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# The acquisition of L2 Italian by an illiterate Moroccan young adult

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## ***Introduction***

The topic of this thesis is the acquisition of Italian as a second language by an illiterate Moroccan adult, Rachid.

Learning occurred in an educational context, precisely within a Centro Territoriale per l'educazione Permanente (CTP). It is for this reason that we decided to dedicate the first chapter of this work to *language teaching theories* which concern second language acquisition (SLA, White 1989, 2003) and tried to analyse the profile of an adult learner in general: the adult learner presents some characteristics which make him different from children and teenagers (e.g. needs, motivation, personal experiences, cognitive styles, etc.).

In the second chapter *linguistic theories* on second language acquisition are exposed: the Universal Grammar applied to SLA and the Processability Theory. The Universal Grammar (UG) has been proposed by Chomsky (1957 and future work) to provide hypothesis on first language acquisition ; this theory has been a matter of study also for second language acquisition (SLA). We have dealt with the three hypothesis on the accessibility of Universal Grammar in SLA: 1) it is not accessible (Schachter 1988, Clahsen and Muysken 1986), 2) it is accessible as UG (Flynn, 1987) or 3) it is accessible through the first language (White 1989, 2003).

The Processability Theory instead has been proposed by Manfred Pienemann (1984 and future work) and it regards the identification of common learning sequences followed by learners with different mother tongues: this theory is based on the research conducted by Pienemann himself and other experts on German L2 Spanish and Italian adult workers (Pienemann 1984, Clahsen 1996 and Meisel 1992). From this research it has emerged that learners follow a common developmental sequence; however, the path is also characterised by a certain degree of individual variability: for example, learners might have different motivations or different mother tongues and this could reflect on the acquisition time.

The third chapter consists in the analysis of our case study; we monitored Rachid's path from the very beginning: in the first period we concentrated on the development of the phonological and lexical competence. In a second

phase, we taught him the basic grammar rules (e.g. articles, verbs, agreement between the linguistic elements).

Only after an entire school year he has been able to produce brief spontaneous texts which we analysed according to the theory proposed by Pienemann and then revised by Di Biase (Di Biase 2007) in relation to Italian as an L2.

Our aim was to verify his level of competence and if he respected the phases proposed by the Processability theory.

## Chapt. 1: *On second language acquisition*

### *1.1 Definition of “second language”.*

“Second languages are all the languages acquired beyond the mother language.” [Balboni 1994, p 13].

Actually, this claim is imprecise from a language teaching point of view because it does not distinguish between *foreign language*, *second language* and *ethnic language*<sup>1</sup>.

It is more correct to talk about *second language* to refer to a language taught to non- native speakers in a context in which that language is used as a medium of daily communication (e.g. Italian for immigrants in Italy).

The difference between a foreign language (FL) and a second language (SL) is substantial (Balboni 2002, chapt. 4, Caon 2005, chapt. 2, Luise 2006, chapt. 2).

The foreign language:

- is taught in a situation which is strictly educational,
- the linguistic input is gradually selected by the teacher during the few school lessons through didactic materials,
- is not used in daily life.

The second language instead:

- is acquired after the mother language,
- is acquired in an educational but especially non- educational environment because it is the language present in the social context,
- is learnt in the hosting Country where it is used for every day communication,
- is the language immigrants have to learn if they want to integrate in the foreign country.

In the case of second language acquisition in an educational context, the input is controlled by the teacher.

He or she simplifies the lexicon using common words, avoiding metaphors or idiomatic expressions, tries to pronounce the words clearly and slowly.

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<sup>1</sup> The *ethnic language* is a language proper of an immigrant’s original community; it is present in the immigrant’s environment but it is not his mother tongue: for example, immigrants’ sons born in Italy have acquired Italian but they can hear the original language from their parents, from other countrymen or from particular radios or TVs. (Balboni 1994, 2002).

Furthermore he or she employs sentence constructions that are simple and short but never produces ungrammatical expressions.

This variety of language is called *teacher's talk* (Balboni 2002 p. 80, Pallotti 1998 chapt.6, Maddii 2004 chapt.5).

The *foreigner's talk* (Balboni 2002 p. 79, Pallotti 1998 chapt.3, Maddii 2004 chapt.5) instead is the variety of language practised out of the educational context, where the foreigner is exposed to various and uncontrolled linguistic inputs. Very often these inputs are not of high level: for instance, this is the case of foreigners who take care of elderly or ill people.

In these situations a particular linguistic competence is not required and, anyway, it is not sufficiently stimulated: in fact, the assisted people and their relatives talk to the foreigner with a low linguistic register in order to facilitate information exchanges; they do not use courtesy forms (e.g. “Lei” as the allocution of respect) in order not to complicate the verbal communication.

Generally, the native speakers turn to immigrants, simplifying their language, omitting some functional elements (e.g. the article) or using the infinitival verbal form instead of inflected forms.

Italian as a second language has reached a remarkable importance only after the eighties and during the nineties. The first essays on language teaching have been published and the first language textbooks for adults have started to spread.

The wide migrations from Eastern Europe, Northern Africa and Asia has “forced” a re-organization of the school system in terms of methods and approaches not only with regard to teaching to children and teenagers but especially to adults who come to Italy with their sociolinguistic background and are introduced in a completely new society (Maddii 2010, chapt. 1).

Their first aim is to learn the basic language (BICS, *Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills*)<sup>2</sup>, the language used in every day life in the new Country, which is needed to survive.

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<sup>2</sup> The acronyms BICS and CALP (*Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency*) were introduced by professor Jim Cummins at the end of the Seventies; the first term refers to the basic competence used for the simple daily communications (pronunciation, basic lexicon, grammar), whereas the second indicates the school competence, i. e., the use and command of the language in more complex tasks (e.g. comprehension, production and summary of a text). (Luise, 2006, Balboni 2002).

It is also necessary for them to understand how the society is organized from the social, political and cultural point of view in order to become well integrated.

In the following sections, we will describe the peculiar characteristics of the adult learner and the positive and negative factors involved in the learning process.

## ***1.2 The adult learner.***

### *1.2.1 The andragogic model by Knowles.*

Malcom Knowles<sup>3</sup> (in Begotti, 2010 chapt. 2) was an American psychologist who dealt with the mechanisms of learning in adults.

The andragogic model proposed by him catches the narrow link between the experiences during life, age and learning [quot. Begotti, 2010, p.11].

This model is compatible with the pedagogic one, also proposed by Knowles; in the teacher-student relationship a child student commits an act of faith towards his/her teacher while an adult student considers himself/herself at the same level as the teacher.

Usually the adult learners are more independent because, thanks to their former experiences, they have already developed their own learning method. However, there are cases in which the teacher can apply a transmissive method as with children, i.e., she can guide the learner in case in which he has no previous experience or has little knowledge about a certain thematic [quot. Begotti, 2010, p.12].

The two principal factors which differentiate the andragogic model and the pedagogic model are the adult motivations and his autonomy. According to the author, there are more individual differences among adults than among children or teenagers.

Each adult is different from the others for their earlier personal story and their well-formed cognitive style.

Furthermore, while children and teenagers are obliged by law to attend school, adults enrol spontaneously and each of them acts following different motivations (work, personal pleasure, necessity).

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<sup>3</sup> Everything that will be said concerning Knowles, Rogers, Maslow and Krashen is not taken by their works but from the quoted bibliography.



### *1.2.2 Carl Rogers and his humanistic- affective theory.*

Knowles' andragogic model was inspired by the American psychologist Carl Rogers.

According to Rogers (in Begotti, 2010, in Caon 2005 and Balboni 2002), an adult is willing to learn when by learning he or she can satisfy his or her interests and needs [Begotti, 2010, p. 16]: he or she needs to apply what he or she learns and his or her personal experience in every day life, not just for a short period of time but for the entire life. Rogers' thought evolved in the humanistic- affective theory, which claims that the process of learning reaches its purpose when it is the individual who decides to take the risk and his choices are respected. We talk about significant learning if it is driven by the individual will and it is not imposed.

In his theory Rogers thinks that learning is significant if there are the following conditions (revision of Begotti 2010 p. 16, Caon 2005, p. 16):

- 1) each person lives his own experiences, so the teacher should not teach directly to someone, but just make his learning easier (Rogers, 1973, in Begotti 2010 and Caon 2005).
- 2) The student learns in a more complete way if the emotional and affective sphere is involved.
- 3) To be significant, learning has to be self- motivated, in the sense that it has to influence the person behaviour.
- 4) The student figures out personally his or her doing and thinks that his or her expectations are satisfied.
- 5) Learning has to fall within the student's experiences and interests.

As can be deducted from the first hypothesis, the teacher should behave like a facilitator in the learning process: the student should be rendered autonomous as much as possible but, obviously, he needs a guide to refer on.

The teacher has also to promote a favourable atmosphere, based on cooperation and respect between the participants of the didactic act.

### 1.2.3 The humanistic affective theory applied to language teaching

According to the humanistic- affective approach, supported by the principles of the humanistic theory by the American psychologist Abraham Maslow<sup>4</sup> Rogers and Knowles, the individual has to be set in the centre of the teaching act.

Yet, the attention has not to be limited on the cognitive aspects and on the individual intelligence; it has to be focused also on his feelings, aptitudes, personality and motivations (Begotti 2010, Balboni 2002, 2006, Daloiso 2009, Caon 2005).

In concrete terms, it means for example to remove every source of anxiety (teaching activities in stress conditions do not lead to acquisition but just learning)<sup>5</sup>, not to create competition, to carry out personalized programmes, to enhance individual qualities, to involve all the students in the group works, to support constantly the motivation for studying and to propose tasks which students can afford (Balboni 2002).

The humanistic- affective theory is particularly important when we refer to L2 foreign students. First of all, we should consider that the integration of the foreign student sometimes occurs in language and cultural homogeneous groups (classes composed by native speakers) but often it occurs in non homogeneous contexts (classes with students of different nationalities); the student's personality value has to be improved, he or she has to be favourably received in the group with his background of previous experiences and culture.

Particularly, he or she needs to be guided by qualified people who help them to integrate in a world different from theirs.

For those foreign students who have already attended courses in their Countries, it is necessary to propose teaching alternatives because they can

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<sup>4</sup> See section 3.1.

<sup>5</sup> Krashen distinguishes between *acquisition* and *learning*: the first process is unconscious, spontaneous and what is learnt remains in the long term memory; on the contrary, learning is intentional and rational but what is learnt enters short term memory and it is not definitive.

The purpose of teaching (generally speaking, not only of language teaching) is that everything the student learns becomes acquisition, i. e., the information are fixed permanently in memory and not just for the school period (Balboni 2002, Pallotti 2010, Caon 2005).

have difficulties with the methods adopted in the hosting Country (Balboni 2002, Begotti, 2010, Pistolesi 2007).

#### *1.2.4 The role of the teacher and the relationship with the student.*

The teacher of an adult class or of an individual student should create a pleasant context in the classroom or with the single student.

It is important to create a cooperative peer relationship; the teacher does not have a traditional role, where he or she transmits his or her knowledge to the students: in this case the role is on of facilitating learning. For this reason an exchange occurs between peers and the personal student experiences become a source of enrichment for the teacher and for the other members of the group.

A cooperative relationship also means that the student gives his or her contribute in creating the educational programme: together with the teacher he or she establishes his or her aims and needs, the materials, the learning strategies.

In this way, the student becomes the centre of the didactic act, he or she is active and not submitted to the teacher's figure (Begotti 2010, Balboni 2002, Vedovelli, Massara, Giacalone Ramat 2001).

#### *1.2.5 Peculiar characteristics of the adult learner.*

According to Knowles (in Begotti 2010, p.24) the adult learner presents some distinctive elements which are different from those of children and are independent from nationality, age, sex and previous education<sup>6</sup>.

They could be summed up as follows (revision of Begotti 2010 p. 24, Balboni 2002, Daloiso 2009):

- the concept of himself: the adult personality is already formed, he needs to be involved in the decisions about the educational career and to be autonomous.

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<sup>6</sup> The concept of "adult" for Knowles presupposes the man's maturation from the biological, legal, social and psychological point of view. He considers adult a man who procreate, has reached the age to vote, fills a position in the society, is responsible and autonomous. The last condition is retained by Knowles the most important from the learning point of view.

- motivation: the adult learner is driven by the will to enrich his or her knowledge both for professional purposes and personal pleasure.
- need of knowledge: the formative process implies a remarkable commitment, so the person reflects on which will be the advantages by acquiring new knowledge before facing the course;
- willingness to learn: the adult is willing to learn for necessity but also to improve himself or herself.
- orientation towards learning: the adult learns in order to apply his or her knowledge in every day life;
- the influence of previous experience: it is almost impossible that the previous experience does not influence the new one; this could be an advantage because it allows a comparison between the two experiences.

#### *1.2.6 Factors which can influence the process of learning*

Various factors can be determinant in learning, both positively or negatively; among them we can mention the experiences lived during life (not just for what regards school, but also work or familiar history), cognitive styles, learning methods adopted, aptitudes and original culture:

- previous experience: usually the adult focuses on the learning model used and practised in the past. Every culture develops a peculiar educational system and the teacher should be aware of that in order to resolve some organizational and methodological problems that can emerge.
- cognitive style: each person elaborates the external input in his own way and as a consequence everyone is characterized by a different cognitive style; for example somebody prefers to learn by listening and repeating at high voice, others fix the information by observation and others prefer the use of techniques implying movement (ex. role playing, role taking, etc.)
- the influence of the original culture: it is evident especially when the two confronted worlds (the original Country of the immigrant and the hosting Country) are very different (e.g. Islamic Countries and Western Countries). It is difficult to create an equilibrium between different teaching methods, dissimilar interpersonal relationships, etc.

A closer examination of these aspects will be dealt with in the next section.

### ***1.3 Variables which can influence the second language acquisition by adults***

When the adult arrives in the new Country, he/she is introduced to a new environment, most of the times completely different from the original culture.

The reasons why adults migrate can be various (choice or desperation); in any case their emotional, psychological and familiar equilibrium is put in the dumps. Even if the immigrant has a good cultural and professional background, the entering in the new Country leaves him or her in a state of uncertainty.

His or her necessity of integration will contrast with the desire of keeping his or her origins and cultural identity.

The second language learning is part of this process of integration because it is the way to understand and to be understood, to know the new world and to defend the original one.

The learning process in adulthood is subjected to different kinds of variables which can be determinant both positively and negatively. The variables that are involved in the learning process can be subdivided into three groups (Begotti 2010, p.34):

- individual variables;
- social variables;
- natural variables.

We will start to explain each variable beginning with the individual kind.

#### ***1.3.1 Individual variables.***

In a learning environment, where there is a mixture of cultures, personalities, intelligences and needs, it is fundamental to remember that each person has his particular features that distinguish him from the others, especially among the adults.

This group comprehends the following variables: needs, motivation, cognitive style, multiple intelligences, emotional factors, characteristics of personality and self-esteem.

*Needs*. Maslow, in his work “*Motivation and personality*”(1970), represented graphically the needs of an individual in a five levels pyramid<sup>7</sup> (Begotti 2010, pp. 17-19, 34-35, Massara in Vedovelli, Massara, Giacalone Ramat 2001, pp. 187-200):



For the adult learner the aim of self-actualization takes place satisfying gradually the various levels. First of all, he or she will try to satisfy his physiological needs, which are linked to survival and then the safety needs (have a job, have the guarantee of survival, physical and economical safety). He will continue with the fulfilment of social needs trying to be accepted in a group. The fourth level represents the necessity of being estimated and respected by the others.

The final goal, which is self- actualization, corresponds to the realization of his expectations and self-esteem.

The adult immigrant in a foreign Country is above all worried about satisfying his physiological needs, i. e., food, dress, lodging and work. Then he or she will carry on by defending his or her economical and living conditions safety.

The first step of literacy in second language falls within the first needs in Maslow's pyramid because it allows the survival and the social and working integration.

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<sup>7</sup> Image taken from <http://talkingstory.org/2005/05/strengths-values-and-that-pyramid/>, 22-10-2011.

The study of the more advanced levels of the second language is placed among the secondary needs: the insertion in a group, being estimated by the others and self-actualization.

The adult immigrant student who faces the learning of a second language, will manage to reach step by step the various levels of the pyramid only if his or her will of integration and self-actualization in the new social context will be very strong.

When the immigrant does not succeed to adapt to the new environment and feels socially excluded, he or she will just learn the language of first communication and will concentrate on the satisfaction of his or her first survival needs.

*Motivation.* The motivation is another fundamental factor which interacts in the learning process: it is the engine that activates the process of formation. Some authors like Harter, Titone<sup>8</sup> and Balboni (in Begotti 2010, chapt. 4, Balboni 2002, Caon 2005 and Daloso 2009) have proposed their models on motivation which have a common point: all these models claim that the learning guided by pleasure leads to the best results because pleasure is the highest level of motivation.

According to Titone's ego-dynamic model (in Balboni 2002, Caon 2005), if a student's project life presumes the learning of a language, he has to pick out his "*strategy*": the enrolment to a course, the purchase of a CD-rom or a DVD, a study tour abroad, etc.

Then the student puts to use the strategy (*tactical moment*), i.e., attends the course, avails himself of the CD-rom or the DVD or he goes abroad.

If the chosen strategy gives the expected result, the motivation is strengthened and he or she will carry on his formative process; if the results are not satisfying, the learning process fails.

Titone's model is related to Balboni's model which specifies the causes which determine the human actions (*duty, need and pleasure*):

- *duty*: it is the lowest level of motivation; this kind of motivation does not lead to acquisition.

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<sup>8</sup> Everything that will be said about Harter, Titone and Skehan is not taken from their original works but from the quoted bibliography.

The information learnt is fixed for a short period of time and then it is forgotten; this is the case of traditional language learning contexts: the student will remember them until the tests, but he or she will soon forget.

- *Need*: it is the second level, it will work until the student decides that his needs are satisfied.
- *Pleasure*: it is the highest level of motivation and the most powerful.

There are various forms of pleasure, all linked to self-realization and positive emotions (the emotive sphere has a determinant role in acquisition as we will see later), as it is claimed in Balboni (2002, chapt. 3) and Daloiso (2009):

- the *pleasure of learning*: learning becomes a pleasure if it gives good results but it is compromised if the proposed activities do not respect the natural order of acquisition (i+ 1 according to Krashen's theory)<sup>9</sup>; the activities should be nor too easy or too difficult but within the student's grasp. Furthermore, mistakes can be demotivating but if the student is told that making mistakes is normal and that he will learn from them, he will accept them more easily;
- the pleasure of *variety* and *novelty*: motivation is fed if the given material is various; otherwise, if the student has to do always the same exercises, he or she will be bored and less motivated;
- the pleasure of *challenge* with themselves;
- the pleasure of *systematization*: it is a pleasant satisfaction to discover the mechanisms of grammar by reasoning and not by rigid schemes proposed by the teacher.

Harter (in Begotti 2010, pp. 35-37 and Balboni 2002 p. 39) distinguishes between extrinsic (related to pleasure) and intrinsic motivation; the two kinds of motivations can interact between each other but their distinction allows the recognition of particular behaviours of the adult students.

Among the intrinsic motivations, apart from the pleasure given by challenge, we find:

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<sup>9</sup> Krashen proposed the *Second Language Acquisition Theory* (SLAT), in which it is claimed that learning occurs through natural phases and language teaching should follow these steps (Balboni 2002, Luise 2006).



- curiosity and interest on what is the matter of learning,
- independent control: if the person corrects his or her own mistakes, he will learn better and will be less embarrassed,
- self-assessment: the student recognizes his or her level of learning and will be able to judge his success or failure.

