context will be illustrated. The items are composed on a six-point Likert scale (1 = totally disagree, 6 = totally agree).

The first stage of the DMIS is “denial” and is identified as an orientation of closure and denial towards cultural differences. Individuals who face this orientation, perceive the foreign individual as an almost unreal or marginal person. Awareness of diversity emerges when the individual is “forced” by some circumstance to become aware of others. In this phase, therefore, one's own culture is considered central compared to others, which are perceived as almost non-existent. Individuals who experience this stage are indifferent or even hostile towards intercultural communication. This phase is overcome through increased awareness and interest in other cultures.
The questions asked of participants are as follows:

Item 1: People of my own culture behave in the only way that makes sense.
Item 2: I often feel that people in Italy are rude to me.
Item 3: I do not need to care about what happens in other parts of the world.
Item 4: Living in Italy makes me feel uncomfortable.

The second stage of DMIS is “defence” and is identified as an orientation towards defending one's own culture, perceived as the only possible one, against those that threaten it. Individuals who reach this defensive stage divide the world into “us” and “them”, with their own culture being superior to others perceived as inferior (Paige et al. 2003, p. 424). At this stage, they tend

to be critical of other cultures and inclined to blame cultural differences for problems within society, promoting stereotypes. Compared to the denial stage, individuals with a defensive orientation actually experience cultural differences and feel them to be more real than individuals with a denial orientation. In addition, a variant of defence, “reversal” (Bennett, 1993), has been identified. In this variant, the adopted culture is perceived as better than that of primary socialisation (Paige et al. 2003, p. 424) and, unlike defence, reversal does not see cultural differences as a threat. This happens because, at this stage, the individual tends to romanticise or imagine another culture. The questions asked of participants are as follows:

Item 5: There are lots of people representing other cultures who are arrogant
Item 6: I divide the students of my school into ‘‘our people’’ and ‘‘other people’’
Item 7: I hate people who represent certain culture or ethnic group
Item 8: there are many things about the local people that irritate me
Item 9: I am ashamed of my fellow nationals when I am in Italy
Item 10: I would definitely emigrate to some other country different from Italy
Item 11: I do not value the culture of my native country

It is important to note that the scores for questions 9, 10 and 11 need to be converted, as these questions have the opposite meaning to the other questions.

The third stage of DMIS is “minimisation” and is identified as a crucial step in terms of intercultural sensitivity. Compared to the previous stages, in this phase the dichotomous conflict between “us” and “them” is overcome, precisely because cultural differences are no longer perceived as a threat. However, although the worldview is no longer defended exclusively, individuals at this stage are still in a state of ethnocentrism, minimising cultural differences and perceiving their own culture as universal. This means that individuals see other cultures as similar to their own, failing to recognise their differences (Bennett, 1993). If recognised, cultural differences are not evaluated negatively, but rather trivialised. This stage can manifest itself in two ways. The first concerns “physical universalism”, in which behaviour is perceived as innate, and differences are interpreted as simple variations in behavioural rules (Lorentz, 1977). In this context, the individual believes that the main behavioural models are sufficient to guarantee success in intercultural situations. This is an ethnocentric view because the basic models of behaviour are considered absolute and similar to one's own. The second is “transcendent universalism” and is based on the idea that all human beings are the result of a

single transcendent principle, such as a supernatural entity or force in religion, or other forms that include the Marxist notion of historical imperative, in which all people are influenced by the same economic and political laws. In both cases, therefore, cultural differences are either recognised and tolerated superficially, or seen as an impediment to continued communication. This is because communication is thought to be based on common and universal rules. In this way, individuals who project their desire for similarity between cultures and their resistance to the idea that the world is different can lead to a retreat from progress and, therefore, to a regression in the development of interculturality. For this reason, Bennett (2017) emphasises the importance of recognising and valuing similarities, not to deny differences, but to develop a genuine ability to appreciate and manage them in an effective way. The questions asked of participants are as follows:

Item 12: People all around the world need and want approximately the same things
Item 13: All people act almost in the same way when they face ethically problematic situations
Item 14: Conflicts between different nations can be solved by obeying the same ethical principles
Item 15: There may be some differences between the customs of different cultures, but deep down all people are just like me

The fourth stage of DMIS is “acceptance” and is presented as a fundamental turning point in the development of intercultural sensitivity. At this stage, the individual recognises cultural differences, including their own, placing them on the same level. In fact, the individual is curious about other cultures and cultural differences, but this does not mean that they cannot be judged negatively.
Judgement of cultures other than one's own does not disappear, but is transformed: it is no longer the result of an ethnocentric logic, in which one's own culture is considered superior, nor is it reduced to a universalism that trivialises differences (as in Minimisation). Although individuals show curiosity about other cultures, their knowledge and perceptual flexibility are still rigid and limited, preventing them from adapting perfectly to different cultural contexts. At this stage, individuals try to be respectful and avoid judging them as either right or wrong, but justify them as different from their own. The questions asked of participants are as follows:

Item 16: People from different cultures may not understand each other because of their different ways of expressing themselves.

Item 17: Different behaviours make me see things in a new way
Item 18: Understanding different cultures helps me recognise the value of different things.
Item 19: The more I know about various cultures, the better I recognise the differences between them

The fifth stage of DMIS is “adaptation” and is presented as a further advancement in the development of intercultural sensitivity. It reflects the individual's ability to consciously modify their behaviour in order to communicate and interact effectively in different cultural contexts (Bennett, 2004, 153). Bennett (1998) adds that adaptation could also be considered a kind of empathy towards cultures different from one's own and is similar to assimilation, but adaptation is intentional (Bennett, 2004, 157). At this stage, the individual experiences the world as if he or she belonged to a different culture, through a kind of cognitive and emotional simulation. This process generates a sense of familiarity with otherness, which in turn promotes a more positive and less threatening perception of cultural differences. Adaptation, therefore, is not only a behavioural skill, but also a transformation of the perceptual structure, which allows one to attribute meaning to the behaviour of others in a culturally appropriate way. The problem that would arise at this stage could be related to identity. In this regard, Bennett (2017) proposes a view of identity as a fluid and dynamic construct, capable of adapting to multiple contexts and modes of expression. In this sense, identity is no longer understood as a fixed and immutable entity, but as a set of culturally situated ways of being, which can coexist and integrate harmoniously in the individual's experience. The questions asked of participants are as follows:

Item 20: I am able to behave in culturally appropriate ways, but still adhere to my own values
Item 21: Many of the immigrants living in our country try their hardest to adjust to our lifestyle, and that is why I want to understand their way of living
Item 22: It is only a good thing that people are different
Item 23: I have adapted to living in Italy, but I continue to follow my values.

The sixth and final stage of DMIS is “integration” and is presented as the most advanced level of the model. At this stage, the individual is able to live naturally within different cultural systems, integrating their perspectives, values and modes of behaviour. Integration does not involve a loss of sense of belonging, but rather the expansion of identity towards a transcultural form, in which the possibility of belonging to several cultures at the same time is recognised. The questions asked of participants are as follows:

Item 24: I feel part of more than one culture.
Item 25: I am able to put myself in the position of a person from another culture
Item 26: I would like to be a cultural mediator to help people who migrate here.

3.4.3 Third section: Social networks and L2 learning

The third section is entitled "Social networks and L2 learning" and contains 58 items. The first question focuses on language. Specifically, students are asked to specify their level of knowledge of the Italian language by analysing the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Students are asked to answer these four questions by choosing the most appropriate box from: 1 meaning "not at all", 2 "a little", 3 "almost good", 4 "good".

From this point onwards, the questionnaire refers to questions about the use of social media. The questions come from the Questionnaire on Digital Acculturation Practices for Migrant Adolescents (DAP-QAM) (Banzato, 2025) on a six-point Likert scale for a total of 36 items. In particular, the DAP-QAM assesses digital acculturation practices through three dimensions: digital skills, digital acculturation and digital language learning.

The questionnaire under study is based on six categories: Social Interaction (1), Information (2), Production (3), Individual Language Learning (4), Social Language Learning (5) and Use of Translation Tools (6).
The first six items in the section collect information on the use of social media.
Item 31 asks students if they are registered on social networks, giving them the option to answer by selecting "yes" or "no".
Item 32 asks students which social networks they use. Students are asked to mark with crosses the social networks they use: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Tik Tok, WhatsApp, YouTube, Other.
Item 33 asks students which social network they use most among those mentioned in the previous question. In this case, students select their answer on a six-point Likert scale (from 1 = never to 6 = very often).
Item 33 asks students which social network they use most among those mentioned in the previous question. In this case, students choose their answer on a six-point Likert scale (from 1 meaning NEVER to 6 meaning ALWAYS).
Item 40 asks students how many hours they spend using social networks, and they can choose from the following options: "1 hour", "2-3 hours", "3-5 hours", "more than 5 hours".

Item 41 asks students in which of the following situations they use social networks. The options include: “before school”, “after school”, “during school”, “at the table when eating”, “in the presence of friends”, “together with friends” and “before going to sleep”. Again, the student chooses their answer on a six-point Likert scale (from 1 meaning NEVER to 6 meaning ALWAYS).
Item 48 asks students if they stay up late to spend time on social networking sites. Again, students choose their answer on a six-point Likert scale (from 1 meaning NEVER to 6 meaning ALWAYS).
From this point onwards, the categories are put into practice, all on a six-point Likert scale (from 1 meaning NEVER to 6 meaning ALWAYS).
The first, Social Interaction (1), refers to interaction with other individuals, both Italian and from the country of origin:

Item 49: I communicate with friends from my country
Item 50: I communicate with friends from my country in Italy
Item 51: I communicate with Italian friends
Item 52: I seek out and get to know new Italian people
Item 53: I am constantly connected with anyone and at any time

The second, Information (2), refers to interest in news, music and fashion both in Italy and in the country of origin:

Item 54: I keep up to date with news from my country of origin
Item 55: I keep up to date with news in Italy
Item 56: I follow music from my country of origin
Item 57: I follow Italian music
Item 58: I follow fashion from my country of origin
Item 59: I follow Italian fashion

The third, Production (3), refers to the publication of written and multimedia content, and participation in discussions and livestreams:

Item 60: I regularly post on my profile
Item 61: I publish interesting news and updates on my page

Item 62: I regularly upload photos and short videos to my page
Item 63: I actively participate in discussions on other people's posts
Item 64: I make live videos to communicate in real time with my friends

Next, there are questions that involve active and direct participation in Italian traditions (such as watching video recipes to learn how to cook Italian dishes), exploring Italian places and communities, and sharing posts with Italian peers and people from your own country:

Item 65: I have participated in Italian cultural events (for example, the Venice Carnival).
Item 66: I tried cooking Italian dishes by following video recipes
Item 67: I discovered Italian traditions
Item 68: I took online lessons on Italian culture
Item 69: I communicated in Italian groups
Item 70: I tried to learn about famous Italian places
Item 71: I shared my Italian experiences with friends in my country

Next, the fourth category, Individual Language Learning (4):

Item 72: I follow videos by Italian teachers on social networks to improve my language skills
Item 73: I watch videos in Italian to listen to the spoken language
Item 74: I pay attention to Italian grammar while watching videos
Item 75: I pay attention to Italian accents while watching videos
Item 76: I use Italian tests to assess my level of knowledge

The fifth, Social Language Learning (5):

Item 77: I participate in groups to learn Italian on social networks
Item 78: I post in Italian in social network groups
Item 79: I use chat on social networks to improve my Italian
Item 80: I accept social network suggestions for learning Italian
Item 81: I ask Italian students to be my friends on social networks
Item 82: I accept friend requests from Italian students on social networks

Finally, the sixth category, Use of translation tools (6), refers to the use of automatic translation, comprehension and writing tools:

Item 83: I use automatic translation to read posts in Italian
Item 84: I use translation tools before posting in Italian

The next table shows a summary of the items of the questionnaire with the related categories.

Numbers	DMIS Items	Categories
1	People of my own culture behave in the only way that makes sense	Denial
2	I often feel that people in Italy are rude to me	Denial
3	I do not need to care about what happens in other parts of the world	Denial
4	Living in Italy makes me feel uncomfortable	Denial
5	There are lots of people representing other cultures who are arrogant	Defence
6	I divide the students of my school into ‘‘our people’’ and ‘‘other people’’	Defence
7	I hate people who represent certain culture or ethnic group	Defence
8	There are many things about the local people that irritate me	Defence
9	I am ashamed of my fellow nationals when I am in Italy	Defence
10	I would definitely emigrate to some other country different from Italy	Defence
11	I do not value the culture of my native country	Defence
12	People all around the world need and want approximately the same things	Minimisation
13	All people act almost in the same way when they face ethically problematic situations	Minimisation
14	Conflicts between different nations can be solved by obeying the same ethical principles	Minimisation
15	There may be some differences between the customs of different cultures, but deep down all people are just like me	Minimisation

16	People from different cultures may not understand each other because of their different ways of expressing themselves	Acceptance
17	Different behaviours make me see things in a new way	Acceptance
18	Understanding different cultures helps me recognise the value of different things.	Acceptance
19	The more I know about various cultures, the better I recognise the differences between them	Acceptance
20	I am able to behave in culturally appropriate ways, but still adhere to my own values	Adaptation
21	Many of the immigrants living in our country try their hardest to adjust to our lifestyle, and that is why I want to understand their way of living	Adaptation
22	It is only a good thing that people are different	Adaptation
23	I have adapted to living in Italy, but I continue to follow my values	Adaptation
24	I feel part of more than one culture.	Integration
25	I am able to put myself in the position of a person from another culture	Integration
26	I would like to be a cultural mediator to help people who migrate here	Integration