On the other hand, we can consider extrinsic motivations (proper of young students):

- the preference for simple tasks: doing simple tasks is no good either for young or for adult students because it is boring and demotivating,
- the aim is to satisfy the teacher and to receive a good mark,
- the comprehension of what he or she is learning depends principally on the teacher,
- the student is guided by the teacher in the activity: it is the teacher that helps with schemes and notes,
- the success depends on the teacher criterion, and not on the student.

The adult student is usually driven by intrinsic motivations because learning for him or her is more a challenge with himself or herself rather than with the teacher or with the other students and he or she will be more satisfied when he or she reaches his or her expectations.

However, the case of a second language adult learner is particular because many times he or she decides to stop his or her formation when he or she reaches the lower levels of linguistic competence<sup>10</sup> (this motivation is extrinsic, it is called *instrumental*), useful to satisfy the basic needs (find a job and a house).

When the motivation is deeper (intrinsic motivation) the foreign individual perceives the educational career as a moment of personal growth; he or she is involved emotionally and affectively and, referring to the already mentioned Maslow's pyramid, he or she aims to the highest level, which is self-actualization.

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<sup>10</sup> These levels correspond to A1 and A2 of the Common European Framework.

*Cognitive styles.* Each person perceives and fixes the stimulus coming from the external environment in different ways, depending on his or her favourite sensorial channel.

According to the Neurolinguistic Programming spread in America during the Seventies, we can classify three types of cognitive styles: visual, auditive and kinesics.

Following this classification, the input is acquired through the sensorial channels of sight, hearing and touch: one of these senses predominates on the other two not only during the moment of acquisition, but also when the memory of the stimulus is recovered.

This does not mean that the person will always learn through the same channel; he will often prefer one of them, but sometimes he can use the other two (in Begotti 2010 pp. 27-28. 37-39, Balboni 2002 pp. 44-45, Pallotti 1998 chapt.5).

- Visual cognitive style.

A student with a visual cognitive style prefers to learn by observation, he uses the support of images or videos and he or she often needs to write down in order to remember better what he learns; usually, he or she presents a reserved personality, he or she is thoughtful and not much exuberant.

- Auditive cognitive style.

An auditive cognitive style is represented by students with an outgoing nature, who like to express their emotions by words and are more confident with activities such as discussions, dialogues, dictations, etc.

- Kinesics cognitive style.

Finally, a student with a kinesics cognitive style uses the touch, expresses his or her feelings through facial expressions, movements, gestures; he or she prefers to learn with techniques such as role plays, team workings or, in general, activities which imply manipulation and movement.

The student with a kinesics cognitive style likes better to learn by involving his body.

The distinction of the three styles has important language teaching implications because it allows the teacher to better understand which materials are more suitable for the student and how he or she prefers to

learn; this does not mean, anyway, that the teacher should follow just one type of cognitive style: doing always the same kinds of activities would cause boredom and lack of attention.

*Multiple Intelligences Theory (M.I.T.)* The Multiple Intelligences Theory was proposed by Howard Gardner<sup>11</sup> in his work called “*Creating minds*”<sup>12</sup> (1983) (Balboni 2002, Begotti 2010 pp. 40-45). According to him, the human genre is not gifted with just one intelligence but with a mixture of various intelligences; these intelligences coexist and interact between each other.

They are equally present in the individual at birth and then develop differently when they come into contact with the external environment.

The social and cultural environment where the person grows and the experiences that he does, influence the development of the kind of intelligence.

He classified eight types of intelligences but lately, in 2010, he added a new intelligence, the existential one: interpersonal, intrapersonal and existential (they are linked to the person), linguistic and musical (linked to language), kinaesthetic, logical- mathematical (linked to the object), (Begotti 2010, Balboni 2002, pp. 44-47 and 2006, pp. 47).

We will start from the linguistic one.

- *Linguistic intelligence*: it represents the skill of using the native language or other languages to express thoughts and understand the others. A well developed linguistic intelligence allows to use the appropriate words in the right context and to perceive the different semantic nuances of a term.

- *Logical- mathematical intelligence*: it is proper of people who are able to manipulate numbers, quantities and operations. In language learning, it helps to find the right morpho-syntactic structures.

- *Spatial intelligence*: it gives rise to the skill of representing space in our mind; it can be used in science and arts.

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<sup>11</sup> Everything that will be said about Gardner and Goleman is not taken from their original work but from the quoted bibliography.

<sup>12</sup> He started working on this theory in 1983 and ten years later he published the book “Multiple Intelligences: the theory and practice” (1993).

- *Kinaesthetic intelligence*: it is well- developed in people who use their body (or part of it) to do something or to resolve problems (ex. athletes, dancers, actors, etc.).
- *Musical intelligence*: it is a skill which allows to think in music, to listen to tracks, to remember and also to manipulate them.
- *Interpersonal intelligence*: having a well- developed interpersonal intelligence means to be able to understand other people (ex. people like doctors, teachers, etc.).
- *Intrapersonal intelligence*: it is the skill of understanding themselves (“what we want to do?”, “what we do?”, “how do we react to situations?”, etc.).
- *Naturalistic intelligence*: it refers to the skill of recognizing the different kinds of plants and animals.
- *Existential intelligence*: it represents the human inclination to find an answer to questions like: “Who are we??”, “Where do we come from?”.<sup>13</sup>

The psychologist Daniel Goleman (in Begotti 2010 pp. 44-45) added also the *emotional intelligence*, which is proper of the adult because it indicates the skill of controlling his emotions thanks to his maturation.

Each student has all the kinds of intelligences but, generally, there is one that develops better than the others.

For what regards language learning it is important to have a well developed linguistic intelligence but also the other give their contribute: the musical one helps in listening activities, pronunciation, the kinaesthetic intelligence in role- takings or role- makings; also the logical- mathematical intelligence is involved in the organization of schemes, text reordering, etc.

The teacher should keep in mind the various cognitive styles and intelligences in order to create programmes personalized as much as possible because we have to follow the student’s natural inclination.

*Emotions and feelings*. As we said at the beginning of the paragraph there are positive and negative factors which influence the learning process

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<sup>13</sup> A wider explanation of multiple intelligences is found in Begotti 2010 (pp. 41-42), in which the faithful description theorized by Gardner himself is reported.

(Begotti 2010, Daloiso 2009, Balboni 2002 and 2006, Caon 2005, Pallotti 1998, chapt.5).

Motivation is certainly a positive factor but it can be blocked by negative emotions such as *anxiety*, *hyperemotionality* and *stress*.

Some studies conducted by Chastain, Kleinmen and Scovel<sup>14</sup> (in Pallotti 1998, p.222) have enlightened that there are two kinds of anxiety: one is inhibitory (“a bad anxiety” which provokes the rise of the *affective filter*<sup>15</sup>) and a positive anxiety which is similar to excitation: for instance, it is the case of a student who is ready and willing to learn.

Anxiety, hyperemotionality and stress can be traced back to activities which mine the student self image or self- esteem, for example debates, oral expositions or too difficult tasks; the fear of making mistakes and a consequent humiliation can arise (especially for Arabic students as it is reported in Della Puppa’s works).

An high level of these feelings causes the affective filter which bars the storing of the input or the recovering of information.

There are situations in which the adult foreign student particularly feels anxiety and stress: this occurs especially when he or she owns a low linguistic and communicative competence and he or she has to interact with the teacher or with his or her classmates.

To avoid these negative situations which render the language learning more problematic, the environment in classroom should be the most possible positive; nobody has to feel judged if he or she gets wrong: mistakes have to be seen as a moment of linguistic consideration.

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<sup>14</sup> Everything that will be said about Chastain, Kleinmen and Scovel is not taken from their original works but from the quoted bibliography.

<sup>15</sup> This phenomenon is a mechanism of self-defence which has chemical origins in the limbic system: the limbic system controls our emotions, feelings and motivation and is composed by several cerebral structures, among which the most important are the hippocampus, the amygdale and the hypothalamus.

In pleasant situations the adrenaline transforms into noradrenaline, a neurotransmitter which facilitates memorization.

On the contrary, in stressful situations the noradrenaline is blocked and our suprarenal glands product the stress hormone: its production is controlled by amygdale which requires more stress hormone in blood while hippocampus tries to restricts its quantity and this causes contrasts between the two structures; if the negative situation lasts in time the hippocampus is no longer able to carry out its functions of control and memorization.

As a consequence, the information is not fixed in memory or it is not recovered (revision of Balboni 2002, 2008, Daloiso 2009, Caon 2005, Umiltà 2011) .

*Personality: being outgoing or inward.* The individual personality carries a great deal with clout in the process of learning: the student with a good self consciousness faces the study with persistence, planning his or her purposes and he or she does not get discouraged by mistakes.

A lot of studies on the influence of personality in language learning have been conducted; however, it has not been proved empirically if there is a narrow correlation between personality and language learning, i.e, if being outgoing favours language learning (Pallotti, 1998, p. 223-224).

According to Skehan<sup>16</sup> (in Begotti 2010, pp. 47-48 and Pallotti 1998, pp. 222-224) there are outgoing and inward- looking people.

The outgoing people integrate with naturalness in a study group and, in language teaching environment, they start with an advantage in the acquisition of communicative competence and fluency (Balboni 2002).

Yet, an outgoing individual is also impulsive and throws himself or herself into situations without thinking too much; referring to language learning, this leads him or her to make a lot of linguistic mistakes.

Inward people instead are shy and reserved, very careful and thoughtful; in language teaching context they will reach a more correct linguistic competence but a less fluent communication.

*Self-esteem.* Self-esteem and self- confidence are a good help in language learning, as it has been demonstrated by studies of Clément, Dörnyei, Noels, Ehrman, Oxford (in Pallotti 1998, p. 223).

An adult student with a good self- esteem tackles an L2 course more peacefully without being afraid of difficulties and he or she can obtain good results.

Yet, an adult with a low self-esteem surely had learning difficulties in the past: attending a language formative course can provoke anxiety or disease and it can obstruct the reaching of a good competence in L2 (Begotti 2010, p. 48).

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<sup>16</sup> Everything that will be said about Skehan, Clément, Dörnyei, Noels, Ehrman and Oxford is not taken from their original works but from the quoted bibliography.

### 1.3.2 Social variables

The second kind of factors that we are going to analyse are the social variables, which comprehend the previous learning experiences and the learning context.

*Previous learning experiences.* As we have stated before talking about the cognitive style and the multiple intelligences, when the adult arrives at the new course he has already developed his own learning method and he or she will tend to apply it again; he or she will hardly accept to change it.

The previous experience and the original culture unconsciously influence the learning of the new language (Begotti 2010, Balboni 2002 and Luise 2006).

Every culture has its school methods and rules and the L2 teacher should know of it in order to better plan the teaching.

For example, Chinese students are used to learn by heart because in their idiom each word corresponds to a specific ideogram and at school they are obliged to memorize long lists of words.

The majority of the Arabic students (at least those who attended the Koranic school, called *Kuttāb*) instead has been educated with a traditional educational system, called “by imitation” (Della Puppa, 2007, 2006 and 2003).

The students have just the role of listeners; the learning process occurs by imitating the teacher who uses the Koran as reference text.

The used techniques are the mnemonic repetition of the concepts explained by the teacher; otherwise the method of the dictation is used. The text is then read again in a loud voice and memorized, without personal considerations or contents reprocessing.

In the high level school (*madrasa*) a pseudo- discussion occurs: the arguments are discussed but the aim is to train the dialectical skill and not to examine the dealt issues.

On the contrary, Western students are used to learn by reasoning out and eventually to ask or to be critical.

Chinese and Arabic students are different from Western students also in terms of behaviour: in both Chinese and Arabic cultures the teacher is

considered an incontestable figure (in China the students are very respectful towards older people according to an age hierarchy and in Arabic countries because the teacher is often an imam, a charismatic religious and political figure).

As a consequence, Chinese students will hardly cut it on a conversation or ask something to the teacher and they will be scared of activities such as role-takings or role plays<sup>17</sup> in which the relationship with the others is promoted, because they tend to be reserved and inward.

Arabic students are less reserved than Chinese, but they will never dare to object to what the teacher says because they are used not to challenge the Imam's words.

On the contrary European students or also Latin Americans and Africans are more outgoing and they will be more willing to participate to discussions or to question to the teacher.<sup>18</sup>

*The learning context.* The learning context is an environment- class in which the problems of the adult students and of the teacher converge; the adult students have to try to accept methods and approaches different from theirs, while the teacher has to respect the individualisms and the previous experiences fixing time by time the learning method.

An adult class presents a social context which is extremely non homogeneous: as for young students classes, there is a mixture of cultures, personal stories, intelligences, styles, personalities.

The difference is that while in children and teenager classes the students age is generally the same, in an adult class students can go from 20 to 40/50 years old.

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<sup>17</sup> These activities are used to simulate communicative situations (e.g. dialogue at the post office, at the supermarket, ect.); the students are divided into couple or groups and each student plays a role.

For what regards the role taking, the students follow a exhaustive plot in which they are told which are the communicative acts while in the role plays the given plot is reduced at the minimum and the students have to be creative and invent the communicative acts (Balboni, 2002, 2006, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> A closer examination of this argument is dealt in Interlandi 2006, Della Puppa 2007, [http://venus.unive.it/aliasve/index.php?name=EZCMS&page\\_id=526](http://venus.unive.it/aliasve/index.php?name=EZCMS&page_id=526) on 13-7-2011, Boussetta in <http://www.ilnostroplaneta.it/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/italiano-per-arabofoni-boussetta.pdf> (2-7-2011).



These differences, especially the different maturity and original culture, can create difficulties in relationships.

That is why it is important that the students and the teacher try to find an equilibrium and to balance the differences, then the environment will be more pleasant and it will give an opportunity of personal enrichment both for students and for the teacher.<sup>19</sup>

### *1.3.3 The natural variables*

The third and last kind of factors are the natural variables: personal aptitude, age, memory and sex.

*Personal aptitude.* The aptitude is an inborn quality and so it cannot be taught; some individuals can be more predisposed to learn languages because they show a particular skill in discriminating phonemes and morpho- syntactic structures.

According to the psychologist Carroll<sup>20</sup> the four components which form the aptitude are (in Begotti 2010 pp. 50-52, Pallotti 1998 pp. 224-231):

- *phonemic code ability*: it means to be able to associate a phoneme to its correspondent grapheme and to memorize foreign sounds;
- *grammatical sensitivity*: it is the ability to assign the correct grammatical function to each word;
- *inductive language learning ability*: it is the capacity of understanding which are the schemes underlying a language and how they work<sup>21</sup>;
- *rote learning activity for foreign language materials*: it is the skill of establishing the right meaning between the elements in the native language and the second language. It is also explained as the skill of fixing in memory new linguistic structures and new lexicon.

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<sup>19</sup> A wider explanation is given in Balboni 2002, 2008, Begotti 2010, Caon 2005, Daloiso 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Everything that will be said about Carroll is not taken from his original work but from the quoted bibliography.

<sup>21</sup> The grammatical sensitivity and the inductive learning ability are similar, so some authors such as Skehan proposed to unify them under an unique definition called *linguistic analysis skill* (in Pallotti, 1998, p.225).

*Age.* In Pallotti (1998, pp. 198-205) studies on the difference between language learning in children and teenagers and adults are reported: they have shown that phonology is the linguistic field most influenced by age (it becomes almost impossible to acquire a native accent after 12 years of age), then there are morphology and syntax, whereas for the acquisition of the lexicon there are no age limits.

Some scholars, for example Lenneberg<sup>22</sup> (in Guasti 2002) hypothesize that there is a “window” of time called “the critical period” in which the acquisition of a second language occurs in a way similar to how the first language is acquired, i.e., naturally and unconsciously; there is no agreement on the duration of the critical period but generally it is taken range from birth up to 8-10 years. During this period our brain reaches the top of synaptic connections thanks to its plasticity.

After this period the neurons become more efficient but at the same time hardly modifiable. However, this does not mean that learning of a second language becomes impossible, but it will imply a more expensive cognitive and attentive effort.

The adult learner will never be fluent as a native speaker, his or her pronunciation will always sound like foreigner and the acquisition will be slower and harder.

In any case, an adult is mature enough to get over the difficulties and frustration he or she can find in his or her L2 learning career<sup>23</sup>.

*Memory.* The system of our memory is subdivided into three parts<sup>24</sup>:

- working memory,
- short term memory,
- long term memory.

The working memory works as processor of information during the different cognitive tasks such as reading, comprehension, learning and reasoning but it has a limited capacity of keeping the information.

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<sup>22</sup> Everything that will be said about Lenneberg is not taken from his original work but from the quoted bibliography.

<sup>23</sup> Begotti 2010 pp.52-53, Pallotti 1998, chapt. 5, Balboni 2002, chapt.11, Daloiso 2009 chapt 8.

<sup>24</sup> Begotti 2010, pp. 43-44 , Balboni 2002 pp. 40-44, Daloiso 2009, chapt. 8 and Longoni 2000, chapt. 1.

The information is then passed in the short term memory, which has a limited capacity too and also, the new information are added to the old ones and this can provoke interference or confusion.

Part of the information are then lost and the rest (that information the person wants to maintain) are kept in the long term memory.

For the adult learner the fixing of new information and the recovering of old information is cognitively more difficult than for a young student, especially when memory has not been trained.

Memory can be trained with different strategies (associations, slips of paper stuck on things, etc.<sup>25</sup>) which work better if the person is strongly motivated, he or she is willing to learn and stimulated by newness.

The psychological side is also important and it has not to be undervalued; it is fundamental to create a positive context in the classroom, with pleasant activities because an high level of anxiety can block the storing of notions and, consequently, it can influence negatively the process of learning (*affective-filter*).

*Sex.* Studies conducted by Burtstall (1975) and Nyicos (1990) (in Pallotti, 1998, pp. 17, 303)<sup>26</sup> with a wide number of subjects showed that women have the advantage in language learning because they tend to use different learning strategies. Furthermore, “women are more sociable than men and work easily in a group so they more advantaged in the L2 acquisition; on the contrary, men tend to be more individualist” [Besnard<sup>27</sup>, in Begotti. 2010, p.55].

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<sup>25</sup> These are just two examples of mnemonic techniques which can help the recovering of lexicon.

The activity of associations consists in naming things associated to a word (e.g. bedroom- bed- desktop, etc.).

It is also useful to write down the name of a thing on a slip of paper and stick it on that thing (e.g. a slip with the writing “pencil case” on a pencil case) because it helps the recovering of the basic lexicon.

<sup>26</sup> Everything that will be said about Burtstall and Nyicos is not taken from his original work but from the quoted bibliography

<sup>27</sup> Everything that will be said about Besnard is not taken from his original work but from the quoted bibliography.

## *Chapt 2. On the Processability Theory*

### **2.1 Introduction.**

Second language acquisition has been a matter of studying since decades; in this chapter we will report two important theories which have dealt with this topic under different points of view. These theories are: the Universal Grammar applied to Second Language Acquisition and the Processability theory. The former aims at discovering how second language acquisition works compared to first language acquisition; the latter aims at identifying common learning sequences in second language learners.

In our treatment, the term *interlanguage* will recur more than once. It has been introduced by Larry Selinker in 1972 (in Pallotti 1998, Maddii 2004, chapt. 4, [www.digilander.libero.it/poseidoninterlingua/.../](http://www.digilander.libero.it/poseidoninterlingua/.../) on 27-9-2011, Gass, Selinker 1992, Selinker 1992).<sup>28</sup>

As the word itself suggests, it is a variety of language that functions as a bridge between the mother language and the second language (considered as *target language*).

The interlanguage is an interlinguistic continuum, in the sense that it is a dynamic and open linguistic system, in evolution. It is not a random linguistic variety but it is ruled by an autonomous grammar.

In this interlanguage development we will try to see the role of Universal Grammar and the evolution of the developmental sequences.

Between the two theories, we considered the Processability Theory as more appropriate for our context because it has already been applied to Italian as a second language by Di Biase in a school context (Di Biase 2007).

In the last part of the chapter we will provide a study on Italian as an L2 by Giacalone Ramat and Vedovelli which is complementary to Di Biase's.

We will start with the application of Universal Grammar on SLA, but before explaining the hypothesis on second language acquisition we have to briefly explain how first language is acquired.

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<sup>28</sup> Some authors proposed other terms: “transitory competence” or “idiosyncratic dialect” (Corder), “approximate system” (Nemser) (in Pallotti, 1998, p. 21).

## 2.2 *Universal Grammar*

### 2.2.1 *First language acquisition*

During the Twentieth Century there have been two main theories which provided an explanation of first language acquisition: *Behaviourism* and *Cognitivism* (Cacciari, 2006).<sup>29</sup>

According to Behaviourism, the language acquired and performed by children is the product of imitation of what they hear from adults: language acquisition occurs by “getting used” to produce some linguistics behaviours through imitation. In contrast with this assumption, during the sixties the *Innatist Theory* started to spread; it was initially proposed by the American linguist Noam Chomsky in his “*Syntactic structures*” in 1957 (in Cacciari, 2006, p. 17). In the following years this theory has been refined and has been subject to evolution.

Since it is very wide and complex, we will limit our presentation to the points which are interesting in for our treatment (Haegemann 1996, Cacciari 2006, Guasti 2002):

- the innate language faculty,
- the poverty of stimulus,
- the Universal Grammar: the model of Principles and Parameters,
- the hypothesis of a critical period.

Contrary to what was claimed by behaviourism, according to the innatists, language acquisition is not based on imitative behaviour, but on the interaction between an innate language faculty and the linguistic input.

One of the arguments asserted by Chomsky to contrast Behaviourism is the *poverty of the stimulus* (Cacciari, 2006, p.34): the linguistic stimulus to which the child is exposed is insufficient and characterised by mistakes (e.g. sentences that are incomplete and not always grammatical, etc.); nevertheless children manage to formulate correct sentences. Furthermore, it is also poor in comparison to the vastness of language possibilities: the child does not imitate what he hears because if it were so, he or she would pronounce just a limited set of sentences; on the contrary, children are able

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<sup>29</sup> A closer examination of the Innatist and Behaviourist theories is dealt with in : Haegeman (1996), Guasti (2003), Graffi and Scalise (2002), Cacciari (2001), Nespor (1993), Pinker (1994), Jackendoff (1998); in this section we have just summed up the main features of these theories.

to correctly perform sentences which they have never heard before (Guasti 2002, Cacciari 2006).

Within the innatist view, the child acquires the first language and discovers its rules. Indeed, the human brain is endowed with a biological device predisposed to language acquisition (*Language Acquisition Device*, LAD) (Haegemann 1996, Cacciari 2006, Guasti 2002). Natural languages are based on an innate and unconscious linguistic knowledge called Universal Grammar (UG).

Universal Grammar contains the *Principles*, which are universal and valid for all the languages; for example, every human language depends on a structure (*Principle of structure dependence*): each utterance is not a simple linear performance of words. It is instead the result of phonological, semantic, syntactical and morphological relations between the elements and their combination obeys to the structural rules imposed by the language.

What renders languages different are the *Parameters*; in other words, languages differ in some peculiar characteristics: for example, there are some languages such as Italian, Spanish and Portuguese which allow subject omission (*pro*) because it is interpretable through their rich verbal morphology. On the contrary, other languages (English or French) do not have this possibility and require the obligatory expression of the subject. This variation is called “the *pro-drop parameter*”: languages such as Italian are called “*pro-drop languages*”, whereas languages such as English are defined “*non pro-drop*”.

Another example of parameter is head direction: languages can be head-initial or head final, that is to say that the head of a phrase can precede or follow its complements. Among the head initial languages we can name English (the examples are a revision from Haegeman 1996, Haegeman and Guéron 1999):

e.g. [IP [DP I] [VP eat (V0) [DP an apple]]]

As we can see from the example, the head of the VP is the verb “eat” and the complement “an apple” follows it.

Other languages instead, require the complement before the head; an example of head-final language is German:

e.g. [IP [DP dass Hans] [VP [DP ein Buch] liest (V0)]]

Through the exposure to the linguistic input, the child correctly sets this parameter, that is to say that he or she will understand immediately if his mother tongue allows subject omission or not or if it is head initial or head final (Guasti 2002).

Each native speaker, thanks to UG and to exposure, develops the linguistic competence of the modules of Grammar, which include: phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon, as well as pragmatics, semantics, etc..

The competence in the mother tongue is fully reached before puberty; after this period, which is called *critical period*, it is possible to learn other languages but a native competence cannot be achieved.

### *2.2.2 Universal Grammar applied to Second Language Acquisition*

In the previous section we have briefly summed up the fundamental points on which the Universal Grammar and first language acquisition are based.

In the present section, we will try to explain how the theory of Universal Grammar has been applied to second language acquisition.

First and second language acquisition show evident differences; first of all, the degree of success differs: native speakers reach a full competence of the grammar of the language they are exposed to. On the contrary, L2 learners hardly achieve a grammar competence like that of a native speaker (White, 1989). The difference of degree of success does not depend just on the level of competence, but also on the level of performance: mother tongue speakers perform correctly; second language learners instead hardly reach a native like accent and their performances are often unsuccessful in relation to morphology and syntax. Furthermore, an L2 learner obviously knows another language which might play a role in second language learning.

Another difference between first and second language acquisition is the age factor: the existence of a critical period is still a matter of debate, but it is evident that second language learning becomes more and more difficult with age (White 1989).

Despite these differences, linguistic research on second language tried to discover if the Universal Grammar model can be applied also to second language acquisition. Up to now, researches have not led to a satisfying and comprehensive theory but many hypothesis have been proposed.

During the Eighties, the topic on which the linguists were interested was the *availability* (or *accessibility*) of UG in second language acquisition (White 1989, 2003, Cook 1993, Clahsen 1996): they wondered if UG in second language acquisition works in the same way as it does for L1 acquisition. Concerning this issue, three main positions can be classified: on the one hand, scholars like Schachter (1988), Clahsen and Muysken (1986) support the *no-access* hypothesis or partial access to UG; other researchers like White (1989, 2003) claim that UG is accessible also in second language acquisition via L1. The third and last position is the *direct access* to UG (Flynn, 1987).

The *no-access* hypothesis proposes that adult L2 learners might use their mother tongue and other problem-solving strategies to learn the second language: according to this hypothesis, adult L2 learners proceed with trials and errors until they get the feedback of their attempts with the evidence coming from the input (Cook 1993, Bley Vroman 1990).

Clahsen and Muysken tried to verify their hypothesis with an experiment: they investigated the access to UG in L2 through the word order in German; the subjects were migrant workers in Germany compared to native children. The experiment showed a difference between L1 and L2 learners: L1 learners initially used the underlying order of German (SOV) and then learnt the SVO order. On the contrary, adults started with the SVO order and then performed the SOV order. Clahsen and Muysken hypothesize that adult learners' performances might not be guided by UG but by other mental faculties responsible for the acquisition of knowledge in general rather than language specifically (Cook 1993, chapt. 5, 9, Clahsen and Muysken 1986). Schachter (1989, 1990, Pallotti 1998) also tried to provide evidence for the unavailability of UG; he tested the Subjacency principle on L2 English Korean, Chinese, Indonesian and Dutch learners. The Subjacency principle imposes some restrictions on phrasal movement; in English for example, the sentence:

\* [<sub>CP</sub> What<sub>i</sub> did [<sub>IP</sub> the teacher ask the students [<sub>CP</sub> where [<sub>IP</sub> they put  $t_i$ ]]]] ?,  
is ungrammatical because the interrogative element cannot be extracted from the embedded interrogative clause and moved to sentence initial position.



Like English, also Dutch has this kind of restriction in interrogative clauses, whereas Chinese does not present this kind of restriction. Korean does not show phenomena of movement and, as a consequence, the Subjacency principle is not active.

Schachter submitted grammatical and ungrammatical interrogative sentences: if UG were available, Korean learners should not have respected the Subjacency principle in English interrogative sentences; yet, if it were accessible, they should have performed like English native speakers, refusing the ungrammatical examples.

The results of the experiment supported the no-access hypothesis: Dutch testers scored similarly to English native speakers, Chinese and Indonesian scored better than Koreans and Korean learners judged randomly, confirming Schachter's hypothesis (Pallotti 1998, White 1989, Schachter 1989, 1990, Meisel 2011).

The second hypothesis, of *indirect access to UG* (White 1989, 2003), claims that UG is accessible to second language learners but not as UG, rather as L1. White (1989) hypothesizes that L2 learners apply L1 principles and parameters especially at the first stages of acquisition; in the following stages, they can reset parameters if they are different from those of the first language.

To verify her hypothesis she tested the pro-drop parameter with L2 English French and Spanish learners (English and French are non pro-drop languages, whereas Spanish allows subject omission): the results from the ungrammaticality test showed that, at first stages, Spanish learners performed less null subject than French learners.

Therefore, she proposes that Spanish learners have been influenced by their mother tongue (White 1989, 2003).

The last hypothesis, the *Direct Access Model*, support the idea that Universal Grammar is directly accessible in L2 acquisition. Otsu and Naoi (1986) tried to give evidence of this hypothesis conducting an experiment on structure-dependence. The subjects were L2 English Japanese learners; these two languages differ in terms of movement in interrogative sentences: in English, a complex NP (noun phrase which contains an embedded relative clause) is considered as a unit, so it is impossible to extract the

auxiliary “is” from the embedded clause (1); on the contrary, the movement is possible if the auxiliary is extracted from the main clause verb (2) (White 1989):

e.g. (1) \* Is<sub>i</sub> the girl who t<sub>i</sub> eating pizza is blonde?

(2) Is<sub>i</sub> the girl who is eating pizza t<sub>i</sub> blonde?

In Japanese yes-no questions, movement of the interrogative constituents is not allowed; this kind of questions is formed with the simple addition of a question particle.

Otsu and Naoi (1986) aimed at discovering if learners behaved like English native speakers or according to their first language: from the results (the test was the transformation of English declarative clauses into questions) it has emerged that Japanese learners followed the English structure, enhancing the Direct Access Model.

There are also other experiments, for example the experiments conducted by Pèrez- Leroux and Glass (1999) and Kanno (1997) which support the access to UG hypothesis: in these experiments, learners showed to be able to adopt UG constraints in domains not foreseen by first language grammar or interpretable from the L2 input (White, 2003). An example of these experiments is the test on the overt pronoun constraint: this constraint claims that in pro-drop languages, the subject of embedded clauses cannot have quantified expressions or wh-elements as their antecedents in the main clause if they are overt pronouns; on the contrary, if they are null pronoun subjects, they can be co-referential with quantified expressions and wh-elements (White 1989, 2003). Languages which show this constraint are Spanish (as we can see from the examples) and Japanese:

1) \*Nadie<sub>i</sub> cree [<sub>CP</sub> que ella<sub>i</sub> es sensible]

2) Nadie<sub>i</sub> cree [<sub>CP</sub> que *pro*<sub>i</sub> es sensible]

The experiments on this constraint were conducted by Pèrez- Leroux and Glass (1999) and Kanno (1997) with English native speakers who had to learn L2 Spanish and Japanese respectively. English does not have the overt-pronoun constraint but learners showed to behave similarly to Spanish and Japanese native speakers: in most cases, they disallowed quantified expressions or wh-elements antecedents of overt pronouns (White 2003, Pèrez- Leroux and Glass 1999, Kanno 1997).

Up to now, linguistic research has not reached a consensus; however, more recent studies (White, 2003) support the idea that second language acquisition is UG-constrained.

The current research focuses more on the *nature* of the interlanguage representation rather than on the *sources* of interlanguage knowledge (White in <http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/networks/nw09/white.pdf> on 24-2-2012): that is to say that researchers are investigating on the representation of specific grammatical properties. Particularly, they research on the nature of the L2 initial state. The results of the studies led the experts to propose various hypotheses; for example Schwartz and Sprouse (1996) claim that the L2 initial state is represented by the L1 grammar (*Full Transfer Full Access Hypothesis*): according to them, the L1 steady state grammar is the first state of L2. Their hypothesis presupposes that the learner can have recourse to UG when the L2 input shows properties (e.g. new parameters settings or functional categories) not instantiated in the L1. However, the L1 grammar is not expected to be affected by the new properties. The Full Transfer Full Access Hypothesis supported by Schwartz and Sprouse provides also a prediction on the final outcome: according to the authors, it is possible to reach a native-like grammar but this is not guaranteed because there could be interference with first language or other interlanguages (Schwartz and Sprouse 1996, White 2003).

Another hypothesis, supported by Vainikka and Young-Scholten (1996, White 2003), is the *Minimal Trees Hypothesis*. Also this hypothesis supports the idea that the initial state of interlanguage is the L1 grammar; however, differently from the Full Transfer Full Access Hypothesis, they claim that the L2 functional categories are not present initially: they will emerge later during the developmental phase thanks to the exposition to L2 input. Their prediction on the final stage is that L2 learners can attain the L2 grammar.

The third hypothesis which considers the first language grammar as the initial state is the *Valueless Features Hypothesis* proposed by Eubank (1996, White 2003). According to this hypothesis, L1 functional categories are represented in the interlanguage grammar; however, their strength value is not transferred: they are not “strong” or “weak”, but rather “inert”. An example could be verb movement: in French, the finite verb has to raise to

the Inflection node to check its features (tense, agreement); on the contrary, in English the verb remains in situ because English does not show a rich verbal morphology.

Within the Valueless Features Hypothesis perspective, these features are initially inert in L2, so finite verbs may raise or not raise and this can have consequences in word order; for example, it can occur that a learner of French (language with strong features) produces both word orders (examples taken from White 2003):

e.g. Marie regarde<sub>i</sub> [souvent [<sub>VP</sub> *t<sub>i</sub>* la télévision]]  
Marie [souvent [<sub>VP</sub> regarde la télévision]]

Nonetheless, the initially inert features should be then replaced by strong features in L2; the final outcome foreseen by this hypothesis is that the learner can reach the L2 grammar (White 2003, Eubank 1996).

The last hypothesis is the *Full Access (Without Transfer)*, by Flynn and Martohardjiono (1994), Flynn (1996) and Epstein, Flynn and Martohardjiono (1998). These authors do not explicitly claim that UG is the initial state of interlanguage grammars but they propose that all interlanguage stages are constrained by UG and not by the L1 grammar, although there can be some of its effects. Furthermore, functional categories are predicted to be present also in the initial stages, in contrast with what is assumed by the Minimal Trees Hypothesis. The final outcome foreseen by the Full Access Hypothesis is that the L2 learner might reach a native-like competence.

Even if the research has not led to a unified theory which confirms which hypothesis is the most appropriate, the results support the claim that L2 learners can reach a high competence in the L2 and that acquisition is guided by UG.

### 2.3 *The Processability Theory*

The *Processability Theory* (PT) has been proposed by Manfred Pienemann<sup>30</sup> in 1998 (Dogana 2002/2003, Della Puppa 2007, Pallotti 1998, Luise 2006). It accounts for the learning of a second language and the development of its interlanguages. Pienemann's studies were oriented on the determination of the sequences of development of the skills which allow to process (i.e. to elaborate) the linguistics elements in a second language.

This theory was elaborated using the results obtained in the project ZISA (*Zweitspracherwerb italienischer und spanischer Arbeiter*) and the Levelt's model (1989) (Dogana, 2002-2003, Di Biase 2007, Levelt 1989).

#### 2.3.1 *The ZISA project*

The project ZISA was a research project conducted in the Seventies and Eighties on the acquisition of German as a second language by Italian and Spanish workers immigrated in Germany (Pallotti 1998, Della Puppa 2007, Cook 1993); together with Pienemann, also Clahsen (1996) and Meisel (1992) (Pallotti 1998) teamed up with this study: their purpose was to identify the existence of sequences of L2 acquisition that are implicational and regular through the analysis of strategies of sentence constructions (Di Biase 2007, Pallotti 1998).

All the learners follow an acquisition order of certain syntactic rules; however, while some rules have a fixed acquisition order which is common to all learners, other rules are acquired in a variable way in individual interlanguages.

In other words, these experts recognised the existence of two dimensions (Pallotti, 1998, p. 83): one is *developmental*, universal for all L2 learners, and one of *variability*; the developmental order depends on the different cognitive structures which come out during acquisition. The individual variant instead depends on extra- linguistics factors, such as for example motivation and will to integrate in the hosting Country.

The L2 German learners examined by Pienemann and his colleagues learnt the syntactic rules according to a precise order: initially, they produced

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<sup>30</sup> Everything that will be said concerning Pienemann, is not taken from his works but from the quoted bibliography.

isolated words or forms; then, the first attempts to produce a fixed word order started; in the majority of cases, it was the SVO (Subject+ Verb+ Object) order, which is called *canonical* (the following examples have been taken from Pallotti, 1998, p. 84-85 and from Cook, 1993, chapt.2):

e.g. Die Kinder spielen mit dem Ball.

*“The children play with (the) ball”*

S            V            O

In the following phase, the production of the first adverbs in sentence initial position started to appear; however, this was not accompanied by the subject- verb inversion, as is required in standard German (Pallotti, 1998, Dogana 2002-2003):

e.g. Da Kinder spielen.

*“There (the) children play”*

[Adv] + [S V] → [Adv + S V]

In the third phase, auxiliary and modal verbs and the infinitival lexical verbs were correctly placed (cit. Pallotti, 1998, p. 84), approaching the target language.

e.g. Alle Kinder muss die Pause machen.

*“All the children have to a break take”*

[S Mod V O] → [S Mod O V]

During the fourth phase, learners applied the inversion of the subject and the verb in sentences that started with an adverb:

e.g. Dann hat sie wieder die Knoch gebringt.

*“Then has she again the bone brought”*

[Adv S Aux V O] → [Adv Aux S O V]

In the final phase, the more advanced one, learners managed to distinguish between main and subordinate clauses, placing the subordinate finite verbs in sentence final position (Pallotti, 1998):

e.g. Er sagt, dass er nach Hause kommt.

*“ He says that he home comes”*

[embedded clause: S V O] → [embedded clause: S O V]

The researchers reached the conclusion that second language acquisition of German occurs in five phases, each of them characterised by the acquisition of a syntactic rule. These rules are: the canonical order (SVO), the adverb in

sentence initial position (Adv), the separation of the verb (SEP), the inversion (INV) and the verb in final position (V-final); they are acquired in an implicational sequence which can be summed up as follows (Dogana 2002-2003, Cook 1993):

SVO > Adv > SEP > INV > V- final

The validity of the Processability Theory was extended to English as a second language; Pienemann and colleagues (Pienemann & Johnston 1987, Pienemann, Johnston & Brindley 1988, Pienemann & Mackey 1992<sup>31</sup>, quoted in Pallotti 1998, Cook 1993) confirmed that the Processability Theory was applicable also for English.

The results of the studies on English as a second language confirmed that also in English morpho-syntactic acquisition, learners followed the same strategies we have seen with regard to German L2 learners: in English too, initially a production of forms and isolated words occurred (Pallotti, 1998, p. 87).

During the *first* phase, learners rigidly followed the canonical order SVO and, in case of negative sentence, the negation was inserted in sentence initial position (the examples are taken from Pallotti, p. 88, 89, 90, Cook 1993):

e.g. Me live here. You live here?  
[S V O]      [S V O]  
No me live here.  
[Neg + S V O]

In the *second* phase, modifiers were inserted at the beginning of the sentence:

- adverbs: e.g. Today he stay here [Adv+ S V O],
- the auxiliary “do” without morphological inflection:  
e.g. Do he live here? [Do+ S V O],
- and the sentence Topic: e.g. Cheese I like. [Topic+ S V (O)].