Numbers	**DAP-QAM Items**	**Categories**
49	I communicate with friends from my country	Social Interaction
50	I communicate with friends from my country in Italy	Social Interaction
51	I communicate with Italian friends	Social Interaction
52	I seek out and get to know new Italian people	Social Interaction

53	I am constantly connected with anyone and at any time	Social Interaction
54	I keep up to date with news from my country of origin	Information
55	I keep up to date with news in Italy	Information
56	I follow music from my country of origin	Information
57	I follow Italian music	Information
58	I follow fashion from my country of origin	Information
59	I follow Italian fashion	Information
60	I regularly post on my profile	Production
61	I publish interesting news and updates on my page	Production
62	I regularly upload photos and short videos to my page	Production
63	I actively participate in discussions on other people's posts	Production
64	I make live videos to communicate in real time with my friends	Production
65	I have participated in Italian cultural events (for example, the Venice Carnival).	Social media and participation in local Italian culture (S.M.P.L.C.)
66	I tried cooking Italian dishes by following video recipes	(S.M.P.L.C.)
67	I discovered Italian traditions	(S.M.P.L.C.)
68	I took online lessons on Italian culture	(S.M.P.L.C.)
69	I communicated in Italian groups	(S.M.P.L.C.)
70	I tried to learn about famous Italian places	(S.M.P.L.C.)
71	I shared my Italian experiences with friends in my country	(S.M.P.L.C.)
72	I follow videos by Italian teachers on social networks to improve my language skills	Individual Language Learning (ILL)
73	I watch videos in Italian to listen to the spoken language	ILL
74	I pay attention to Italian grammar while watching videos	ILL

75	I pay attention to Italian accents while watching videos	ILL
76	I use Italian tests to assess my level of knowledge	ILL
77	I participate in groups to learn Italian on social networks	Social Language Learning (SLL)
78	I post in Italian in social network groups	SLL
79	I use chat on social networks to improve my Italian	SLL
80	I accept social network suggestions for learning Italian	SLL
81	I ask Italian students to be my friends on social networks	SLL
82	I accept friend requests from Italian students on social networks	SLL
83	I use automatic translation to read posts in Italian	Use of translation tools
84	I use translation tools before posting in Italian	Use of translation tools

3.5 Administration

The questionnaire was administered mainly in the autumn of 2024. At the Casa di Amadou school, the questionnaire was administered in November 2024. Given the high number of students attending the courses, it was decided to add an additional class of students, but the volunteer teacher of the class in question refused to present the questionnaire because of questions that were too personal, such as those related to religion. Many students from both schools refused to complete the questionnaire for the same reasons. At the social centre school, the questionnaire was administered between November and December 2024. Consequently, the sampling carried out is non-probabilistic convenience sampling, in which the necessary requirements are to have the consent of the participants (John W. Creswell & J. David Creswell, 2018).

The sample population selected was not entirely random. This is because classes with a sufficient language level to understand the questions were considered, even if they were also assisted with online translation tools. In relation to this, no time limit was set, but it was noticed that the duration of the questionnaire took around 50-60 minutes to complete. The choice of these two schools was based on the fact that both, in addition to free Italian courses, also provided the opportunity to participate in social events that help migrants to integrate more.

The questionnaire was also administered with the help of the volunteer teacher of the class. The availability of students and volunteers was made easier by the fact that the author of this research is one of the volunteer teachers at the two schools. At the same time, before administering the questionnaires, permission had to be sought from the school representatives, and the questions had to be shown via the Google Forms platform.

4.Results, Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter presents the results of the questionnaire administered to the 18 participants in the research. The data presented were calculated using descriptive statistics, analyzing in particular the average and standard deviation, whose results were then shown in tables.

The following data from the questionnaire were used to answer the questions mentioned above, which are: 'Are there differences between young migrants and adults residing in the Venice area in terms of their socio-cultural adaptation processes, as measured by the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire? Are there differences between young people and adults in their use of social media for information, socialization, production, acculturation and learning the Italian language? What differences emerge between young people (under 30) and adults (over 30) in the use of social networking sites (SNS) and cultural integration?
In particular, this chapter will present the data analysis, the results, a discussion of these results, and finally a conclusion.

4.1 Data collection and analysis

Firstly, the questionnaire was prepared using Google Forms to allow for a preview of the questionnaire and to obtain the necessary permissions from the schools. Subsequently, to enable the interviewees to read it more easily and, if necessary, to use their smartphones to translate the questions, a paper version of the questionnaire was provided. The next step was to transcribe the questions and answers of all interviewees into an Excel form and analyze the data. In particular, the questions were divided into the categories (DMIS and DAP-QAM). The Excel sheet was organised in a way that each column marked with a letter of the alphabet presented a question from the questionnaire, and each line, marked with a number, presented the answer of each interviewee. Subsequently, the interviewees were divided into two groups based on their age to compare them and verify the hypotheses.
To answer the research questions, measures of central tendency, such as average and standard deviation, were used. For the first question (Are there differences between young and adult

migrants residing in the Venice area in terms of their socio-cultural adaptation processes, as measured by the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire?), the measures of central tendency of the two groups (under 30 and over 30) were analysed and compared. For the second question (Are there differences between young people and adults in the use of social media for information, socialization, production, acculturation and learning the Italian language?), as for the first question, a comparison of the central tendency indices of the two groups was made. Finally, for the last question (What differences emerge between young people (under 30) and adults (over 30) in the use of Social Network Sites (SNS) and cultural integration?), a comparison was made of the average index of the two groups in the "integration" category (DMIS) with those of the DAP-QAM questionnaire.

4.2 Results

This section of the chapter will illustrate the results of the questionnaires completed by the 18 participants. Specifically, this section will be divided into two parts. The first will illustrate the results of cultural adaptation (Denial, Defence, Minimisation, Acceptance, Adaptation and, finally, Integration) in six different tables. The second will present the results of social network use and second language learning (Language Competences, Social Interaction, Information, Production, Individual Language Learning, Social Language Learning, Use of Translation Tools and, finally, Participation in Local Italian Culture) in eight different tables. In addition, in order to obtain a complete overview of social media use, the results relating to the type of SNS used and the situations in which SNS are used most, were also analysed.

In the tables in question, for each category addressed, participants were divided into two groups according to their age: the first includes students aged 18 to 30, while the second includes students aged 30 and over.

4.2.1 Cultural Adaptation

This part of the chapter focuses on the results of the second section of the questionnaire, which includes 26 items on cultural adaptation (see Section 3.3.2). Figure 7 shows the results for the Denial category. The under-30 group shows a higher average (3.18) than the over-30 group (2.65). In particular, item no. 1 obtained a higher average (4.6) from the under-30 group than from the over-30 group (3.88). The standard deviation of the first group is 2.01, while for the second it is 2.35. This suggests that, in general, the interviewees feel that their compatriots

perceive their norms and values as the only sensible and valid ones, towards an ethnocentric perspective.