In this phase, the morphemes of the plural, of the past and of the gerund start to appear:

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<sup>31</sup> Everything that will be said concerning Johnston, Brindley and Mackey is not taken from their works but from the quoted bibliography.

- (1) Two cats.                      (2) She *played*.  
 (3) He *going*.

It is not possible to establish the degree of accuracy of their use because it is not systematic (Pallotti, 1998).

It is during the *third* phase that the subject- verb inversion starts to occur, together with the appearing of prepositions in sentence- final position:

- e.g. Have you job?  
 [S V O] → [V S O]  
 He turn the radio on.  
 [S V+ part O] → [S V O part]

The *fourth* phase is characterised by the movement of Wh-phrases and, in interrogative sentences, of the auxiliary “do” and the other auxiliaries in second position within the sentence:

- e.g. Why did she eat that?  
 Where have you lost it?  
 [Wh S Aux V O] → [Wh Aux S V O]

As we have seen talking about the acquisition of German as L2, in this phase the agreements<sup>32</sup> between phrases begin to appear; for example, the agreement between the subject and the verb starts to occur (Pallotti, 1998):

- e.g. He eats.  
 She eats too much.

As with German, the *fifth* and last phase shows the acquisition of the distinction between main and subordinate clauses: in this advanced phase, learners know that in indirect questions the embedded verb remains in-situ, while in direct questions the auxiliary “do” precedes the subject (Pallotti 1998):

- e.g. I wonder where he is.  
 [main clause Interr V S] → [main clause Interr S V]

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<sup>32</sup> Di Biase (2007) and Pienemann use the term “exchange of information”, but according to us “agreement” is more appropriate.



### 2.3.2 The Levelt's model

Pienemann's theory is based on two fundamental points: the temporal sequence of the phases of speech production and the phenomenon of agreements between the linguistic elements

(Dogana 2002-2003, p. 45, Di Biase 2007, chapt. 1, [http://www.nebrhijos.com/processability/ppt/dibint\\_file/slide0001.htm](http://www.nebrhijos.com/processability/ppt/dibint_file/slide0001.htm) on 3-10-2011, Della Puppa 2007 pp. 57-59).

In relation with these two points, Pienemann made use of Levelt's psycholinguistic model (Levelt 1989, Di Biase 2007, Della Puppa 2007, Dogana 2002) about speech production to elaborate his theory.

This model represents the temporal sequences through which a native speaker succeeds in formulating a proposition; the phases of the process are three: in the *first* one (the phase of *conceptualization*) the recovering of words from our semantic memory occurs. For example, if we want to say:

“the cat chases the mice”,

the first thing that our brain does is that of selecting the lemmas “cat”, “chase” and “mice” from our semantic system.

Within the first phase still, the assignment of syntactic, morphological and phonological features to the selected words takes place: the categories (noun, adjective, verb, ect.), gender (masculine, feminine and neuter, in languages which have it) and number (singular or plural) have to be assigned.

In the *second* (the phase of *formulation*), the assembly of the elements happens, according to the order required by the language; the *third* and last (the phase of *articulation*) instead, represents the moment of articulation, that is to say that the mentally formulated message is articulated

(Levelt 1989, Dogana 2002-2003, [http://www.nebrhijos.com/processability/ppt/dibint\\_file/slide0001.htm](http://www.nebrhijos.com/processability/ppt/dibint_file/slide0001.htm) on 3-10-2011).

This process is unconscious, it occurs in real time in the native speaker and it is highly automated; it is not a simultaneous process, but rather sequential. The sequence proposed by Levelt's model is the following (Della Puppa, 2007, Levelt 1989):

conceptual> lexical> grammatical> phonological

Pienemann applies this model to his studies on the acquisition of a second language. The grammaticalization of the information contained in the words is automatic for a native speaker but for an L2 learner is a problem of cognitive processing, i.e. of processability (Di Biase 2007, Dogana 2002-2003, Della Puppa 2007).

As a consequence, the phases on which the attention is focused are the two central phases of the sequence mentioned above (lexical and grammatical), that is to say on the recovering of the lexicon and its grammaticalization, checking on the modalities that are activated for the attribution of the morpho-syntactic features<sup>33</sup>.

The second fundamental point on which Pienemann's theory is based is the agreement between the linguistic elements which occurs through certain procedures that follow an implicational sequence.

The Processability Theory, which is also called "the Processability Hierarchy", aims at explaining how and when in the learner those abilities which allow him or her to process the linguistic structures of the new language emerge (Di Biase 2007, Dogana 2002-2003).

The theory offers some hypothesis on the evolution of the interlanguage just on the basis of the procedural skills that generally follow a regular sequence for all the learners; Pienemann proposes an universal path of acquisition of the procedures [[http://www.nebrhijos.com/processability/ppt/dibint\\_file/slide0001.htm](http://www.nebrhijos.com/processability/ppt/dibint_file/slide0001.htm) on 3-10-2011] which is common to all learners and he sums up this path in the following scheme (the scheme has been revised from: Di Biase 2007, Luise 2006, Dogana 2002-2003, Della Puppa 2007):

PROCEDURAL SKILLS	AGREEMENT	TIME				
		T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
1. lemmatic	None: no sequence of phrases	+	+	+	+	+
2. category	None: use of information in loco	-	+	+	+	+
3. phrasal	Between the head and the	-	-	+	+	+

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<sup>33</sup> This model is valid for every language, even if obviously each language requires its proper order and its proper morpho- syntactic markers (Della Puppa 2007, p. 58).

	other constituents of the phrase					
4. sentence	Between the heads of the phrases	-	-	-	+	+
5. subordinate- clause	Selection of a subordinate clause	-	-	-	-	+

The procedural skills reported in the scheme are found in an hierarchical and implicational order, in the sense that it is not possible to acquire the procedure of a stage if the previous procedure has not been acquired.

The rules governing the target language have to be memorized and automated; only in this way, these rules are available and can emerge more or less rapidly when the learner has to formulate a statement: in fact, he will produce some linguistic structures only if the processing procedures necessary for the elaboration of these structures have been previously acquired (Pallotti 1998, Di Biase 2007, Luise 2006, Della Puppa 2007).

We have seen that in the native speaker, speech production occurs in real time; in the L2 learner instead the production is slower because he or she has to concentrate on few information, exploiting only the structures which have been already acquired and partially automated (Di Biase 2007, Dogana 2002-2003).

### 2.3.3 Analysis of the procedural skills

The scheme proposed by Pienemann and elaborated by Di Biase (Di Biase 2007) is an implicational scheme: each procedure implies that the previous procedure has been fully acquired; the order of the sequences proposed by Pienemann is hierarchical (Di Biase 2007, Della Puppa 2007, Luise 2006) :

1. the lemma access,
2. the category procedure,
3. the phrasal procedure,
4. the S- procedure,
5. the subordinate clause procedure.

The phase of the *lemma access* is the phase of unanalysed forms and of the memorized words; however, there is not a grammatical relation between the produced words. It is the phase of the simple memory (Di Biase 2007,

<http://www.ferraramulticulturale.it/allegati/saggio.pdf> on 1-11-2011). Referring to the speech production model proposed by Levelt (1989, in Di Biase 2007), each acquired word enriches the lexicon of the second language.

In the *second phase*, the assignment of the grammatical category to the lemmas previously acquired begins and the production of morphological markers starts; however, modification occurs only at the level of the lexical item.

We have to reach the *third phase*, called the *phrasal procedure*, to notice the agreement between the elements of the phrase (the head and its modifiers); during this stage, agreement within the nominal or verbal phrase starts to appear (Di Biase 2007):

e.g. the young ladies

It is in the *fourth level* that agreements between different phrases within the sentence occur and, furthermore, the functions (subject of and object of) start to be assigned.

The *fifth phase*, the last and more advanced one, implies the distinction between the main and the subordinate clauses.

If at a certain stage, an element has not been processed in the learner's grammar, the acquisition process cannot continue until that element is not acquired (Di Biase 2007, Pallotti 1998).

#### 2.3.4 *The Hypothesis Space*

Following the Processability Theory, Pienemann claims that none of the phases can be skipped during the learning sequence (Pallotti 1998, Luise 2006, Di Biase 2007, Della Puppa 2007). We have already said that the learning process is a path in which each acquired stage is the prerequisite in order to face the following one.

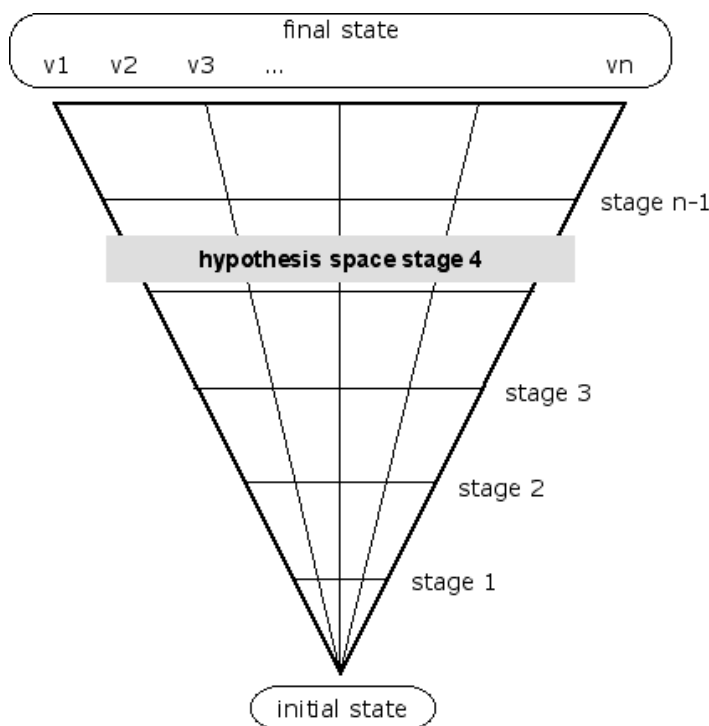
A procedure which has been not activated does not allow the evolution of interlanguage; at each level of acquisition, the processing of a structural element occurs: as soon as new structures emerge, the interlanguages grammars are modified.

However, Pienemann's theory is not exhaustive and does not comprehend all the learning sequences of a second language.

It is in this context that Pienemann proposes the concept of “ hypothesis space”: he offers an explanation on the variability of interlanguages (Dogana 2002-2003, chapt. 2, Della Puppa 2007, chapt. 2).

We have seen that at each developmental stage there are some grammatical structures which foresee a developmental and regular processing; on the contrary, other structures are part of a range of options (Dogana 2002-2003, chapt. 2). With regard to these last structures, learners adopt different strategies when they face new procedures: depending on the rule system they acquired, they choose among the possible grammatical options which can be processed; the result of the choice produces the variability of the interlanguage (Della Puppa 2007, chapt. 2, Dogana 2002-2003, chapt 2.),

Pienemann (Dogana 2002-2003, chapt. 2) explains this hypothesis with a graph with the shape of an overturned triangle divided into five stages; in this triangle, the point corresponds to the initial stage of the learning process, while the basis corresponds to the final stage, (the scheme is taken from <http://spzwww.uni-muenster.de/griesha/sla/pienemann/hypo-space.html> on 14-3-2012):



On the basis of this scheme (Dogana, 2002-2003, chapt.2, p.53), it is possible to foresee the learner’s choice depending on his competence: at

each level possible variations of a structure are expected; it is sufficient to know at which learning level the learner is to anticipate his possible behaviour (Dogana 2002-2003 chapt. 2, Della Puppa 2007, chapt.2).

Dogana (2002-2003, p. 54-56) reports some examples, which regard the English interrogative structure, taken from the English corpus of Pienemann: if an English L2 learner who is at the third or the fourth level of acquisition has to face the grammatical structure “Aux-2” (auxiliary in sentence second position) in the sentence “Where is he going?” (1), he can opt for four possible solutions, using three different linguistic strategies (Dogana 2002-2003, chapt.2 , Della Puppa 2007, chapt. 2, Pallotti, 1998, chapt.2):

The solutions are:

- (2) Where he going?
- (3) Where is going?
- (4) Where is he going?
- (5) He is going were?

In the examples (2) and (3), the *omission strategy* is adopted: in (2) the auxiliary is omitted and in (3) it is the subject to be omitted; in the fourth solution the *violation strategy* has been used, that is to say that the subject-auxiliary inversion does not occur. Finally, in the fifth example, the learner uses the *elusion strategy*: he avoids the L2 structure which requires the inversion and the movement of the interrogative element in sentence initial position (Dogana 2002-2003, chapt. 2, Della Puppa 2007, chapt.2, Pallotti 1998, chapt.2).

The learner applies these strategies when he is not able to realize certain structures of the target language and consequently he makes these attempts to approach to it.

Foreseeing the learner’s behaviour during the process of acquisition, we have to wonder if the explicit teaching can modify the natural order of acquisition; observing the results of the studies in the project ZISA, Pienemann (Dogana 2002-2003, chapt 2., Pallotti 1998, chapt. 2 and 6, Luise, 2006, Della Puppa 2007, chapt. 2) reached the conclusion that school teaching cannot distort the learning sequences: we have not to invert or skip stages because “we cannot teach what is not “learnable” in that moment and

as a consequence it cannot be processed by the learner” [Luise, 2006, p. 98]. Explicit teaching can only favour and accelerate the transition from one stage to another (Pallotti, 1998, chapt.2, Della Puppa 2007, chapt. 2, Luise 2006, p. 98).

The teaching of linguistic structures in an order different from the natural one can cause the *fossilization* (that is to say, the acquisition of wrong structures) and the blocking in the linguistic evolution (Luise 2006, Pallotti 1998).

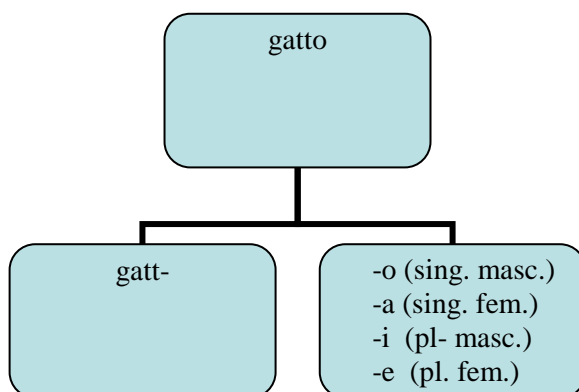
#### ***2.4 The Processability Theory applied to Italian as an L2***

The studies on the application of the Processability Theory on Italian as a second language are not numerous; among the few experts who made researches on the argument, we have to mention Di Biase, who tried to account for the development of L2 Italian by English adults and children speakers (Di Biase 2007, Luise 2006).

The purpose of his researches was to identify which are the learning sequences of Italian: differently from the studies of the project ZISA, he focused the attention more on the development of morphology than on the development of syntax as Italian language does not show wide syntactic movements in un-marked contexts; at the same time, it owns a very rich nominal and verbal morphology which represents a difficulty for non- native speakers (Pallotti, 1998, Dogana 2002-2003, Di Biase 2007).

For example, let’s consider nominal morphology: in Italian the nominal form (as verbal and adjectival categories too) is composed by a theme plus an inflectional element:

e.g.



The theme is not an autonomous word, it needs to be completed with the addition of a morpheme which contains number and gender features. The endings are four: “o” for the singular masculine, “a” for the singular feminine, “i” for the plural masculine and “e” for the feminine plural; Italian also shows a lot of exceptions because some morphological markings are ambiguous: although in most cases, “o” is the morpheme for masculine, there are feminine words that end with “o” (e.g. *mano*, *radio*). The phonological marking “e” can indicate not only the plural feminine, but also the singular masculine (e.g. *fiore*) and the singular feminine (e.g. *neve*), (Di Biase, 2007).

One of the difficulties for the learners of Italian as an L2 is the acquisition of the rules which govern the nominal morphology in Italian.

The studies conducted by Di Biase highlighted that learners manage to learn quickly the formation of the theme+ the vowel morpheme, but they need more time to acquire those cases which are exceptional (Di Biase 2007, Dogana 2002-2003, chapt.2, Della Puppa 2007, chapt.2).

The features of gender, number, person and tense are specific in each language and are stored in the syntactic procedure.

When the L2 is not typologically far from the mother language, it is easier for the learner to recover the structures he already knows; the problem arises when the two languages are typologically different: then he will have to master structures which cannot be recovered in his syntactic store, but he will have to acquire them and, subsequently, to automate them (Di Biase 2007, Dogana, 2002-2003).

Going back to Pienemann’s hierarchy, in the first two stages (lemma access and category procedure) the agreements between the parts of constituents of the produced elements does not occur (*stage 1*), (the examples are taken from our corpus):

e.g. *casco*, *parodinte*

During the *second stage* (which is also called the stage of *lexical morphology*) in particular, we can find the productions of simplified sentences with the canonical order “subject- verb- object” and mainly with the following distribution of the thematic roles: agent+ action+ patient; there



is no need of a high degree of processing to produce these sentences (Di Biase 2007, Dogana 2002-2003, Cook 1993).

With regard to verbal morphology, in this stage the learner starts to distinguish the past from the non-past with the morpheme “-to” and the morpheme “-re”, which indicates the infinitival form, is extended to the other verbal forms.

Within nominal morphology, the definite articles (“il” and “la”, mainly) start to be used and their function is to mark categorically the nominal expressions.

According to the interpretation provided by Di Biase (2007), learners in this phase produce the articles without a real grammatical analysis. Di Biase starts from the assumption that in Italian there are few contexts in which the word is not preceded by the article. He supports the idea of a formulaic learning: the learner presumably perceives the article as part of the phonetic string of the word it accompanies.

Anyway, the system of the use of the article in Italian is quite complex because there are a lot of variants (e.g. “il/lo/la” become respectively “i/gli/le”) and the entire paradigm is mastered only in the most advanced phase of acquisition (Di Biase 2007).

Di Biase found that the only plural morpheme to be used is “-i” and he also noted cases of gender marking, but without the expression of number agreement (the example is taken from the corpus reported in Di Biase, 2007, p. 31):

e.g. il tre orsi

In the *third phase*, called the stage of *phrasal morphology*, the agreement within the constituents starts: for example demonstratives, the noun (head of the DP) and the adjective agree with the number and sometimes also with the gender (Di Biase 2007, Dogana 2002-2003), (the example is taken from our corpus):

e.g. Mia madre

During the *fourth stage* (the *inter-phrasal morphology*) the agreement between the sentence phrases occurs: for example, there could be agreement between the DP- subject and the verb, or, in topicalized structures, the

agreement between object, the DP- object and the verb (only between the clitic pronouns and the past participle).

It is in this phase that the learner is able to recognize the grammatical relations (subject of, direct object of, indirect object of), to identify the category of the phrases and the relation between the predicates (verbal, nominal or adjectival) and their arguments (Di Biase 2007, Dogana 2002-2003), (the examples are taken from our corpus):

e.g. Lui abita.

Ci sono tre fratelli.

In the last phase (the *subordinate clause procedure*), the selection of a subordinate clause by the main clause is expected to happen, for example with the use of the subjunctive verbal form (the example is taken from our corpus):

e.g. Quando vado...meti..

## ***2.5 The phases of interlanguage of Italian as L2***

To conclude this chapter, we report the studies on the interlanguage development conducted by Giacalone Ramat (2003).

As we have seen in the previous section, Di Biase's studies were concentrated on nominal morphology; Giacalone Ramat widened the research to temporality, modality and gender in L2 Italian.

### ***2.5.1 Temporality***

The stages of acquisition of verbal morphology classified by the experts (with regard to Italian, Giacalone Ramat and Pallotti) are four (Maddii 2004, chapt. 4 and Pallotti 1998, chapt.2, Giacalone Ramat, 2003, chapt 7, <http://www.irreer.it/progettoregionale/mateconve22aprile2009L2/ANDORNO.pdf> and [http://www.comune.re.it/download/interlingua/tesi\\_Rossella\\_Fochesato.pdf](http://www.comune.re.it/download/interlingua/tesi_Rossella_Fochesato.pdf) on 27-9-2011).