On the contrary, item no. 2 obtained a lower average (1.7) in the first group and in the second group (2.13). The standard deviation of the first group is 1.34, while for the second it is 2.1. This would suggest that interviewees feel little "threatened" by people living in Italy.

Item		Under 30		Over 30	
		Average	SD	Average	SD
1.	People of my own culture behave in the only way that makes sense	4,6	2,01	3,88	2,35
2.	I often feel that people in Italy are rude to me	1,7	1,34	2,13	2,1
3.	I do not need to care about what happens in other parts of the world	3	2,31	2,43	1,98
4.	Living in Italy makes me feel uncomfortable	3,4	2,27	2,14	2,03
	Denial AVERAGE	**3,18**	**1,98**	**2,65**	**2,12**

Figure 7 ***Stages of DMIS, Denial***

Figure 7.1 shows the results for the Defence category. The under-30s group has a higher average (2.31) than the over-30s (2.14). In particular, item no. 5 received a lower average (3.8) from the under-30s group than from the over-30s (3.86). The standard deviation of the first group is 1.66, while for the second it is 2.11. This suggests that, overall, interviewees think that many people from other cultures are arrogant towards them.

Conversely, item 7 obtained a lower average for the first group (1.4) with a standard deviation of 1.2, and for the second group (1.71) with a standard deviation of 1.88. This suggests that interviewees do not show hatred towards cultures other than their own.

Item		Under 30		Over 30	
		Average	SD	Average	SD
5.	There are lots of people representing other cultures who are arrogant.	3,8	1,66	3,86	2,11
6.	I divide the students of my school into ‘‘our people’’ and ‘‘other people’’.	2,7	1,9	2,43	2,43
7.	I hate people who represent certain culture or ethnic group.	1,4	1,2	1,71	1,88
8.	There are many things about the local people that irritate me.	1,7	1,1	2,29	2,21
9.	I am ashamed of my fellow nationals when I am in Italy.	1,6	1,5	1,71	1,88
10.	I would definitely emigrate to some other country different from Italy.	2,6	1,74	1,43	1,13
11.	I do not value the culture of my native country.	2,4	2,15	1,57	1,51
	Defence AVERAGE	**2,31**	**1,61**	**2,14**	**1,88**

Figure 7.1 ***Stages of DMIS, Defence***

Figure 7.2 shows the results for the Minimisation category. The under-30s group has a higher average (3.47) than the over-30s (3.03). In particular, item no. 15 obtained a higher average (5.58) from the over-30s group than from the under-30s group (5.56), with a standard deviation of 0.37 for the adult group and 1.59 for the younger group. Conversely, item 12 received a lower average: 2.1 for the first group with a standard deviation of 1.81, and 2.71 for the second group, with a standard deviation of 2.36. This suggests that although interviewees tend to make less distinction between cultural groups and perceive them as threats, some of them continue to trivialize the differences.

Item		Under 30		Over 30	
		Average	SD	Average	SD
12.	People all around the world need and want approximately the same things.	2,1	1,81	2,71	2,36
13.	All people act almost in the same way when they face ethically problematic situations.	2,2	1,94	1,85	1,86
14.	Conflicts between different nations can be solved by obeying the same ethical principles.	4	2,14	1,71	1,88
15.	There may be some differences between the customs of different cultures, but deep down all people are just like me.	5,56	1,49	5,85	0,37
	Minimization AVERAGE	**3,47**	**1,85**	**3,03**	**1,62**

Figure 7.2 ***Stages of DMIS, Minimization***

Figure 7.3 shows the results for the Acceptance category. The under-30 group shows a slightly higher average (5.30) than the over-30 group (5.07). In particular, item no. 16 obtained a higher average (5.8) from the under-30 group than from the over-30 group (5.71), with a standard deviation of 0.42 for the former and 0.57 for the latter. Although there are no low averages in this category, the item with the lowest average compared to others is item 17, with 4.8 for the first group, with a standard deviation of 1.6, and 5.71 for the second group, with a standard deviation of 1.81. This suggests that both groups (especially those under 30) are inclined to accept differences.

Item		Under 30		Over 30	
		Average	SD	Average	SD
16.	People from different cultures may not understand each other because of their different ways of expressing themselves.	5,8	0,42	5,71	0,75
17.	Different behaviours make me see things in a new way.	4,8	1,6	4,57	1,81
18.	Understanding different cultures helps me recognise the value of different things.	4,9	1,5	4,42	1,81
19.	The more I know about various cultures, the better I recognise the differences between them.	5,7	0,64	5,57	0,78
	Acceptance AVERAGE	**5,30**	**1,04**	**5,07**	**1,29**

Figure 7.3 ***Stages of DMIS, Acceptance***

Figure 7.4 shows the results for the Adaptation category. The over-30s group shows a slightly higher average (4.57) than the under-30s (4.40). In particular, item no. 23 obtained a higher average (5.71) from the over-30s group than from the under-30s (5.4), with a standard deviation of 0.75 for the latter group and 1.07 for the former. Conversely, the item with the lowest average score is no. 21, with 3 for the over-30s group and a standard deviation of 2.3, compared to a score of 3.9 for the under-30s group and a standard deviation of 2.23. This could mean that interviewees are inclined to adapt to the new context, but remain focused on their own values.

Item		Under 30		Over 30	
		Average	SD	Average	SD
20.	I am able to behave in culturally appropriate ways, but still adhere to my own values.	3,3	2,33	4	2,51
21.	Many of the immigrants living in our country try their hardest to adjust to our lifestyle, and that is why I want to understand their way of living.	3,9	2,23	3	2,3
22.	It is only a good thing that people are different.	5	2,11	5,57	1,13
23.	I have adapted to living in Italy, but I continue to follow my values.	5,4	1,07	5,71	0,75
	Adaptation AVERAGE	**4,40**	**1,94**	**4,57**	**1,67**

Figure 7.4 ***Stages of DMIS, Adaptation***

Figure 7.5 shows the results for the Integration category. The over-30s group has a higher average (5.14) than the under-30s (4.57). In particular, item no. 26 obtained a higher average (5.85) from the over-30s group than from the under-30s (5.2), with a standard deviation of 0.37 for the latter group and 1.75 for the former. Conversely, the item with the lowest average score is item 24, with a score of 4 from the under-30 group and a standard deviation of 2.31, compared to a score of 5 from the over-30 group and a standard deviation of 1.82. The high scores indicate that interviewees seem to be inclined towards integration with other cultures. In view of these

data, it is clear that the category of integration is the one most prone to interviewees compared to the previous ones analysed.

Item		Under 30		Over 30	
		Average	SD	Average	SD
24.	I feel part of more than one culture.	4	2,31	5	1,82
25.	I am able to put myself in the position of a person from another culture.	4,5	2,07	4,57	1,71
26.	I would like to be a cultural mediator to help people who migrate here.	5,2	1,75	5,85	0,37
	Integration AVERAGE	**4,57**	**2,04**	**5,14**	**1,30**

Figure 7.5 ***Stages of DMIS, Integration***

4.2.2 Social networks and L2 learning

This section focuses on the results of the second part of the questionnaire, which includes 58 items on the use of social media in relation to linguistic and cultural adaptation in a new context, specifically Italy (see Section 3.3.3).

Figure 8 shows the results on knowledge of one's own Italian language skills. The table shows that listening competence is highest among the under-30s (3.3) with a standard deviation of 0.95, compared to the over-30s (2.87) with a standard deviation of 1.24. The lowest score is for reading competence. In particular, in the over-30s group (2) with a standard deviation of 1, compared to the under-30s group (2.5) with a standard deviation of 1.

Item		Under 30		Over 30	
		Average	SD	Average	SD
1.	Listening	3,3	0,95	2,87	1,24
2.	Speaking	2,3	1,06	2	1,15
3.	Reading	2,5	1,08	2	1
4.	Writing	2,5	1,18	2,28	1,11
	Language skills	**2,65**	**1,07**	**2,29**	**1,13**

Figure 8 ***Language competences***

Figure 8.1 shows the results relating to membership of the social network sites (SNS) most used by interviewees. It can be seen that the highest average is achieved by the under-30 group in item no. 9 (WhatsApp), with an average of 6 and a standard deviation of 0, while the over-30 group achieved a slightly lower average of 5.13 with a standard deviation of 1.81. The lowest average score was found in item no. 8 (Twitter) in the over-30s group, with a score of 1.63 and

a standard deviation of 1.77, while for the under-30s group, the average was 2.8 with a standard deviation of 1.90.

Item		Under 30		Over 30	
		Average	SD	Average	SD
5.	Facebook	5,3	1,34	5,88	0,35
6.	Instagram	5,3	0,95	3,25	2,49
7	Snapchat	3,5	1,90	2,00	1,93
8.	Twitter	2,8	2,39	1,63	1,77
9.	Tik Tok	4,1	2,47	3,38	2,56
10	Whatsapp	6	0,00	5,13	1,81
11.	You Tube	5,6	0,97	5,25	1,75

Figure 8 .1 ***Social networks used***

Figure 8.2 shows the scores for situations in which social networking sites (SNS) are used. It can be seen that the highest average is in the under-30 group (4.03) compared to the over-30 group (3.13). This suggests that the under-30 group uses SNS more often. In particular, the first group has a high average in SNS use (4.90) (standard deviation of 1.73) compared to the second (4.13) (standard deviation of 2.10). The lowest average score is for the second group (2.13) (standard deviation of 1.81), compared to the first (2.44) (standard deviation of 1.94).

Item		Under 30		Over 30	
		Average	SD	Average	SD
12.	Before school	4,13	2,36	2,50	2,27
13.	After school	4,89	2,20	4,88	1,81
14.	During school	2,44	1,94	2,13	1,81
15.	At the table when I eat	3,56	2,24	2,50	1,85
16.	In the presence of friends	4,20	2,10	2,88	1,89
17.	Together with friends	4,10	2,23	2,88	1,89
18.	Before going to sleep	4,90	1,73	4,13	2,10
	Total	4,03	2,12	3,13	1,94

Figure 8 .2 ***Situations in which SNS are used***

Figure 8.3 shows the scores relating to staying awake to spend more time on SNS. In fact, the data show that those under 30 (3.30) (with a standard deviation of 2.00) slightly exceed the over-30 group (3.25) (with a standard deviation of 2.25). This suggests that in both groups, just

over half of the interviewees stay awake to use SNS. However, the standard deviation data suggest that there are discrepancies in the responses among participants.

	Item	Under 30		Over 30	
		Average	SD	Average	SD
19.	Do you ever stay up late to spend more time on social networking sites?	3,30	2,00	3,25	2,25

Figure 8 .3 ***Situations in which SNS are used***

Figure 9 shows the data relating to the social interaction category. The over-30s group shows a slightly higher mean (4.48) than the under-30s (4.40). In particular, items 20 and 23 obtained a similar and higher mean (5.38) from the over-30s group than from the under-30s (item 20 M: 5.3; Item no. 23 M: 4.4). As regards the standard deviation, for item 20 it is 0.92 for the over-30s group and 1.06 for the under-30s group; for item 23, the standard deviation is 1.19 for the over-30s group and 1.58 for the under-30s group. Conversely, the item with the lowest mean score is no. 24, 2.88 for the over-30s group (sd of 2.23) and 3.4 for the under-30s group (sd of 2.17)**.**

	Item	Under 30		Over 30	
		Average	SD	Average	SD
20.	I communicate with my friends from my country.	5,3	1,06	5,38	0,92
21.	I communicate with my friends from my country in Italy.	4,8	1,23	4,88	1,64
22.	I communicate with my Italian friends.	4,1	1,91	3,88	2,23
23.	I'm looking for and meeting new Italian people.	4,4	1,58	5,38	1,19
24.	I'm constantly connected with anyone, anytime.	3,4	2,17	2,88	2,23
	Total	**4,40**	**1,59**	**4,48**	**1,64**

Figure 9 ***Social Interaction***

Figure 9.1 shows the results for the Information category. The over-30s group shows a higher average (4.73; SD: 1.69) than the under-30s (4.43; SD: 1.68). In particular, item no. 27 obtained a higher average (5.85) from the over-30s group than from the under-30s group (5.2), with a standard deviation of 1.49 for the over-30s group and 1.40 for the under-30s group. Conversely, the item with the lowest average score was item 28, with a score of 3.7 for the under-30s group and a standard deviation of 2.89, compared to a score of 4.25 for the over-30s group and a standard deviation of 2.12. The high scores indicate that interviewees in both groups seem to keep up to date with both Italian news and news from their country of origin.

Item		Under 30		Over 30	
		Average	SD	Average	SD
25.	I keep up to date with news from my country of origin.	5	1,63	4,75	1,49
26.	I keep up to date with news in Italy.	4	1,70	4,38	1,77
27.	I follow music from my country of origin.	5,2	1,40	5,25	1,49
28.	I follow Italian music.	3,7	1,89	4,25	2,12
29.	I follow fashion from my country of origin.	4,8	1,55	4,75	1,83
30.	I follow Italian fashion.	3,9	1,91	5,00	1,41
	Total	**4,43**	**1,68**	**4,73**	**1,69**

Figure 9.1 ***Information***

Figure 9.2 shows the results for the production category. Between the two groups, the higher total average is in the over-30 group with 3.78 and a standard deviation of 1.90, compared to the under-30 group with an average of 3.72 and a standard deviation of 1.86. Item no. 33 obtained a higher average (5.00) from the over-30s group than from the under-30s group (4.6), with a standard deviation of 1.41 for the over-30s group and 1.84 for the under-30s group. Conversely, the item with the lowest average score was item 34, with an average score of 2.50 for the over-30s group and a standard deviation of 1.96, compared to a score of 3 for the under-30s group and a standard deviation of 1.63.