In the *first stage* the verb appears in its basic form (generally, the verbal root), which is morphologically expressed with the third or sometimes second person singular of present indicative.

In some cases, the Italian infinitive appears to express events which have not really happened or it is used by learners whose mother language is typologically very far from Italian (e.g. Russian, Chinese).

The basic form is generalized to all verbal tenses (present, past, future); as a consequence, learners employ temporal adverbs or temporal and locative locutions to realize temporality (the examples are sentences reported by the first conversations with R.):

e.g. Io scriva penna. (io scrivo con la penna)

Tu va Venezia? (Tu vai a Venezia?)

Ieri tu va Venezia? (Ieri sei andata a Venezia?)

In the *second stage* the past participle suffix “-to” starts to appear, which indicates the past participle, the development of past actions already concluded.

The basic form continues to be used with the present form and also for past situations which have lasted for a long time (*durative aspect*):

e.g. Ieri fatto male boxe. (Ieri mi sono fatto male a boxe)

Io partito Marocco, arriva a Italia lavorare. (Sono partito dal Marocco, sono arrivato in Italia per lavorare)

In the *third stage* the use of imperfect appears. It is a level of acquisition rather advanced because learners begin to distinguish between past events occurred in a precise time and past events lasting in time.

The first verbs to appear in past simple are the verb “essere” with the function of copula (“ero/era”) and then verbs like “avere” and “potere”.

The *fourth stage* represents the advanced level of interlanguage.

Usually well-educated learners exposed to a driven input or learners whose mother tongue is typologically similar to Italian (e.g. Spanish, Romenian) can reach this level.

The learner starts to distinguish between sure and possible situations or desired situations using the conditional and subjunctive moods and the future indicative (Pallotti, 1998, chapt. 2, Maddii, 2004, chapt.4, Giacalone Ramat, 2003, chapt.7).

### 2.5.2 Modality

The modality to express doubts, wishes, certainties and hypotheses can occur through verbal forms (indicative, imperative, conditional and subjunctive moods), or through non linguistic forms (gestures, facial expressions, intonation)

(Pallotti, 1998, chapt.2, Maddii, 2004, chapt. 4, Giacalone Ramat, 2003, chapt.7, <http://www.fondazionefestari.it/pdf/dogana.pdf> on 24-11-2011, [http://www.comune.re.it/download/interlingua/tesi\\_Rossella\\_Fochesato.pdf](http://www.comune.re.it/download/interlingua/tesi_Rossella_Fochesato.pdf) on 27-9-2011).

In the *first phase* of the interlanguage (the phase of *implicit modality*) the learner has not acquired yet the verbal forms like “penso, credo, voglio” in order to express modality and resorts to non verbal codes to communicate his or her uncertainties and wills.

During the learning process, a *second stage* has been recognized, the stage of *lexical modality*, where the learners use lexical strategies but not the grammatical ones yet; the modality of uncertainty (or *epistemic modality*) is expressed with verbal forms such as “non so, penso, credo” or with adverbs as “forse” and “magari”.

To express the *deontic modality*, i.e. the modality of duty, the learner starts to use verbs like “volere, potere, dovere”; it is also realized with the infinite verbal form:

e.g. (from Rachid’s corpus)

io andare via prendere autobus → “io devo andare via per prendere l’autobus”

The use of conditional and subjunctive is reached only in the *third stage* (stage of *grammatical modality*), the more advanced one, in which the learner correctly uses verbal moods.

### 2.5.3 Agreement

Also with regard to gender and agreement, the acquisition occurs by stages; the acknowledgement of the masculine and feminine gender and the respective agreement with articles, adjectives and verbs happens gradually (Pallotti, 1998, chapt.2, Maddii, 2004, chapt. 4, Giacalone Ramat, 2003, chapt 7, <http://www.fondazionefestari.it/pdf/dogana.pdf>, 24-11-2011).

Initially, the gender of nouns is not analysed and, since articles are not present, there's no question of agreement.

The use of personal pronouns "lui/lei" and their distinction appears in this first stage because they are useful for communicate.

In the *second phase*, there are the first attempts of agreement with the appearance of definite and indefinite articles (both singular and plural); the strategy used by the learner is the rhyme between the final part of the noun and the article. It works with regular forms (e.g. *la casa, lo zaino*) but he or she will produce mistakes with the numerous exceptions in Italian (e.g. *le cornice* instead of "la cornice").

The evolution of the third stage sees the agreement between nouns and attributive adjectives; at first, also in this stage the learner resorts to the rhyme and apart from correct forms such as "brava maestra", we find deviated forms like "mano grando".

In the most advanced phases, the learner faces the difficulty of expressing the agreement in gender and number between the noun and the predicative adjective (e.g. *la lavagna è nera* and not "la lavagna è nero").

The last obstacle that is overcome is the agreement in the construction of the past participle, which with the copula "essere" requires the agreement with the subject both in gender and in number (e.g. *la penna è caduta*).

### *Chapt. 3 Our case study*

#### **3.1 Introduction: profile of our informant**

Rachid is a Moroccan boy, age 21; he arrived in Italy on August 2010 and in the following month he enrolled at the Centro Territoriale per l'Educazione Permanente (CTP) with the first purpose of learning how to read, to write and to communicate in Italian.

In his Country, he did not have the opportunity to attend school, unless for few months during childhood; as a consequence, he could not learn reading and writing in his mother tongue, which is Arabic. Nor he had the chance to learn French, which is often taught in high level schools in Morocco.

Since he decided himself to enrol in school, his motivation was very high and the improvements he made, both in writing and reading, have been remarkable already from the first months.

Most of the time Rachid has been monitored individually by me, working as a probationer for 150 hours and then remained as a volunteer until the half of May; nonetheless, we have never worked out of the classroom, which was composed by adult foreigners of all ages (from 17 to 60 years old) with a very basic level of Italian.

This gave him the chance to interact with his classmates when they had to create communicative situations in which they dialogued with simple and daily sentences.

From the very beginning, a pleasant and favourable background has been created in the classroom; it was characterised by cooperation between teachers and students and between the students themselves; thanks to this positive atmosphere, Rachid never felt judged but always felt accepted by the group, making his situation easier.

The program we started lasted almost a school year; from time to time Teresa Rossi and I planned the lesson and let Rachid share the activities we were going to do.

The beginning has not been easy because R. knew few Italian words, he did not talk much and barely understood what he was told.

Yet, little by little we started to understand each other through gestures and also thanks to two Moroccan classmates who translated what was incomprehensible to him.

With Rachid we dealt with all the grammar modules (phonology, syntax, morphology and lexicon), respecting a certain chronological order and his acquisition time.

When he started his school career, he did not possess a lexical store and so we had to respect the so-called “silent phase” ([http://www.municipio.re.it/sottositi/interlingua.nsf/PESIdDoc/1A830CABEA00F4BDC125794F00443DC7/\\$file/tesi\\_Rossella\\_Fochesato.pdf](http://www.municipio.re.it/sottositi/interlingua.nsf/PESIdDoc/1A830CABEA00F4BDC125794F00443DC7/$file/tesi_Rossella_Fochesato.pdf) on 29-9-2011): during the first months we did not force his production because he was not ready.

Therefore, a great part of the first semester has been dedicated to the development of the phonological competence: we focused on the discrimination of Italian sounds, on their possible combinations and on their graphic transcription.

The development of the phonological competence has been accompanied by the development of the basic lexicon: we associated sounds to concrete words with the double aim of making him familiar with sounds and building a minimum lexical basis.

Talking in terms of Interlanguage and Processability, we could say that we dedicated the first part of the school year to the first two phases of the procedural scheme because we ignored the syntactic and morphological reflection.

Only some months later we passed to the following stages, i.e., to the development of the morphological and syntactic competence. We dealt with the following aspects:

- definite and indefinite articles,
- the indicative present tense (of “to be”, “to have” and of the other lexical verbs),
- the present perfect,
- the canonical sentence structure (SVO, sometimes with the addition of indirect complements).

All the tasks conducted during the first year were elicited and guided as the student was not capable to work autonomously.

As we will see in the next section, only at the beginning of the second school year the student managed to obtain a certain degree of autonomy and to produce short spontaneous written texts.

### ***3.2 Methods applied in explicit teaching***

The work with the Moroccan student was done within the CTP. In these structures, language teaching promotes flexible programs; in our case this has been useful because we could adapt the program and the teaching materials to his needs and problems.

The organization of the Italian course was not easy because, as we know, the learner was an illiterate adult: he has been exposed only at an oral input in his Country, so he could not develop the skills of meta-linguistic reflections which are acquired through practising reading and writing (<http://www.irrefvg.org/STRANIERI/materiali/Articolo%20-%20L'educatore.pdf> on 12-7-2011). The lack of education did not allow him to develop the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences of which we talked in the first chapter.

When children go to school, they study a language which they already talk; a second language learner instead, at the beginning only hears undefined streams of sounds. Until he is not able to recognize the words, he cannot associate them to meanings. The second language becomes at the same time the mean and the object of learning (Minuz, 2005, pp. 101-102).

The process of literacy has to adapt to the level of the learner's oral competence.

The methods we used to teach him literacy are the following (Minuz, 2005, <http://www.irrefvg.org/STRANIERI/materiali/Articolo%20-%20L'educatore.pdf> on 12-7-2011, <http://www.itacacorsico.it/Metodi%20di%20alfabetizzazione.pdf> on 28-7-2011):

1. phonemic,
2. phonic- syllabic,
3. global.

To teach reading and writing we used all the three methods in different moments.



The *phomemic* method considers the phoneme as its starting unit: the word is analysed phoneme by phoneme. At the beginning, we could not apply this method because it requires an high skill of sound discrimination that Rachid did not own; furthermore, the single phoneme is hard to perceive and does not bring lexical meaning.

(<http://www.irrefvg.org/STRANIERI/materiali/Articolo%20-%20L'educatore.pdf> on 12-7-2011).

The *phonic- syllabic* method instead starts from the syllable because the phonemes are easier to perceive if they are inserted in a syllabic context. This method is valid if the syllables are shown within known words (e.g. RA + NA in “rana”, MA + NO in “mano”); if not, the exercise becomes monotonous and not useful to acquisition (<http://www.irrefvg.org/STRANIERI/materiali/Articolo%20-%20L'educatore.pdf> on 12-7-2011).

We used this method with the help of pictures; the pictures in fact helped to associate sound to meanings. The single phonemes have been considered only when Rachid could recognize the syllables.

The last method we used was the *global* one: it is based on the Gestalt Psychology (Balboni 2002, Luise 2006, [www.ssis.unige.it/BiniMetodietecniche.doc](http://www.ssis.unige.it/BiniMetodietecniche.doc), on 28-7 2011); according to this psychological framework, the perception of a stimulus occurs in three phases: globality, analysis and synthesis.

During the first phase, the global perception of the linguistic stimulus, a word in our case, takes place; we propose for example the word “mare” (globality). In the second phase (analysis) the word is analysed and subdivided initially in syllables and then into phonemes. In the third phase (synthesis) a phonological reflection occurs: for example, the learner reflects on the association of the initial letter with the other vowels (MA, ME, MI, MO, MU).

Then, the learner can continue with the research of words which contain the consonant “M” in word initial position (e.g. mare, mela, mina, mora, muro). With this kind of remark, learning can become acquisition.

We could apply the global method only at the end of our teaching, because the student lacked two important prerequisites

(<http://www.irrefvg.org/STRANIERI/materiali/Articolo%20-%20L'educatore.pdf>

on 12-7-2011):

- the knowledge of the relation between the oral expression and the written word;
- a sufficient lexical competence in the target language.

These three methods helped us to develop R.'s phonological and lexical competence.

After this initial phase, we could gradually teach him the first grammatical rules, such as for example the use of articles.

In the second phase we used different kinds of activities; we tried to propose useful and appropriate for our context..

We report the types of elicited exercises we submitted to the student (Balboni, 2008):

1. insertion of missing words,
2. comprehension exercises,
3. picture matching,
4. phrases reordering,
5. dictations,
6. listening exercises.

The *insertion of missing words* in mutilated texts is a technique that favours the way in which our brain elaborates the input (global perception> analysis> synthesis); the text reading has to be introduced gradually with students at the first acquisition levels: the learner has to start by exploring the paratext (pictures), then he reads the text and finally carries on with the insertion of the missing words (Balboni, 2008).

We report an example taken from the corpus of elicited exercises:

Oggi Luca lavora in casa. Con il maratiro (martillo) e un coiodo (chiodo)

appende un quadro al muro del salotto.

Con il cacciavete (cacciavite) e una vete (vite) ripara la gamba del tavolo.

Con la pinsa (pinza) e un dado ripara il robinto (rubinetto).

Con la sega taglia la legna per la stufa.

Luca è stanco e si addormenta sul defano (divano).

Also with *comprehension exercises* the initial approach to the paratext is fundamental; after reading, the student can continue with the verification of comprehension supported by tables which highlight the key-words:

- e.g. Mario: “Dove sei nato?”  
 Ugo: “A Torino, ma poi sono venuto a Treviso per lavoro.”  
 M: “E a Treviso dove abiti?”  
 U: “Abito in via Rodi.”

NOME	NATO A	VIA
Mario		
Ugo		

The third kind of exercises, the *picture matching task*, consists simply in word or sentences comprehension and the matching with the correspondent picture:

- e.g. Io sono Rita e abito a Treviso.  
 Io sono Paolo e abito a Roma.  
 Io sono Luisa e abito a Milano.  
 Io sono Luca e abito a Bari.

### 3. 3 *The initial phase: phonology and orthography*

The module of phonology and the transcription of the phonemes into graphemes has been the linguistic field in which the influence of the mother tongue has been more evident.

Rachid’s initial difficulty was the discrimination of single sounds: for example, he had problems to distinguish between the voiced plosive [b] and the voiceless plosive [p], because in Arabic the sound [p] does not exist ([http://venus.unive.it/aliasve/moduli/lingua\\_e\\_cultura/Allievo%20arabo\\_2003.pdf](http://venus.unive.it/aliasve/moduli/lingua_e_cultura/Allievo%20arabo_2003.pdf) on 13-7-2011, Della Puppa, 2007):

- e.g. “basta” instead of “pasta”

Other consonants which were difficult for him were the voiceless sibilant [s] and the voiced sibilant [z]; in terms like “casa”, “spesa” and “riso”, the consonant <s> is in intervocalic position and it is phonetically rendered with the voiced sibilant [z]. On the contrary, in Arabic the sound [z] corresponds to the grapheme <z>; it was therefore natural for him to write *caza*, *speza*

and *rez* because this was the sound he knew (Della Puppa in Luise, 2003, sect.6.1).

Also the couple of fricatives [f] and [v] was problematic because the voiced fricative [v] does not exist in Arabic, while the voiceless fricative [f] is present (Della Puppa, 2006, pp.11-12, [http://venus.unive.it/aliasve/moduli/lingua\\_e\\_cultura/Allievo%20arabo\\_2003.pdf](http://venus.unive.it/aliasve/moduli/lingua_e_cultura/Allievo%20arabo_2003.pdf) on 13-7-2011):

e.g. defano (divano)

With regard to vowels, we need to report a short digression about the Arabic vowel system: in the language *fusha* (language present in the Koran), the Arabic alphabet comprehends just three short vowels (a, i, u,) and three long vowels (ā, ī, ū); the vowels [i] and [u] are close, whereas [a] is open.

Yet, in regional and dialectal varieties (*dârija*), the vowels [e] and [o] are also present: we find them in the different pronunciation of long vowels [ā] and [ū] respectively.

In Italian, the distinction between the vowels [i] and [e] represents a problem for Arabic students (because [e] is not present in standard Arabic); also Rachid in his productions very often substituted [e] with [i] and [i] with [e]<sup>34</sup>:

e.g. sorille (sorelle)  
midico (medico)  
albiro (albero)  
mateta (matita)  
fela (fila)

In particular, the phenomenon of substitution in the last two examples can be explained with the influence of the vowels just before or just after the interested syllable: the presence of [a] in the previous or in the following syllable influences, with his opening, the performance of the vowel [i]; [i] is

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<sup>34</sup> The process of substitution of [e] with [i] can be caused by (Della Puppa, 2007, p.209):

- the position of [e] within the word,
- the position of [e] with respect to the stressed vowel,
- the number and the position of the same vowels within the word,
- the way in which the vowel is pronounced (dialectal influence).

The pre-tonic vowel is especially confused (in Della Puppa, 2007, pg. 210):

- e.g. /'mente/ and /sente/ are realized correctly,  
/men'tire/ and /sen'tire/ are realized /min'tire/ and /sin'tire/

then performed with [e], which is less close than [i] and less open than [a], (Della Puppa, 2007 pg. 210, [ojs.cimedoc.uniba.it/index.php/glottodidattica/article/view/84/83](http://ojs.cimedoc.uniba.it/index.php/glottodidattica/article/view/84/83), on 9-5-2012).

Sometimes Rachid substituted [i] with [e], as in *parteto*, *veso*, *dormete*, *vete* (instead of “partito”, “viso”, “dormite” and “vite”); the last two mistakes could be traced back to the assonance with [e] contained in the words.

Rachid many times confused [o] with [u], as in the examples:

Eg. *Cocina* (cucina)  
*Bocato* (bucato)  
*Sopermercato* (supermercato)

The diversity between Arabic and Italian at the sound level reflects also in orthography: Rachid in fact had remarkable problems with the trigraphs <che>/<chi>, <ghe>/<ghi>, <sce>/<sci> and with the digraphs <gl>/ <gn>, which, phonetically speaking, correspond respectively to [ke]/ [ki], [ge]/[gi], [ʃe]/ [ʃi], [ʎ] and [ɲ].

The reason is that in Arabic the digraphs and the trigraphs do not exist, because each phoneme corresponds to a single grapheme.

Furthermore, the presence of the letter <h> adds another problem: in Arabic, there are three types of <h> with sounds of different intensity; in Italian instead, the letter <h> does not correspond to any sound, but it is used to transcribe certain sounds (e.g. [g] in *ghiro*), (in [http://venus.unive.it/aliasve/index.php?name=EZCMS&page\\_id=526](http://venus.unive.it/aliasve/index.php?name=EZCMS&page_id=526), 13-7-2011).

Another problem we seldom encountered in Rachid’s corpus was the syllabic structure CCVC in word initial position: in standard Arabic there are no words beginning with the structure CCVC ([http://venus.unive.it/aliasve/index.php?name=EZCMS&page\\_id=526](http://venus.unive.it/aliasve/index.php?name=EZCMS&page_id=526), 13-7-2011, Della Puppa 2007); as a consequence, very often it occurred that Rachid inserted a vowel between the two initial consonants (e.g. “*paroblema*” instead of “*problema*”, “*tare*” instead of “*tre*”); this kind of mistake is found also in the middle of the word (e.g. “*risotorante*” instead of “*ristorante*”)<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> The exercises we made will be reported in the appendage.

### **3.4 Grammar**

At the grammar level we did not encounter remarkable difficulties.

With regard to articles, the Arabic system is quite different from the Italian one: in Arabic there is just one definite article, “al”, which is used both for feminine and masculine, singular and plural; this article is added at the beginning of the word (e.g. la porta → al-bābu). To realize the indefiniteness, the letter “nun” (n) is added to the final vowel (phenomenon of “nunation”), (Della Puppa, 2007, chapt. 6, [http://venus.unive.it/aliasve/moduli/lingua\\_e\\_cultura/Allievo%20arabo\\_2003.pdf](http://venus.unive.it/aliasve/moduli/lingua_e_cultura/Allievo%20arabo_2003.pdf) on 13-7-2011, <http://boccea590.altervista.org/aggiornamento/unababeledilingue.pdf> on 12-7-2011). Despite these differences, Rachid did not have many difficulties with Italian articles, at least with “il” and “la” and their plural forms (e.g. la bocca, il piede, i quaderni, le gomme).