Item		Under 30		Over 30	
		Average	SD	Average	SD
31.	I regularly post on my profile.	4,5	1,78	4,75	1,75
32.	I post interesting news and updates on my page.	3,2	2,15	3,50	2,67
33.	I regularly upload photos and short videos to my page.	4,6	1,84	5,00	1,41
34.	I actively participate in discussions on other people's posts.	3,3	1,89	2,50	1,69
35	I do live videos to communicate in real time with my friends.	3	1,63	3,13	1,96
	Total	**3,72**	**1,86**	**3,78**	**1,90**

Figure 9.2 ***Production***

Figure 9.3 shows the results for the category Social media and participation in local Italian culture. The over-30s group shows a higher average (3.93) than the under-30s (3.80). In particular, item no. 41 obtained a higher average (5.88) from the over-30s group than from the under-30s (5.1). The standard deviation of the over-30s group is 0.35, while that of the under-

30s is 1.73. This suggests that the interviewees, especially those over 30, seek to learn about Italian places. Conversely, item no. 38 obtained a lower average for the over-30s group (2.38) with a standard deviation of 2.26, and for the under-30s group (2.9) with a standard deviation of 2.28.

	Item	Under 30		Over 30	
		Average	SD	Average	SD
36.	Have you participated in Italian cultural events online via social networks?				
	I participated in Italian cultural events (e.g. Venice Carnival)	3,4	2,55	3,63	2,56
37.	I tried cooking Italian dishes by following video recipes	3,2	1,81	4,38	1,69
38.	I discovered Italian traditions	2,9	2,28	2,38	2,26
39.	I took online lessons on Italian culture	3,5	1,90	3,38	2,13
40.	I communicated in Italian groups	3,5	2,32	2,75	2,43
41.	I tried to learn about famous Italian places	5,1	1,73	5,88	0,35
42.	I shared my Italian experiences with friends in my country	5	1,70	5,13	1,81
	Total	**3,80**	**2,04**	**3,93**	**1,89**

Figure 9.3 ***Social media and participation in local Italian culture***

Figure 9.4 shows the results for the Individual Language Learning category. The under-30 group has a higher average (5.38) than the over-30 group (5.15). Item no. 44 obtained a higher average (6) from the over-30 group than from the under-30 group (5.5). The standard deviation of the over-30s group is 0, while that of the under-30s is 0.85. This suggests that interviewees, especially the over-30s group, are more inclined to listen to the Italian language. Conversely, item no. 47 obtained a lower average for the over-30s group with a score of 3.75 and a standard deviation of 1.90, and for the under-30s group with a score of 5.1 and a standard deviation of 1.20. This suggests that the over-30s group is less inclined to assess their level of knowledge of the Italian language.

Item		Under 30		Over 30	
		Average	SD	Average	SD
43.	I follow videos by Italian teachers on social networks to improve my language skills.	5,6	0,70	5,75	0,70
44.	I watch videos in Italian to listen to the spoken language.	5,5	0,85	6	0
45.	I pay attention to Italian grammar while watching videos.	5,4	0,70	5,25	1,75
46.	I pay attention to Italian accents while watching videos.	5,3	1,06	5	1,91
47.	I use Italian tests to assess my level of knowledge.	5,1	1,20	3,75	1,90
	Total	**5,38**	**0,90**	**5,15**	**2,26**

Figure 9.4 ***Individual Language Learning***

Figure 9.6 shows the results for the Social Language Learning category. The over-30s group shows a slightly higher average (4.52) than the under-30s (4.40). In particular, items no. 51 and no. 52 obtained a similar and higher average (5.13) from the over-30s group than from the under-30s group (item no. 51: 5.10; item no. 52: 4.33). As for the standard deviation, for item 51 it is 1.36 for the over-30s group and 1.52 for the under-30s group; for item no.52, the standard deviation is 1.81 for the over-30s group and 3.54 for the under-30s group. Conversely, the item with the lowest average score is no. 48, 3.50 for the under-30 group (sd of 1.90) and 4.50 for the over-30 group (sd of 1.69).

Item		Under 30		Over 30	
		Media	SD	Media	SD
48.	I participate in groups to learn Italian on social networks.	3,50	1,90	4,50	1,69
49.	I publish posts in Italian in social network groups.	3,89	2,12	3,75	1,91
50.	I use chats on social networks to improve my Italian.	4,90	1,73	4,50	2,27
51.	I accept proposals from social networks to learn Italian.	5,10	1,52	5,13	1,36
52.	I ask Italian students to be my friends on social networks.	4,33	3,54	5,13	1,81
53.	I accept friend requests from Italian students on social networks.	4,70	2,00	4,13	2,03
	Totale	**4,40**	**2,14**	**4,52**	**1,84**

Figure 9.6 ***Social Language Learning***

Figure 9.6 shows the results for the Use of translation tools category. The under-30s group has a higher average (8.30) than the over-30s (7.38). Item no. 54 obtained a higher average (4.44) from the under-30 group (SD: 1.41) than from the over-30 group (4) (SD: 1.73). Conversely, item no. 55 obtained a lower average for the under-30 group with a score of 4.30 (SD: 2.31)

and for the over-30 group with a score of 4.43 (SD: 1.81). This suggests that the under-30s group is more inclined to use translation tools than the over-30s group.

Item		Under 30		Over 30	
		Media	DS	Media	DS
54.	I use automatic translation to read posts in Italian.	4,44	1,41	4,00	1,73
55.	I use translation tools before publishing posts in Italian.	4,30	2,31	4,43	1,81
	Totale	**8,30**	**3,89**	**7,38**	**3,50**

Figure 9.7 ***Use of translation tools***

4.3 Discussion and Conclusion

The first research question aims to explore whether there are differences between young and adult migrants residing in the Venice area in terms of their socio-cultural adaptation processes, measured using the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire. The results show an interesting perspective on the adaptation processes in the young and adult migrant groups.

Overall, as shown in Figure 10, both groups registered high scores in the ethno-relative categories (Acceptance, Adaptation and Integration), (under 30: M= 4.57 SD= 2.04; over 30: M= 5.14 SD= 1.3) compared to ethnocentric ones (Denial, Defence, Minimisation), (under 30: M= 4.76 SD= 1.67; over 30: M= 4.93 SD= 1.42). In particular, the under-30 group showed higher scores in the Acceptance category than the over-30 group (under 30: M= 5.3 SD= 1.04; over 30: M= 5.07 SD= 1.29). This suggests that young people are able to recognise and treat cultural differences, including their own, as equal. Almost the majority of the under-30 group agrees that people may not understand each other because of cultural differences (item no. 16, under-30s: M= 5.8). Not only that, but almost the majority of the under-30 group is aware that the more they learn about different cultures, the more they recognise the existence of differences between them (item no. 19, under-30s: M= 5.7).