With verbal morphology, his biggest problem was to understand the use of personal pronouns and the agreement within nominal predicates (e.g. il ragazzo è *bella*).

Differently from what we expected, he did not appear to have problems, in elicited exercises, with the distinction between “be” and “have” at the present tense. In Arabic, the verb “have” with the meaning of possess does not exist: for example, “Anna *ha* due bambini”, would be expressed as “Ad Anna, due bambini”; still, “Lui ha l’ombrello” in Arabic becomes “Presso di lui, l’ombrello” (Della Puppa, 2007, chapt. 6).

Despite this difference, Rachid carried out correctly the exercise on this argument (e.g. tu sei Bengalese, loro sono marocchine, loro hanno il libro).

Rachid could also understand the use of “essere” as copula in nominal sentences even if in Arabic the copula is not expressed in this kind of sentences if the verb is inflected at the present tense but it occurs only in the past tense (Della Puppa, 2007, chapt. 6).

### **3.5 Lexicon**

Beyond the development of the basilar syntax of Italian, we dedicated a lot of time to the acquisition of lexicon.

The lexical areas on which we lingered over were those that could be useful in his daily life: food, means of transport, family, sport, etc.

### ***3.6 Methods applied to verify the learner's competence***

The purpose of our work was to verify our learner's linguistic competence. Linguistic competence is abstract; a linguistic researcher has to resort to different techniques to "tap" it and to collect data (White 1989, 2003). In this section we will touch on the kinds of methods linguists use and give an explanation of why we choose an experimental technique instead of another.

According to White (1989, 2003), we could classify linguistic data into three categories:

1. *intuitional data* (obtained through grammaticality judgements, truth- value judgements, sentence matching),
2. *comprehension data* (act-out and picture- identification tasks),
3. *production data* (spontaneous and elicited productions).

Grammaticality judgements (GJ), truth- value judgements and sentence-matching are certainly valid, but they were inapplicable to our situation for the reasons we are going to explain.

In GJ tests for example, the learner has to judge if a given structure is possible or ungrammatical in the second language; we retained this technique not appropriate because our learner did not have a sufficient linguistic competence in L2 to face these tasks (White 1989, 2003).

With regard to *comprehension tests*, we limited to few worksheets in elicited exercises because his lexicon was still poor.

We thought that the best way to test his linguistic proficiency was the spontaneous production: we limited to suggest a topic; in this way, he was free to express himself and to use the structures he was able to process.

### ***3.7 The analysis of spontaneous productions***

So far, we have dealt with his productions under elicited exercises, but in this section we will examine his spontaneous written productions.

Our purpose is to verify if we respected the phases of Processability, facilitating his process of learning.

In particular, we will focus on nominal morphology and on verbal agreements.

Each production has been examined with two aims: one was to verify the learning of morpho- syntactic structures with relation to the Hierarchy of Processability proposed by Pienemann and applied to Italian as an L2 by Di Biase<sup>36</sup>.

The second purpose was to verify the acquisition of the verbal forms of present, present perfect and past simple.

The data concerning the first aim have been reported in tables subdivided into five columns: the first column contains the example taken from the corpus, the second the structure of the example, the third the procedure in the target language, the fourth indicates the correspondent stage (the stages have been indicated in brackets if the structure was not processed correctly) and the last column has been dedicated to comments when they were retained necessary.

As we will notice in the chart, in all the productions the lemmatic access (1) and the stage of the category procedure (2) appear few times: with regard to the former, we have reported only the examples of DPs which have not been grammatically analysed and so, for instance, without articles or paraphrased expressions (e.g. *materiale di muscollo*); with what concerns the second stage, in the analysis of productions few examples appear because it concerns the assignment of category (e.g. noun, adjective). The frequent presence of determiners and other modifiers favours the hypothesis that the procedure of the second stage is consolidated. However, we thought it was necessary to indicate the number and gender morphemes assigned in this stage in italics (in case of mistakes they have been underlined). The count of the occurrences has then been reported in the resumptive charts.

The analysis concerning the second purpose has been described in the final comment.

The productions have been reported following a temporal sequence of approximately two months.

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<sup>36</sup> In this analysis the orthographical mistakes (clearly frequent) have been ignored because they were not our matter of research.



The productions are very simple and formed by short sentences; for each production a topic was suggested and only in one (the description of an image), we offered an outline to follow with some guide-questions.

After the analysis of the data in the tables, we will provide a short comment of each production. Then, a resumptive table is provided in order to highlight the occurrences of each procedure and the results.

*First production (2<sup>nd</sup> February 2012)*

*Rachid's family:*

“Mio padre si chiama A. ha cinquantacinque anni, lui abita in Rabata lui lavora la scuola.

Mia madre si chiama B. ha cinquanta anni lei lavora in asilo.

Ci sono tre fratelli e cinque sorille. Il primo fratello si chiama M. ha trentasei anni lui abita ha S.

Sorilla si chiama F. a trentaquattro anni. Sorilla si chiama N. a trentadue anni. Sorilla si chiama Z. a trenta anni. Sorilla si chiama M. a ventotto anni. Sorilla si chiama G. a venticinque anni. Sorilla si chiama S. a diciannove anni.

I miei genitori abitano la Rabat . Tre sorelle e un fratello sono sposati.”

EXAMPLE	STRUCTURE	PROCEDURE IN L2	STAGE	COMMENTS
Mio padre	DP (modif.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Mio padre si chiama A.	DP+ VP	Inter-phrasal agreement	4	-
ha	DP (pro)+ VP	Inter-phrasal agreement	4	-
Cinquanta-cinque anni	DP (num.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Lui abita	DP (pers. Pr.)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Lui lavora	DP (pers.pron)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Mia mdre	DP (modif.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Mia mdre si chiama B.	DP+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
ha	DP (pro)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
cinquanta anni	DP (num.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Lei lavora	DP (pers.pron.)	Interphrasal agreement	4	-

Ci sono tre fratelli e tre sorelle	Existential construction of “to be”	Interphrasal agreement	4	It is not appropriate for the context but the construction is correct.
Tre fratelli	DP (num.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
(e) tre sorelle	DP (num+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Il primo fratello	DP (def. art.+ modif. + Noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	He wanted to say “the older brother” but he does not master the comparative and so he tried to explain with what he knew.
Il primo fratello si chiama M.	DP+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Ha	DP (pro)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
trentasei anni	DP (num.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Lui abita.	DP (p.p.) + VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Sorilla ( <i>sorella</i> ) si chiama F.	DP + VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
(mia) Sorilla	DP	Phrasal agreement	(3)	He omits the possessive adjective; he makes this mistakes 6 times.
a ( <i>ha</i> )	DP (pro)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
trentaquattro anni	DP (num.. + noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-

In this first spontaneous production only the procedures of the third and of the fourth stage recur; the first and the second stages are not very frequent for the reasons we anticipated in the preliminary remarks.

Within the noun phrases, we can notice that Rachid used two kinds of modifiers: the possessive adjectives (e.g. *mia sorella*) and the numeral modifiers (e.g. *tre fratelli, trentasei anni*).

The definite article appears twice and it is used correctly:

e.g. *I miei genitori*  
*Il primo fratello*

When R. was not able to produce the right structure, he resorted to the omission strategy:

e.g. *sorilla si chiama*

With regard to verbal agreement, he used only the third person singular, except for the last sentence in the text because it was guided; he expressed the subject both with the explicit DP (with the full-referential DP and with personal pronouns) and with the implicit subject (*pro*):

e.g. *Mio padre (full ref. DP) si chiama*  
*Lui (pers. Pronoun) abita*  
*A (pro- ha) ventotto anni*

The expression of the subject with personal pronouns could be also analysed as an hyper-correction phenomenon: even if Arabic is a pro-drop language (Della Puppa, 2003, 2007), he expresses the subject when it is not necessary. The agreements between the subject noun phrase and the verb phrase have been correctly performed in all the cases produced.

This production is substantially good, even if the structures of the produced sentences are very simple and repetitive: we are facing mainly sentences with the canonical structure SVO with the occasional addition of indirect complements (e.g. *lui abita in Rabata*).

When he was not capable to produce a structure of the target language, he made use of the paraphrase:

e.g. *Ci sono tre fratelli e cinque sorille.*  
*(ho tre fratelli e cinque sorelle)*

The structure is grammatically correct, even if this form is not usual in current Italian; we could argue the same thing to refer to the noun phrase “*il primo fratello*”: the elements within the phrase are positioned and agree in the correct way; however, he avoided to use the comparative structure,

which would be more appropriate, because he has not acquired it yet (e.g. il fratello più grande).

Here we report the table concerning the structures realized in the text:

STAGE	STRUCTURES	OCCURRENCES	√	*
1	lemmas	-	-	-
2	Number and gender morphemes	13	13 (100%)	-
3	Def. Art.	1	1	-
	Indef. Art.	-	-	-
	Numerals	6	6	-
	Other modifiers	3	2	1
	Total	10	9 (90%)	1 (10%)
4	Subj. DP- VP agreement	13	13 (100%)	-
5	Main clause+ sub. clause	-	-	-

### *Second and third production*

*Talk about the boxe (14 February 2012)*

Ci sono dentro paglistra sette sacco e un ring e matariale di muscollo. Quando vado sopra ring meti parodinte o casco e gle buonti pre corpo forte.

Io comencio dalle 7, facio la bicicletta e ginasteca e dumenale e sirquesto e corda comabatemete con ragazzi di paglistra facima il tecneca con mastro.

Fenico alle 10.

EXAMPLE	STRUCTURE	PROCEDURE IN L2	STAGE	COMMENTS
Ci sono sette sacco e un ring e matariale di muscollo	Existential form of "to be"	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Sette sacco	DP (num.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No number agreement
Un ring	DP (indef. Art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Matariale di muscollo ( <i>pesi</i> )	form	Lemma access	(1)	He did not remember the word and so he tried to explain with the words he knew
Quando vado...meti ( <i>metto</i> )	Subordinate clause+ main clause	Subordinate procedure	(5)	No person agreement
meti	DP (pro)+ VP	Interphrasal	(4)	No person

		agreement		agreement between DP and VP
Parodinte (paradenti)	DP	Lemma access	(1)	No insertion of the definite article
casco	DP	Lemma access	1	-
(E gle) buonti (I guanti)	DP	Lemma access	(1)	-
Gle (buonti)	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	He tries to produce agreement
Pre corpo forte (per i colpi forti)	form	Lemma access	1	He tried to repeat a received input
Io comencio	DP (p.p.)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Facio	DP (pro)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
La bicicletta	DP (def. art. + noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
e ginesteca (ginnastica)	DP (bare noun)	Lemma access	(1)	Non correct term
e dumenale (addominali)	DP (bare noun)	Lemma access	(1)	Non correct term
e sirquesto (circuito)	DP (bare noun)	Lemma access	(1)	Non correct term
e corda comabatamete (corda da combattimento)	DP (bare noun)	Lemma access	1	Non correct term
Con ragazzi di paglistra	DP	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No definite article
Facima (facciamo)	DP (pro)+ VP	Interph. Agreement	(4)	This is an attempt to reach the target verbal form
il tecneca	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No gender agreement
Con mastro (maestro)	DP	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No definite article
Fenico	DP (pro)+ VP	Interph. Agreement	4	-

*Talk about the carpenter work (15 February 2012)*

Materiale di falegname ci sono la sega, il pinza, il cacciavita, il martello.

Io faccio tavolo, letto, comodino, armadio, libreria, divano e riposare.

Ripaso finestre la porti la gollo.

EXAMPLES	STRUCTURE	PROCEDURE IN L2	STAGE	COMMENTS
Materiale di ( <i>da</i> ) falegname	form	Lemma access	1	-
Ci sono la sega, il pinza, il cacciavita, il martello	Existential construction of “to be”	Interphrasal agreement	4	The structure is not appropriate in this context, but it is grammatically correct
La sega	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Il pinza	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No gender agreement
Il cacciavita	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	The noun is not correct
Il martello	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Io faccio tavolo, comodino, divano	DP (pers.pron. ) + VP + DPs	Interphrasal agreement + category procedure	4	In Italian in this context we tend to use the bare noun in the plural form. He did not inflect the DPs with the plural but he correctly avoided to insert the definite articles
Divano e riposare ( <i>divano letto</i> )	form	Lemma access	(1)	-
Ripaso ( <i>ripasso</i> )	DP (pro)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
finestre	DP	Category procedure	(2)	No def. Art.
La porti	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	This structure is retained valid even if the ending vowel is not correct

The second and the third productions are very similar and really poor with relation to the contents and to the structures to analyse.

In both, he mainly wrote a list of the terms concerning the two arguments; he made use of the lexicon using the paraphrase, to indicate the nominal expressions which he did not remember, as in the examples:

e.g. Matariale di muscollo  
 corda comabatamete  
 divano e riposare

In the two tables concerning the analysis of the data, the lemmas recur in the first production especially at the first stage because they have been classified as mistakes (they were not usual and not fixed in his lexical competence); on the contrary, in the second table the lemmas have been classified at the third stage because they were lemmas of more common use and have been analysed from the grammatical point of view, with gender and number agreement.

In particular, the two examples,

e.g. Il pinza  
 il cacciavita

would seem similar mistakes; actually, in the first case the agreement has not been realised and so we have considered it a mistake. The second instead has not been signalled because it is an orthographical mistake (exchange of vowels in final position).

The structures produced in the two productions belong mainly to the third and the fourth stage; differently from the first production the agreements, both nominal and verbal, have worsened, presumably because the lexicon adopted was not familiar to him:

e.g. sette sacco  
 meti (io metto)

It has to be noticed that for the first time a structure of the fifth stage appears:

e.g. quando vado sopra ring meti..

Clearly, we cannot affirm that just one occurrence implies the acquisition of the procedure of the most advanced level.

STAGE	STRUCTURES	OCCURRENCES	√	*
1	lemmas	9	3 (33,3%)	6 (66,6%)
2	Number and	5	5 (100%)	-

	gender morphemes			
3	Def. Art.	5	1	4
	Indef. Art.	1	1	-
	Numerals	1	-	1
	Other modifiers	-	-	-
	Total	7	2 (28,6%)	5 (71,4 %)
4	Subj. DP+ VP agreement	6	4 (66,6%)	2 (33,3%)
5	Main clause+ sub. clause	1	-	1 (100%)

STAGE	STRUCTURES	OCCURRENCES	√	*
1	lemmas	2	1 (50%)	1 (50%)
2	Number and gender morphemes	9	9 (100%)	-
3	Def. Art.	5	4	1
	Indef. Art.	-	-	-
	numerals	-	-	-
	Other modifiers	-	-	-
	Total	5	4 (80%)	1 (20%)
4	Subj. DP+ VP agreement	3	3 (100%)	-
5	Main clause+ sub.clause	-	-	-

#### *Fourth and fifth production*

*Describe your house in Italy(29 February 2012).*

Si trova la mia casa proferetiria di S.. Ci sono due piani io abito primo piano ci sono dentro casa mia tre camera e due bagne e una cucina e uno salotto e uno corodio e due la teraza e una girdeno e grande gorgio. Ci sono dentro gorgio uno sacco e una becicleta e una machineta di corsa.

EXAMPLE	STRUCTURE	PROCEDURE IN L2	STAGE	COMMENT S
Si trova la casa mia	VP+ DP	Interphrasal agreement	4	The DP- VP agreement is correct but the phrases are inverted
La casa mia	DP (det. art.+ noun+ adj.)	Phrasal agreement	3	The agreement within the DP is correct but the noun and the adjective positions are inverted
Proferetiria di S.	PP (in+ DP+ PP)	Lemma access	(1)	He meant "in periferia di S."; he tried



				to reproduce a word heard in classroom
Ci sono due piani	Existential construction of "to be"	Interphrasal agreement	4	Even if "Ha due piani/ è di due piani" would be more correct, the existential construction is correct.
Due piani	DP (num.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Io abito	DP (p.p.)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
primo piano	DP (modif+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Ci sono (dintro casa mia) tre camera, due bagne...	Existential construction of "to be"	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Casa mia	DP (noun+ modif.)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Tre camera	DP (num..+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No number agreement
Due bagne	DP (num..+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	The agreement is correct even if the final vowel is wrong
Una cucina	DP (indef. art+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Uno salotto	DP (indef. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	He substitutes the article with the numeral adjective
Uno corodio (corridoio)	DP (indef. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	He substitutes the article with the numeral adjective
Due la teraza	DP (num.+ art. + noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No agreement and wrong insertion of the article
Una girdeno (giardino)	DP (art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No gender agreement
(un) Grande gorgio (garage)	DP (adj+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	He omits the indefinite article but the gender and number agreement between the

				noun and the adjective is correct (a part from orthographic mistakes)
Ci sono (dintro gorgio) uno sacco e una bicicletta e una machineta da corsa	Existential construction of "to be"	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Uno sacco	DP (indef. Art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	He substitutes the article with the numeral adjective
Una bicicletta	DP (indef. Art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Una machineta da corsa (tapis rouland)	form	Lemma access	(1)	This is an attempt to explain an unknown word

*Describe your house in Morocco (7<sup>th</sup> March 2012):*

“Ci trova la casa mia cintro di R. e ci sono due piane. Primo piano ci sono due camere e uno salotto e una cocina e uno banio un corodio e secondo piano ci sono una camera e due salotto e uno cocina e uno corodio uno bagno e sopra di casa mia ci trova la terasa e vicino mare.

EXAMPLE	STRUCTURE	PROCEDURE IN L2	STAGE	COMMENT S
Ci (si) trova la casa mia	Existential construction of "to be"	Interphrasal agreement	4	The information is exchanged correctly but he inverts the phrases
La casa mia	DP (def. art.+ noun+ modif.)	Phrasal agreement	3	The agreement is correct but the modifier "mia" is not positioned in the Italian unmarked position (la mia casa).
(e) ci sono due piane	Existential construction of "to be"	Interphrasal agreement	4	-

Due <i>piane</i>	DP (num..+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Primo <i>piano</i>	DP (modif.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
ci sono due camere e uno salotto...	existencial construction of "to be"	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Due <i>camere</i>	DP (num. + noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Uno <i>salotto</i>	DP (indef.art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	He substitutes the article with the numeral adjective
Uno <i>baino</i>	DP (indef. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	He substitutes the article with the numeral adjective
Un <i>corodio</i>	DP (indef. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Secondo <i>piano</i>	DP (modif..+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
ci sono una camera e due salotto..	existential construction of "to be"	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Una <i>camera</i>	DP (indef.art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Due <i>salotto</i>	DP (num.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No number agreement
Uno <i>cocina</i>	DP (indef. art. + noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No gender agreement
Uno <i>corodio</i>	DP (indef. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	He substitutes the article with the numeral adjective
Uno <i>baino</i>	DP (art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	He substitutes the article with the numeral adjective
<i>casa mia</i>	DP (noun+ modif.)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Ci ( <i>si</i> ) trova la <i>teraso</i>	Existential construction of "to be"	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
La <i>teraso</i>	DP (def.art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No gender agreement

The arguments of the fourth and of the fifth productions are the description of his home in Italy and in Morocco.

What appears evident in these two productions is the positive result of the procedures of the stages of phrasal and inter-phrasal agreement: in the majority of the occurrences, both the agreements within the noun phrases and the agreements between the subject DPs and the verbal predicate have been carried out correctly.