On the contrary, the over-30s group registered high scores in the Integration category (under 30s: M= 4.57 SD= 2.04; over 30s: M= 5.14 SD= 1.3). These data suggest that adults show a greater ability to live without particular effort within different cultural systems, integrating their perspectives, values and modes of behaviour. This is demonstrated by the fact that almost the majority of the over-30s group would be inclined to help other people by being the mediator between them and the new Italian culture (item no. 26, over 30s: M= 5.85). In addition, many

adult interviewees would also be able to put themselves in the position of other people belonging to other cultures, thus showing that they are able to put themselves in the position of other people from another culture (item no. 25, over 30: M= 4.57).

However, both groups, predominantly that of the under-30s, scored lowest in the Defence category (under-30s: M= 2.31 SD= 1.61; over-30s: M= 2.14 SD= 1.88). This suggests that both groups are far from defending their own culture against others. Furthermore, the data show that only a few of the interviewees admitted to dividing people belonging to cultures different from their own (item no. 6, under 30: M= 2.7; over 30: M= 2.43) or hating them (item no. 7, under 30: M= 1.4; over 30: M= 1.71).

DMIS Categories	Under 30		Over 30		
	Average	SD	Average	SD	**Average difference (Over30 - Under30)**
Tot. Denial average	3,18	1,98	2,65	2,12	-0,53
Tot. Defence av.	2,31	1,61	2,14	1,88	-0,17
Tot. Minimization av.	3,47	1,85	3,03	1,62	-0,44
ETHNOCENTRISM	**2,99**	**1,81**	**2,61**	**1,87**	-0,38
Tot. Acceptance av.	5,3	1,04	5,07	1,29	-0,23
Tot. Adaption av.	4,4	1,94	4,57	1,67	0,17
Tot. Integration av.	4,57	2,04	5,14	1,3	0,57
ETHNORELATIVISM	**4,76**	**1,67**	**4,93**	**1,42**	0,17

Figure 10 ***DMIS Categories***

In summary, to answer the question, the data suggest that both groups, especially those over 30, show an approach that is more oriented towards ethnorelativity. Young people seem to have greater exposure to cultural differences, but at the same time, they seem to have more difficulty in managing cultural diversity. In fact, young people seem to recognise the differences that distinguish them from others, but at the same time they judge them. Adults, on the other hand, seem to be closer to a state of integration into Italian culture, recognising the possibility of belonging to more than one culture at the same time. Consequently, it can be deduced that young people are in an exploratory phase that also involves conflict, while adults are in a more stable and structured phase on a process towards cultural integration.

The second question seeks to understand whether there are differences between young people and adults in the use of social media for socialising, information, production, acculturation and learning the Italian language.

Regarding the use of SNS for social interaction, over 30 people seem to use SNS more than under 30 people (under 30: M= 4.40 SD= 1.59; over 30: M= 4.48 SD= 1.64). Although both groups score highly in terms of social interaction, those over 30 seem to be more connected with their relatives living in their country of origin (item no. 20, under 30: M= 5.3; over 30: M= 5.38), but also with those living in Italy (item no. 21, under 30: M= 4.8; over 30: M= 4.88). Despite this, those over 30 also score higher in seeking out and getting to know new Italian people through SNS (item no. 23, under 30: M= 4.4; over 30: M= 5.38). On the contrary, the under-30s group, in addition to maintaining ties with their compatriots, -as they have almost similar scores in the previous items- communicate more with Italian friends (item 22, under 30: M= 4.1; over 30: M= 3.88), and are always connected to SNS (item no. 24, under 30: M= 3.4; over 30: M= 2.88). However, it is those over 30 who stay up late to spend time on SNS (item no. 19, under 30: M= 3.30; over 30: M= 3.25). Consequently, it can be seen that young people tend to strengthen the social networks of their own ethnic group, both in their country of origin and in Italy, while adults tend to create intercultural links that go beyond their own cultural group.

As regards the use of SNS for information purposes, those over 30 seem to use SNS more than those under 30 (under 30: M= 4.43 SD= 1.68; over 30: M= 4.73 SD= 1.69). This can be seen from the fact that those over 30 seem more likely to be updated on Italian fashion (under 30: M= 3.9; over 30: M= 5), Italian news (under 30: M= 4; over 30: M= 4.38), and Italian music (under 30: M= 3.7; over 30: M= 4.25). Conversely, it would appear that those under 30 are more interested in using SNS to keep up to date with news from their own country (under 30: M= 5; over 30: M= 4.75) and fashion in their own country (under 30: M= 4.8; over 30: M= 4.75). Consequently, it appears that young people maintain an identity link with their country of origin through the use of SNS, while adults seem to balance both links with a more functional and integrative use of SNS.

As regards content production through the use of SNS, the over-30s seem to use SNS more than the under-30s, despite the average scores being almost identical (under-30s: M= 3.72 SD= 1.86; over-30s: M= 3.78 SD= 1.90). Adults seem to publish content (posts, images, videos, news and live videos) much more often than young people. Young people, on the other hand, show more

interest in actively participating in discussions by interacting with other people (item no. 34, under 30: M= 3.3; over 30: M= 2.50).

With regard to participation in local Italian culture through the use of SNS, higher scores are recorded in the over-30 group, although there is little difference between the two (under 30: M= 3.80 SD= 2.04; over 30: M= 3.93 SD= 1.89). Adults seem to be more involved in participating in cultural events (item no. 36, under 30: M= 3.4; over 30: M= 3.63) and discovering famous Italian places (item no. 41, under 30: M= 5.1; over 30: M= 5.88). Despite this, both groups record average scores in rediscovering Italian traditions and cuisine through SNS (item no. 38, under 30: M= 2.9; over 30: M= 2.38), (item no. 39, under 30: M= 3.5; over 30: M= 3.38). At the same time, both groups show interest in communicating their experiences in Italy with people living in their country of origin (item no. 42, under 30: M= 5; over 30: M= 5.13) or communicating in Italian groups (item no. 40, under 30: M= 3.5; over 30: M= 2.75). This data is very interesting because it shows how much the two groups try to maintain constant links with their own country, as found in the literature, while ignoring the discovery of the traditions of their new country (item no. 39, under 30: M= 3.5; over 30: M= 3.38). SNS are probably not seen as a useful tool for learning about Italian traditions. Consequently, it is clear that young people are more inclined to communicate through chats and groups, experiencing SNS as a social space and a place of belonging, rather than as a practical tool for cultural appropriation (searching for Italian dishes, places and events and sharing them) as adults do.

With regard to learning the Italian language, more specifically individual language learning, the under 30s registered higher scores (under 30: M= 5.38 SD= 0.90; over 30: M= 5.15 SD= 2.26). However, those over 30 show greater interest in using SNS in relation to learning Italian by watching videos of Italian teachers and paying attention to listening to the spoken language. Nevertheless, young people seem to pay much more attention to grammar, accent and the assessment of their level of language knowledge (item no. 47, under 30: M= 5.1; over 30: M= 3.75). In this sense, it is clear that both groups use social media intensively to learn Italian. Young people seem to be more oriented towards an active and metalinguistic approach, as they score highly on grammar and accent, but also on self-assessment tests. Adults, on the other hand, seem to prefer an immersive approach (listening, learning by exposure) that is more oriented towards the practical use of the language.

Finally, with regard to the use of translation tools, adults use automatic translation tools before publishing posts in Italian (item no. 55, under 30: M= 4.30 SD =2.31; over 30: M= 4.43 SD =1.81). This could refer to the fact that adults may be less independent than young people, or to the fact that they would like to be more precise in interpreting the post (item no. 54, under 30: M= 4.44 SD =1.41; over 30: M= 4.00 SD =1.73). Both groups use automatic translation tools consistently. Young people seem to use automatic translation tools a lot, especially when reading. This is probably to understand the content of a post more quickly. Adults also use these tools a lot, but in different ways and especially when writing. This is probably to achieve greater linguistic accuracy when writing.

In summary, to answer the question, the data suggests that there are differences in the use of SNS by the two groups. Young people prefer to use a more individual approach focused on content consumption, autonomous and digital learning (use of digital tools such as automatic translation). Adults, on the other hand, prefer to use a more systematic approach focused on socialisation (participation in groups to learn Italian, more inclined to accept and send friend requests).

The last question seeks to understand the differences between young people (under 30) and adults (over 30) in their use of social networking sites (SNS) and cultural adaptation.

As can be seen in Figure 11, the averages for digital skills show small differences, which are therefore not very significant (< 0.2) from an interpretative point of view, between the two groups examined (under 30 and over 30). Overall, therefore, the data show that the use of SNS by young people and adults is very similar, both in terms of competence and in terms of how they are used. The only differences considered significant concern the category of "Information", which is slightly higher in the over-30s (+0.30), and the category of "Individual linguistic activity" in the linguistic dimension, which is higher in the under-30s (-0.23). This shows that young people use social media more as tools for information, exploration and self-expression. In contrast, adults' use of social media remains slightly more functional and less oriented towards experimentation.

The significant difference emerges when compared with the DMIS stages. In particular, the integration stage represents the most advanced level of intercultural sensitivity and competence. The over-30s show a greater capacity for integration than the under-30s (+0.57). This indicates that adults are able to live more naturally within different cultural systems by integrating their perspectives, values and modes of behaviour.

Consequently, the data show that the difference between the two groups does not lie in the use of SNS, but in the effect it has on cultural integration. Young people use SNS to better exploit their informational and individual potential. However, this digital competence does not automatically translate into a higher level of cultural integration. On the contrary, adults seem to benefit more from the use of SNS in relation to acculturation and cultural integration.

	Survey	Under 30	Over 30	Differences	Interpretation
		Mean	Mean		
Digital Competences	Total Social Interaction	4,4	4,48	0,08	Not relevant
	Total Information	4,43	4,73	0,3	Relevant difference (Under 30 highest)
	Total Production	3,72	3,78	0,06	Not relevant
	Total SNS and participation in local Italian culture	3,80	3,93	0,13	Not relevant
Linguistic	Total Individual Language Learning	5,38	5,15	-0,23	Relevant difference (Under 30 highest)
	Total Social Language Learning	4,4	4,52	0,12	Not relevant
	Total translation tools	4,37	4,21	-0,16	Not relevant
Total		4,36	4,40	0,04	Not relevant
Dmis category	Integration	4,57	5,14	0,57	Relevant difference: Over 30s show greater cultural integration

Figure 11 ***Total comparison of averages***

The initial hypothesis assumed that migrants who choose to attend Italian courses for foreigners already had a propensity for linguistic and cultural adaptation and, consequently, positioned themselves in the ethno-relative stages of Bennett's model (Acceptance, Adaptation, Integration) rather than in the ethnocentric stages (Denial, Defence, Minimisation). The data collected through the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire partially confirms this hypothesis. Although both young people and adults score high in the ethno-relative stages, confirming that the choice to voluntarily participate in a linguistic and cultural training course is already an indication of openness towards the host culture. However, there are some

significant differences between the two groups: young migrants also scored significantly in the ethnocentric stages, indicating a greater tendency to reduce or deny cultural differences; while adults scored significantly in the integration stage, highlighting a more mature ability to integrate intercultural experiences into their own identity. Therefore, both groups are placed in an ethno-relative area of the model, but the processes of adaptation are more advanced in adults.

With regard to the use of social media, the initial hypothesis suggested that young migrants were more inclined to use social media as tools for linguistic and cultural acculturation through participation in social activities, events and interactions with natives, while adults would favour use linked to maintaining ties with their country of origin, showing less openness to changes in the host context. The data collected show a different picture. The differences between young people and adults in their use of social media are, on the whole, insignificant. In fact, the only discrepancies concern young people who use social media extensively to obtain information and to implement individual language learning. However, this greater digital literacy does not translate into a higher level of cultural integration. On the contrary, adults scored higher in the integration category of Bennett's questionnaire. This indicates that, despite using social media in a similar way, adults benefit more in terms of socio-cultural adaptation.

4.4 Limitations and future implications

The results obtained show interesting educational implications in the field of language learning. Data analysis has shown that young people are more likely to prefer individual and digital learning, while adults are more oriented towards social and interactive practices, especially through online groups and structured educational content. These data therefore, suggest that social media could also be used as support tools in teaching Italian as a second language. Teachers should be able to create technological, experimental and innovative activities that attract the attention of young people, and guided interaction spaces for adults. Furthermore, the data also show that the use of social networks is linked to processes of acculturation and cultural integration. This would confirm that language learning is also linked to the construction of social bonds and participation in the life of the host community.

However, the research revealed some limitations. First of all, it is a study based on a limited sample in terms of both the number of participants and gender. In fact, as has also been found in the literature, even in the classes of the two schools examined, the presence of women is very low. Furthermore, the sample examined is not large enough to generalise the results. In addition, during the compilation of the questionnaire, a difference emerged among the participants,

especially among adults, which required an explanation of the purpose of the questionnaire several times. Consequently, this attitude may have also led to unreliable responses from participants. This aspect is particularly relevant because the migration status may lead participants to fear forms of control, judgement or legal consequences.

Consequently, in consideration of these data, several future research prospects emerge. It would be beneficial to expand the research sample in terms of both gender and number, extending it beyond the Venice area. In addition, it would be appropriate to conduct longitudinal surveys – using quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative (interviews, focus groups, ethnographic observations) tools – to observe the evolution of the interviewees' adaptation strategies and to reduce the risk of responses being influenced by fear or diffidence.

In conclusion, despite the limitations mentioned, the research highlights the importance of using SNS in relation to migrants' language learning and adaptation processes, confirming the idea that these tools are not only used for entertainment, but can also be used as tools for learning, socialising and feeling part of one's own culture.

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