Indefinite articles start to appear systematically but the feminine ones result to be correct (e.g. una cucina, una camera); the masculine articles instead have been correctly analysed only from the gender and number agreement point of view, as R. uses the numeral adjective “uno” in substitution of the indefinite masculine article:

e.g. uno soldato

uno banio

In the fifth production, in the sentence “si trova la mia casa”, we can observe that Rachid did not respect the canonical order in Italian (SVO) because he has been influenced by the Arabic order, which is predominantly VSO in verbal sentences (Della Puppa 2007, chapt. 6).

STAGE	STRUCTURES	OCCURRENCES	√	*
1	lemmas	2	-	2 (100%)
2	Number and gender morphemes	17	17 (100%)	-
3	Def. Art.	1	1	-
	Indef. Art.	7	2	5
	numerals	4	2	2
	Other modifiers	3	3	-
	Total	15	8 (53,3%)	7 (46,6%)
4	Subj. DP+ VP agreement	5	5 (100%)	-
5	Main clause+ sub.clause	-	-	-

STAGE	STRUCTURES	OCCURRENCES	√	*
1	lemmas	-	-	-
2	Number and gender morphemes	19	17 (89,5%)	2 (10,5%)
3	Def. Art.	2	1	1
	Indef. Art.	7	2	5
	numerals	3	2	1
	Other modifiers	4	4	-
	Total	16	9 (56,3%)	7 (43,7%)
4	Subj. DP+ VP agreement	5	5	-
5	Main clause+ sub.clause	-	-	-

*Sixth production (14 March 2012).*

*Describe the photo (with the help of some simple questions):*

Ci sono quindici persone nerri. Non fanno casa. Ci sono vestiti di molto colori.

La foto è di colorati.

Ci sono 5 done fanno passeggille e due doni mittono sopra la testa la terrina.

Ci sono dentro la terrina vestiti.

Una dona alsa una bambina dentro la schiena e sachito nero con la mano.

EXAMPLE	STRUCTURE	PROCEDURE IN L2	STAGE	COMMENTS
Ci sono 15 persone nerri	Existential form of "to be"	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
15 persone nerri	DP(num.+ noun+ modif..)	Phrasal agreement	3	We could say that there is no gender agreement, but the mistake can be also caused by a vowel confusion
Non fanno casa	Neg.+ DP (pro)+ VP+ DP (bare noun)	Interphrasal agreement	4	he meant: "non fanno case di mattone"; no plural marking in the bare DP "casa"
Ci sono vestiti	Existential form of "to be"	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
molto colori	DP(modif.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No number agreement
La foto	DP (def.art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
(la foto è) di colorati	form	Lemma access	(1)	He meant "a colori"
Ci sono 5 done	Existential construction of "to be"	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
5 done	DP (num.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Due doni	DP (num.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	The ending vowel is wrong
Due doni mittono	DP+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
La terrina	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
(Sopra) la testa	PP [P+ DP(def. art.+ noun)]	Phrasal agreement	3	-
(Dentro) la terrina (cesta)	PP [P+ DP(def. art.+ noun)]	Phrasal agreement	3	-

Ci sono vestiti	Existential construction of "to be"	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Uno dona	DP (indef. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No gender agreement
Uno dona alsa	DP+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Una bambina	DP (indef. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Dintro (la schiena)	PP (P+ DP)	lemmatic	(1)	He meant "dietro"
La schiena	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
(e) sachito nero	DP (noun+ modif.)	Phrasal agreement	3	He does not write "sacchetto" correctly but the morphosyntactic procedure is correct.
(Con) la mano	PP [P+ DP( def. art.+ noun)]	Phrasal agreement	3	-

The sixth production consisted in a description of a picture and it has been the only spontaneous production guided by some simple questions.

Also in this task, we can notice that the procedures are attested at the stages number 3 and 4 and with appreciable results.

Thanks to the guiding questions, his sentences turn out to be more complex and articulated; we can record either a bigger effort in the use of new verbs (e.g. fanno, mittono, alsa) and some attempts of paraphrase to compensate for lemmas which have been not acquired yet:

e.g. la foto è di colorati (la foto è a colori)  
non fanno casa (non fanno case di mattone)

STAGE	STRUCTURES	OCCURRENCES	√	*
1	lemmas	2	-	2 (100%)
2	Number and gender morphemes	15	15 (100%)	-
3	Def. Art.	6	6	-
	Indef. Art.	2	1	1
	numerals	3	3	-
	Other modifiers	3	2	1
	Total	14	12 (85,7%)	2 (14,3%)
4	Subj. DP+ VP agreement	7	7 (100%)	-
5	Main clause+ sub.clause	-	-	-

*Seventh production (21<sup>st</sup> March 2012)*

*Describe your life in Morocco.*

Quando sono piculo mi piace la primavera, giocare con miei amici al parco e plisitacion lingnio mi gaurdo pugilato e cide e comedy.

Quando in Marocco nasce un bambino il papà sussurra nel suo orecchio destro una preghiera così diventa un buon musulmano.

Mi piaceva dai la mano a mia madre, lavare i piatti e stendere bucato e guardo come cucinare.

Io facevo lucidare rifare letto scolto la musica e ballare. Vado la scuola mi piaceva solo cantare.

Quando l'estate vado la scuola di bambini di nove anni e undici partono fuori di casa quindici giorno e giochiamo tutti (Quando era estate andavo alla scuola dei bambini...partivamo per 15 giorni e giocavamo tutti insieme).

EXAMPLES	STRUCTURE	PROCEDURE IN L2	STAGE	COMMENTS
Quando sono piculo mi piace...	Sub.+ main clause	Subordinate procedure	(5)	The structure is well formed but he does not respect the consecution temporum
Sono piculo	DP(pro)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	The structure is correct but he does not use the past simple
Mi piace	DP(pro)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	See the previous example
La primavera	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
(mi piace) giocare	Main clause+ sub. infin.	Subordinate procedure	(5)	The structure has been formed correctly but he does not apply the past simple
(con) miei amici	DP (modif.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No insertion of the def. article
Lingnio (legno)	form	Lemma access	(1)	-

Mi guardo (guardo)	DP (pro)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Pogilato (pugilato)	DP	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No def. art.
Quando nasce un bambino...il papà sussurra	Sub. Clause+ main clause	Sub. Proc.	5	-
Nasce un bambino	VP+ DP (art. + noun)	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Un bambino	DP (indef. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Il papà sussurra	DP (art.+ noun)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Il papà	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
(nel) suo orecchio destro	DP (modif.+ noun+ modif.)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Una preghiera	DP (indef. Art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
(così) diventa	DP (pro)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Un buon musulmano	DP (indef. art.+ modif.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Mi piaceva	DP (pro)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Mi piaceva dai (dare)	Main clause+ sub.	Sub. procedure	(5)	The structure is well formed but he does not inflect the embedded verb at the infinitival tense
La mano	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
(a) mia madre	DP (modif.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement.	3	-
(mi piaceva) lavare	Sub. + main clause	Sub. procedure	5	-
I piatti	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
(mi piaceva) stendere	Sub.+ main clause	Sub. procedure	5	-
bucato	DP	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No def. Art.



(mi piaceva) Guardo come cucinare	Main clause+ sub. clause	Sub. Procedure	(5)	-
Io facevo	DP (pers. Pron.)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Scolto (ascolto)	DP (pro)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	In the context of this sentence the use of the past simple was necessary
La musica	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Vado (la scuola)	DP (pro)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	The DP-VP agreement is correct but, again, he does not use the right tense
Mi piaceva (solo) cantare	Sub.+ main clause	Sub. procedure	5	-
Quando (l'estate) vado...	Sub.+ main clause	Sub. procedure	(5)	The structure is correct but he does not use the past tense.
vado	DP (pro)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
bambini	DP	Category proc.	2	-
Nove anni	DP (num.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Partono (io e i bambini)	DP (pro)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	(4)	No person agreement
Quindici giorn <u>o</u>	DP (num.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No number agreement
Giochiamo (tutti)	DP+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-

The seventh production is certainly more complex than the previous ones; Rachid faced the structure of the most advanced stage more than once but he succeeded to perform it correctly just twice.

He alternates correct procedures with wrong forms even within the same sentence:

e.g. \* Mi piaceva dai la mano  
 √ (Mi piaceva) lavare i piatti

We could not retain the infinitival subordinate structure acquired but, anyway, it is an emerged structure which has to be consolidated.

As in the other productions, we recorded only one case of the first stage (lingnio) and three of the second; the cases of phrasal agreement (third stage) and inter- phrasal agreement (fourth stage) instead are more numerous and correct, except for some cases:

e.g. \* Quindici giorno  
 \* (noi) partono

For the first time he managed to use the indefinite masculine article “un” in the correct form and he did not use the numeral adjective as he did previously:

e.g. un bambino  
 un buon musulmano

STAGE	STRUCTURES	OCCURRENCES	√	*
1	lemmas	1	-	1 (100%)
2	Number and gender morphemes	20	19 (95%)	1 (5%)
3	Def. Art.	8	5	3
	Indef. Art.	3	3	-
	numerals	2	1	1
	Other modifiers	5	5	-
		18	14 (77,7%)	4 (22,2%)
4	Subj. DP+ VP agreement	13	12 (92,3%)	1 (7,7%)
5	Main clause+ sub.clause	9	4 (44,4%)	5 (55,5%)

*Eight production (27 March 2012)*

*Description of a boxing meeting*

Commericiato alle 17.00 e prima di combattimento arriverà l'ambulanza e il medico di base fa controllo tutti i ragazzi e le ragazze e fanno il combattimento.

Medico sporteva controllo di la corporatura e il peso.

Arriveranno gli arbitri e ci sono programma degli incontri memorial Gianluigi Levorato Union boxe Mestre dal 1948. Sul ring ci sono: angolo rosso per i nostre atletica e angolo blu e gli altre arriveranno tante persone per guardano il combattimento.

Ero molto nervoso.

EXAMPLES	STRUCTURE	PROCEDURE IN L2	STAGE	COMMENTS
Commericiato (è cominciato)	VP	Interphrasal agreement	(4)	Omission of the subject (pro) and of the copula
Arriverà l'ambulanza	VP (un accusative)+ DP	Interphrasal agreement	4	Correct agreement but he does not inflect the verb at the past tense
L'ambulanza	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Il medico	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Il medico di base (fa) controlla	DP+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	As before, he inserts the wrong tense
Tutti i ragazzi e le ragazze	DP (quantif.+ coordinated DPs)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
E fanno	DP (pro)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Il combattimento	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Medico sporteva	DP (noun+ adj.)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No insertion of the definite article

Medico sporteva controllo	DP+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	(4)	No person agreement
La corporatura	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Il peso	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Arriveranno gli arbitri	VP (un accusative)+ DP	Interphrasal agreement	4	Correct agreement, but he does not use the past tense
Gli arbitri	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Ci sono programma	Existencial construction of "to be"	Interphrasal agreement	(4)	No number agreement
Ci sono angolo rosso e angolo blu	Existencial construction of "to be"	Interphrasal agreement	(4)	No insertion of the indefinite articles
Angolo rosso	DP (noun+ modif.)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No insertion of the indefinite article
(per) i nostre atletica (atleti)	DP (def. art. +modif.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	-
Angolo blu	DP (noun+ modif.)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No insertion of the indefinite article
Gli altre (altri)	DP (def. art.+ pron.)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Arriveranno tante persone	VP (un accusative)+ DP	Interphrasal agreement	4	Correct agreement, but he does not use the past tense
Tante persone	DP (modif.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Arriveranno..per guardano	Main clause+ infinitival clause	Subordinate clause procedure	(5)	Wrong verbal mood in the infinitival clause
Il combattimento	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Ero molto nervoso	DP(pro)+ nominal predicate	Interphrasal agreement	4	-

The structures produced by R. in this production belong to the third and to the fourth stage; just one (unsuccessful) attempt to formulate a structure of the fifth stage has been recorded.

As we can notice, the procedures of the third stage have not been consolidated yet; analysing some of his mistakes, it appears evident that he is not able to use the articles yet.

In the previous productions he resorted to the use of the numeral adjective when he was not able to perform the indefinite article; in the present production instead, he adopts the omission strategy, as in the following example:

e.g. (un) angolo rosso

STAGE	STRUCTURES	OCCURRENCES	√	*
1	lemmas	-	-	-
2	Number and gender morphemes	18	17 (94,4%)	1 (5,6%)
3	Def. Art.	12	11	1
	Indef. Art.	2	-	2
	numerals	-	-	-
	Other modifiers	6	6	-
	Total	20	17 (85%)	3 (15%)
4	Subj. DP+ VP agreement	10	6 (60%)	4 (40%)
5	Main clause+ sub.clause	1	-	1 (100%)

*Ninth production (3<sup>rd</sup> April 2012)*

*Description of two people*

Mia congnziata a 34 anni, alta e capille biondi e nasso normale, occhi verdi.

E multo brava.

Capile leci (lisci). Lei piace guarda calcio juventos e giocare gioco (a carte).

Mio fratello è baso e grosso e pilato. Nasso grosso e occhio neri e barva e piace guarda canale di documentary.

EXAMPLES	STRUCTURE	PROCEDURE IN L2	STAGE	COMMENT S
Mia congnziata	DP (modif.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Mia congnziata	DP+ VP	Interphrasal	4	-

a ( <i>ha</i> ) 34 anni		agreement		
(è) alta	DP (pro) + nominal VP	Interphrasal agreement	(4)	Omission of the copula
capille biondi	DP (noun+ modif.)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	Omission of the definite article
Nasso normale	DP (noun+ modif.)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	Omission of the definite article
Occhi verdi	DP (noun+ modif.)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	Omission of the definite article
E ( <i>è</i> ) multo brava	DP (pro)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Capile leci	DP (noun+ modif.)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	Omission of the definite article
Lei piace guarda	Main clause+ infinitival subordinate clause	Subordinate procedure	(5)	Wrong verbal mood in the infinitival and wrong structure of “piacere”
calcio	DP (noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No definite art.
(Lei piace) Giocare	Main clause+ subordinate clause	Subordinate procedure	5	-
Gioco (a carte)	lemma	Lemma access	(1)	-
Mio fratello	DP (modif.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Mio fratello è baso e grosso e pilato	DP + nominal VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Occhi <sub>o</sub> neri	DP (noun+ modif.)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No number agreement and no insertion of the definite article
Barva ( <i>barba</i> )	DP (bare noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No def. Art.
(gli) piace guarda	Main clause+ infinitival subordinate clause	Subordinate procedure	(5)	Wrong mood of the infinitival verb
Canale di documentary (documentari)	DP	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No def. article

The ninth production was aimed at the realization of agreement in nominal predicates and in verbal predicates with the verb “to have”.

The agreement morphemes are performed quite correctly, but in many cases the copula is missing. It does not mean that our informant has no competence of the copula; in some cases the nominal structure has been

executed with all the elements correctly expressed, as in the following examples:

e.g. E (è) molto brava.

Mio fratello è basso e grosso e pilato.

The verb “to have” in its lexical form has been performed only in one case:

e.g. Mia cognata a (ha) 34 anni.

In the other cases in which he should use it, he omits it and he also does not express the subject, which is interpretable only within the context:

e.g. (Mio fratello ha) capille biondi

(Mio fratello ha) occhi neri.

As we can see from the table, Rachid made three attempts to formulate a structure of the fifth stage:

e.g. lei piace guarda

(lei piace) giocare

(Gli) piace guarda

The first two examples are found within the same sentence; we have to ignore the mistake concerning the form of the indirect complement (*a lei/ le piace*), because it is a structure he does not know yet. We have to focus instead on the structure of the infinitival: in the first attempt he used the wrong verbal mood, whereas in the second he correctly inserts the infinite mood. In the third example he made the same mistake again, so we can retain that the fifth stage is not yet reached.

STAGE	STRUCTURES	OCCURRENCES	√	*
1	lemmas	1	-	1 (100%)
2	Number and gender morphemes	17	16 (94%)	1 (6%)
3	Def. Art.	8	-	8
	Indef. Art.	-	-	-
	numerals	-	-	-
	Other modifiers	7	6	1
	Total	15	6 (40%)	9 (60%)
4	Subj. DP+ VP agreement	4	3 (75%)	1 (25%)
5	Main clause+ sub.clause	3	1(33,3%)	2 (66,6%)

*Tenth production (4 April 2012)*

*Description of a medical visit*

Mi fato un combatemete una setemana fa ha Padova. Ci sono dieci dicontre mi preso pongnio senestra mia occhio. Mi santeto male dentro occhio e feneto secondo rauand cominciato terso rauand mi pasato bastanza male feneto terso rauand mi vento questo contro sono contento. E pasato uno giorno mi vedo con occhio senestra totti nebbiata sono adato con mia cogniata spedale il medico di specialisti. Sono stato dentro spedale due giornie.

EXAMPLES	STRUCTURE	PROCEDURE IN L2	STAGE	COMMENTS
Mi fato (ho fatto)	DP (pro)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	(4)	No insertion of the auxiliary and use of a clitic instead of a personal pronoun
Un combatemete	DP (indef. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Una setemana	DP (indef. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Ci sono dieci dicontre (incontri)	Existential construction of "to be"	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Dieci dicontre	DP (num.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Mi preso (ho preso)	DP (pro) + VP	Interphrasal agreement	(4)	Omission of the auxiliary
Pongnio	DP (noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No insertion of the indefinite article
Senestr <u>a</u> mi <u>a</u> occh <u>io</u>	DP (modif.+ modif..+noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No gender agreement
Mi santeto (male) (mi sono sentito male)	DP (pro)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	(4)	No insertion of the auxiliary and use of a clitic instead of a personal pronoun
(dentro) occhio	DP (noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No insertion of the definite article
Feneto (ho finito) secondo rauand (round)	VP+ DP	Interphrasal agreement	(4)	No insertion of the auxiliary
Secondo rauand	DP (modif.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No insertion of the definite article
(Ho) cominciato terso rauand	VP+ DP	Interphrasal agreement	(4)	No insertion of the auxiliary
Terso rauand	DP (modif.+	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No insertion of



	noun)			the definite article
mi pasato (mi è passato)	DP (pro) + VP	Interphrasal agreement	(4)	No insertion of the auxiliary
(il) male	DP (bare noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No insertion of the definite article
(Ho) feneto terso rauand	VP+ DP	Interphrasal agreement	(4)	No insertion of the auxiliary
Terso rauand	DP (modif.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No insertion of the definite article
Mi vento (ho vinto)	DP+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	(4)	No insertion of the auxiliary and use of a clitic instead of a personal pronoun
Questo contro (incontro)	DP (modif. + noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Sono contento	DP (pro) + nominal VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
Pasato (dopo) un giorno	DP (indef. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Mi vedo (ho visto)	DP+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	(4)	Use of a clitic instead of a personal pronoun
(con) occhio senestr <u>a</u>	DP (noun+ modif.)	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No gender agreement and omission of the definite article
Sono adato (andato)	DP (pro)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
(con) mia cognata	DP (modif..+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-
Il medico di specialisti (dallo specialista)	DP (def. art.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	He resorted to paraphrase
Sono stato	DP (pro)+ VP	Interphrasal agreement	4	-
(dentro) ospedale	DP	Phrasal agreement	(3)	No definite article
Due giorni	DP (num.+ noun)	Phrasal agreement	3	-

The aim of the tenth and last production was to verify the acquisition of verbal agreements in the past tense.

The structures of this production belong mainly to the third and the fourth stage but few correct forms are recorded; with regard to the third stage, the mistakes are in most cases omission of the article and only in one case gender agreement is wrong:

e.g. (un) pongnio

(il) terso rauand

Occhio senestra (sinistro)

The mistakes of the fourth stage instead regard the performance of all the elements of the verbal agreement: in this production the expression of the auxiliary of the present perfect recurs only twice and it is realized correctly:

e.g. sono adato

sono stato

In the rest of the cases Rachid adopted the omission strategy, expressing only the subject (instead of the Italian personal pronoun “io”, he used the subject clitic pronoun “mi” which is proper of Venetian dialect) and the verb in the past participle:

e.g.	mi fato	e.g.	mi santeto
	mi preso		mi pasato
	feneto		
	mi vento		
	mi vedo		

In the first group he omitted the auxiliary “avere” and in the second the auxiliary “essere”.

STAGE	STRUCTURES	OCCURRENCES	√	*
1	lemmas	-	-	-
2	Number and gender morphemes	20	17 (85%)	3 (15%)
3	Def. Art.	8	1	7
	Indef. Art.	4	3	1
	numerals	2	2	-
	Other modifiers	8	5	3
	Total	22	11 (50%)	11 (50%)
4	Subj. DP+ VP agreement	13	4 (30,8%)	9 (69,2%)
5	Main clause+ sub.clause	-	-	-

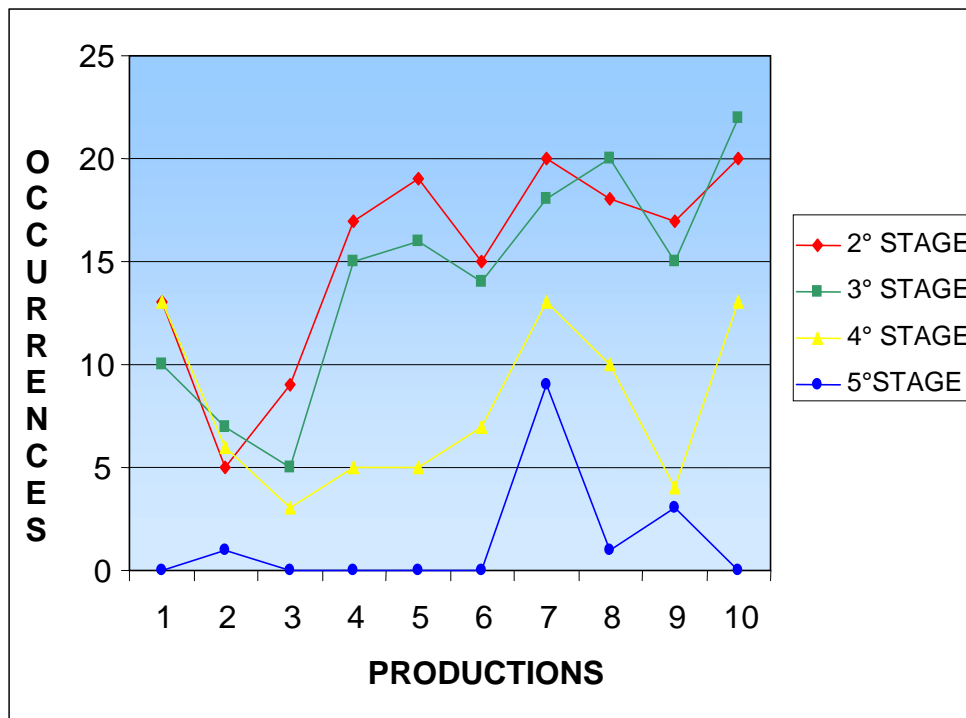
### 3.7.1 Comment on spontaneous productions

In the final section of this chapter we try to give a global comment on the results of our informant's spontaneous productions; we will concentrate not only on morphology (that was the module on which we have interested so far), but also on phonology and on the kind of lexicon and syntactic structures produced.

In the analysis of productions we ignored the orthographical mistakes even if they were many because the learner still has a lot of difficulties with the perception of Italian sounds (especially with vowels) and with their transcription: the fact that he did not receive an appropriate education has strongly influenced his second language learning.

The automation of the processes of phoneme-grapheme conversion will require much more time to him with respect to other educated students.

We start anyway to analyse the results of his productions calculated. The following graph highlights the trend of the occurrences of the grammatical structures; on the whole, it is increasing. In the ninth production, a decrease of the occurrences of the third and the fourth stage is evident: we can interpret it as the product of a particularly brief production.



In the chart below instead, we reported the total of the occurrences of all the ten productions, subdividing the occurrences into right and wrong:

STAGE	STRUCTURES	OCCURRENCES	√	*
1	lemmas	17	4 (23,5%)	13 (76,5%)
2	Number and gender morphemes	153	145 (94,8%)	3 (5,2%)
3	Def. Art.	56	31	25
	Indef. Art.	26	12	14
	numerals	21	16	5
	Other modifiers	39	33	6
	Total	142	92 (64,8%)	50 (35,2%)
4	Subj. DP+ VP agreement	75	60 (80%)	15 (20%)
5	Main clause+ sub.clause	14	5 (35,7%)	9 (64,3%)

For what concerns the lexicon, we can claim that Rachid gradually improved his semantic knowledge in L2; he endeavoured to use less common terms, resorting more than once to paraphrases when he did not know the lemmas.

This is the module which has been less problematic for Rachid because, beyond the school input, he was facilitated by a familiar context in which the spoken language was Italian.

Nominal morphology gave us more opportunities to reason out: from the results of occurrences, definite and indefinite articles are not completely mastered yet; with regard to definite articles, in most cases the mistakes are due to the omission of the element (e.g. (gli) occhi verdi), whereas few cases of wrong gender or number agreement have been recorded (e.g. il (√ la) tecneca, sette \*sacco (√sacchi)).

Indefinite articles were not only omitted, but also the masculine indefinite article was substituted with the numeral adjective “uno” and this was a systematic error because it was repeated several times.

In guided exercises, his performances were better because his attention was concentrated only on the choice of the article; in spontaneous productions instead, there were more structural elements to process and, as a consequence, the task turned out to be more complex.

We found few difficulties with the real numeral adjectives and with the other modifiers of the noun phrase, like possessive or qualifier adjectives,

both in pre-nominal and post-nominal position (e.g. *tre fratelli, mia madre, nasso normale*).

The interphrasal agreements (in our case we analysed the agreement between the subject DP and the verb phrase) were not problematic: as we can see from the data, mistakes with this kind of agreement are not frequent and are concentrated on the eight production in which he had to agree the subject with the copula “be” or with the lexical verb “to have”:

e.g. (è) *alta*  
(ha i) *capille biondi*

However, when he expressed them, the expression was correct:

e.g. E (è) *multo brava*  
A (*ha*) *34 anni*

The morphemes of the present tense have been performed correctly in most cases, but we cannot affirm the same thing for the past tense (past simple and present perfect); in the productions in which he should had to inflect the verb at the past tense, he acted in the following ways:

- he substituted the past tense with the present (e.g. “quando sono piculo” instead of “quando ero piccolo”) or with the future (e.g. “arriveranno gli arbitri” instead of “sono arrivati gli arbitri”),
- he omitted the auxiliary, producing only the morpheme of the past participle “-to” or the past participle of irregular verbs (e.g. *mi preso*).

In the first case, the agreements were produced correctly but the verbs were not inflected with the right tense; in the second case, the agreement was not performed with all the elements, because the auxiliary is missing.

In the course of his productions, some structures of the most advanced level appeared; the subordinate clauses which Rachid tried to produce were temporal and infinitival subordinate clauses.

In relation to the infinitival subordinate clauses, he alternated correct structures with wrong structures: for example, he produced the subordinate clause verbs with a finite mood instead of the infinitival mood (e.g. “Mi piace \*dai la mano”).

At this point, two specifications are necessary:

- the learning sequences regard the emergence of the structures and not their systematic and correct use;
- the errors analysis should be interpreted in the traditional way in order to determine which structures he was not able to process; the mistakes have to be considered as learner's attempts to reach the target language (<http://www.ferraramulticulturale.it/allegati/saggio.pdf> on 1-11-2011).

Rachid's spontaneous productions showed us that his level of use of verb tenses in the second language is still basic: the form of the present tends to be extended also in other contexts, while the forms of the present perfect and past simple are rarely performed and in most cases incorrectly:

e.g. Fenico (finisco)  
 Facio (faccio)  
 \*Vado (andavo)  
 \*Mi santeto (mi sono sentito)  
 Ero  
 Piaceva

Also with regard to the verbal mood Rachid is at the initial levels of the interlanguage, as in his productions only the indicative and infinite mood emerged.

With syntax, his productions are not characterised by complex syntactic structures. In the first productions, his sentences show a canonical structure, S+ V+ O (or sometimes with the indirect object) in which the subject is expressed or omitted, in accordance with standard Italian.

This order is often produced by learners at the initial stages; presumably, they decide to perform sentences with this structure because it is easier to process and it implies the least amount of phrasal movement (Cook, 1993, p. 103). In the case of Italian, it coincides with the canonical order.

In a lot of cases sentences like "si trova la casa mia" were produced: as we have already seen in the comment of the fourth production, this kind of structure resembles Arabic; in these cases, Rachid adopted the strategy of *transfer*: he transferred an L1 structure and translated it literally in the L2 (Tarone, 1989).

Rachid managed to produce various kinds of verbs: transitives (e.g. 5 done mittono la terrina), intransitives, both ergatives (e.g. arriveranno gli arbitri) and unergatives (e.g. fenico (finisco) alle 10).

In order to have the whole picture of his level of competence in L2, we should have had to interview him also with oral tasks: written productions allow more attention to the form. On the contrary, the oral speech is more immediate and, as a consequence, only the structures which are already automated are realized correctly; non automated structures instead appear as attempts.

## ***Conclusions***

As we have seen in the chapter dedicated to Interlanguage and Processability Theories, the learning process has some fixed phases which are valid for all learners; however, it is also characterised by personal variables.

From our work, it has emerged that the three factors which had an important role in Rachid's L2 learning are the mother language, illiteracy and age:

- his mother tongue was typologically far from the target language,
- the illiteracy condition rendered his path really difficult, especially during the initial phase,
- childhood is the period that is retained more adequate to learn a second language and not adulthood.

Despite his difficulty, he showed perseverance to carry on with studying, especially when lessons were boring (learning of phonemes, syllables, etc.). We aimed at teaching Italian basic rules, proposing worksheets with contents related to everyday life: motivation strengthens if the learner recognizes the task utility.

When he became more autonomous, we stimulated him to produce short spontaneous texts concerning his personal sphere: the autobiographical approach allows the learner to see his personal experiences enhanced.

We cannot state that Rachid reached a good competence level from the language teaching point of view: the structures used in his productions do not always comply with the target language. Yet, the path we undertaken respected the learning sequences hypothesised by Pienemann's theory (lemmatic procedure → category procedure → phrasal procedure → interphrasal procedure → subordinate clause procedure).

Despite the slowness of his path, he followed the developmental stages; this is a confirmation of the systematic nature of learning.

The linguistic structures of the first four stages appeared systematically; on the contrary, the structures of the fifth stage emerged few times.

On the strength of the assumption that "the transition from one stage to another is signalled by the frequent use of a new structure" [Giacalone Ramat in Vedovelli, Massara, Giacalone Ramat, 2001, p. 71], we can claim



that Rachid reached the fourth level of the developmental sequence established by Pienemann.

## **Appendage**

### *1. Phonology and orthography:*

Examples of exercises made:

- I pronounced the syllable and he had to insert the missing letter and reproduce the entire syllable.

C(A)	→	R. : CO (first attempt)→CA
B(E)	→	R. : BI ( “ ” )→BE
L(I)	→	R. : LE→LU→LI
R(O)	→	R. : RA→RU→RO

- Through the use of images taken from books or from the environment, we adopted the same method as before: at first I pronounced slowly the entire word, he had to recognize the syllables in a schedule, to write the word and then to read it.

Finally, he had to guess the single sounds belonging to those words which I omitted.

D...T... (dito)	→ R.: DITO
C...N... (cane)	→ R.: CANI
P...N... (pane)	→ R.: PANI
M...T...T... (matita)	→ R.: MATETA
M...L... (mela)	→ R. : MELA
T...T... (tuta)	→ R. : TOTA
T...V...L... (tavolo)	→ R. : TAVOLA
P.....D... (piede)	→ R.: PEDE

F...R...N... (farina)	FARINA
G...L...T... (gelato)	GELATO
C...M...M...LL... (camomilla)	CAMOMELLA
... ..V... (uova)	UOVA
B...SC...TT... (biscotto)	BISCATTA
P...ST... (pasta)	PASTA
V...N... (vino)	VENO
...NS...L...T... (insalata)	INSALATA
SC...L... (scala)	SCALA
STR...D... (strada)	STREDA

B...N...A (banca)	BANCA
CH...ES... (chiesa)	CHIESA
F...RM...C... .. (farmacia)	FARMACEA
B...BLI...T...C... (biblioteca)	BEBLIOTECA
B...R (bar)	BAR
SC...OL... (scuola)	SCOOOLA

- Dictations:

LA MATETA  
 LA ~~T~~Ø, TUTA  
 LA MELA  
 LA MANO  
 IL ~~M~~Ø, MURO  
 LA, ~~L~~, ~~TUT~~Ø > L' AUTO  
 IL MARE  
 IL ~~TAVON~~, TAVOLO  
 IL PANE  
 IL DITO  
 IL CANE  
 IL DENTE

ROSA, RISA → RISO, MARE, MØRO → MURO, FØMO → FUMO,  
 CAZA → CASA, CANE, PANE, RANØ → RANA, NASO, VESO → VISO,  
 SOLE, MELA, RAMI, LUNA, SALE, NEVE, NAVE, DITO, DITO,  
 MANO, VASO, PERA, LANA, NARA → NERA, DØRO → DURO, GOLA,  
 VUCE → VOCE, SADA → SEDIA, ZERO, TAZZA, ASNO → ASINO,  
 MOSCA, NODO, FARO, ØVA → UVA, TAVOLA → TAVOLO, VENTO,  
 SOLDI, PORTA, ALBIRO → ALBERO, FØLA → FILA.

CAZZA → CASA, OCA, ORA, AGO, A-N-Q-N (UNO), ØSØ → OSSO,  
 ANO → ANNO, DONNA, NODO, DOVE, DARE, BELO → BEE → BELLO,  
 BIRA → BIRRA, BAFFE → BAFFI, CARRO, CALLA → COLLA,  
 CATTO → COTTO, POCO, RICCO, SØCØ → SUCCO, BOCCA, ZU-  
 ZUCRA- ZUCCO → ZUCCA, TACCO, GOLLA → GOLA, LAGO,

PAGA, VAGO, GOMMA, GATTO, GONE → GONNA, ALA, A- Q- UVA,  
OTTA → OTTO, INE → INNO.

CORRIRA → CORRIERA, MACCHINA, AEREO, NAVE,  
BICICHILETA → BICICLETTA, TRAGE- TRAGHETTO, VAPIRETTO →  
VAPORETTO, MOTORENO → MOTORINO, MOTO, CAMIOE →  
CAMION, TRENO.

FARMACEA → FARMACIA, EDICOLA, CELIMA → CINEMA, BRA-  
BR- BAR, RISTTORNETE → RISTORANTE, QTTTEL → HOTEL.

QUADERNO, BANCO, ALBERO, MANO, BORSA, CANE, PANE,  
DITO, FENESTARA → FINESTRA, BOXE, ACIQUA → ACQUA,  
VENO → VINO, TELEFUNO → TELEFONO, FFEORE → FIORE,  
ANELLO, OROLOGIO, FARTELO → FRATELLO, SORELLA,  
ALBERO, FARMACEA → FARMACIA, AĽTOBUS → AUTOBUS,  
MACCHINA, BAR, SEMAFORO, PERZANE → PERSONE, VALIGIA,  
CAMEOL → CAMION, TARAMA → TRAM, STAZIONE, STRESCE  
PEDONALI → STRISCE PEDONALI, METROPOEITANA →  
METROPOLITANA, RISOTORANTE → RISTORANTE, POSTA,  
EDICOLA, SØPERMERCATO → SUPERMERCATO, PIZZERIA,  
SUCOLA → SCUOLA, FIORISTA, SALUMIERE, BNACA → BANCA,  
PARCHEGGIO, HOTEL, CHIESA, OSPEDALE, TABACCAIO,  
CARETE → CARTE, TARE → TRE .

RETE, ROspo, PERA, RIGA, RUSPA;

LIBRO, LUCE, STELLA, CAVALLO, BALENA;

TAMBURO, GAMBE, TUBO, BAMBINO, TROMBA.

PUGILE, PESO, PIPA, POMODORO, PISTA

CASA	ZERO
ROSA	ZORRO
SEDIØ (sedia)	TAZZA
ROSA	LANA

TRE  
RANA

SOLE  
MELA

ALBERO → ALBERO

ALA → ALA

APE → APE

ELICA → ELICA

ERBA → ERBA

EDERA → EDERA

MELA → MELE

PERA → PERA

ANELLO → ANELLO

IMBUTO → ~~I~~MBUTO

INDIANO → ~~I~~NDIANO

INDICE → INDICE

ORSO → ORSO

OTTO → OTTO

OCA → OCA

QVA → UVA

UNO → UNO

PIPA → PIPA

NIDO → NIDO

CASA → CASA

ROSA → ROSA

SEDIA → SEDIA

FIORE → ~~F~~IRE

TRE → TRE

DUE → DUE

DENTE → DENTE

TORTA → TORATA

GELATI → GELATI

PIEDI → PIDI

NAVI → NAVI

LUPO → LUPO

DITO → DITO

PINO → PINO

UOVO → UOVO

UOMO → UOMO

FUNGO → FUNGO

RUOTA → RUOTA

- The last worksheet proposed some alphabetical letters and Rachid had to write words that began with a certain letter:

S: sacco, sole

D: dado, donna,

P: penna, porta,

M: mamma, macchina,

G: gomito (gomito), gaanto (guanto),

T: tavolo, telefono,

B: borsa, bicicletta,

C: città, casa, cinesi.

R: rana, ramo,

F: finestra, ~~Fada~~ Federica

B: banca, bocca

## 2. Grammar

- the present tense:

Lei è Fadwa.

Tu sei bengalese.

Loro hanno il libro.

Loro sono uomini.

Loro hanno le borse.

Lei è una donna.

Loro sono marocchine.

Voi ~~siete~~ → siete studenti.

Tu sei italiano.

Lei è una sarta.

Lui è un cuoco.

Lui è un barista.

Io sono una maestra.

- Exercises about the difference between “essere” and “avere” as lexical verbs:

- 1) Anna *ha* due bambini.
- 2) Tu *sei* italiano.
- 3) Noi *siamo* a casa.
- 4) Voi *avete* i soldi.
- 5) Lui *ha* l'ombrello.
- 6) Voi *avete* le scarpe nuove.
- 7) Loro *sono* cinesi.
- 8) Io *sono* malato.
- 9) Lei è in ritardo.
- 10) L'autobus è sporco.
- 11) I fiori *sono* belli.
- 12) Mio fratello *ha* la moto.
- 13) Voi *avete* freddo.

- 14) Noi *abbiamo* caldo.
- 15) Voi *siete* amici.
- 16) Noi ~~*siamo*~~ → *abbiamo* caldo.
- 17) Lui è tuo fratello.
- 18) Lei è tua sorella.
- 19) Le penne *sono* rosse.
- 20) Il passaporto è scaduto.

- exercises about verbs:

MANGIARE:

IO MANGIO

TU MANGI

LUI/LAI → MANGIA

NOI MANG/MO → MANGIAMO

VOI MANG/TE → MANGIATE

LORO MANGIANO

STUDIARE:

IO STUDIO

TU STUDIA → STUDI

LUI/LEI STUDIA

NOI STUDIAMO

VOI STUDIATE

LORO STUDIANO

BALLARE:

IO BALA → BALLO

TU BALLO → BALLI

LUI/ LEI BALLA

NOI BALLAMO → BALLIAMO

VOI BALLATE

LORO BALLAMO → BALLANO

CANTARE:

IO CANTO

TU CANTI

LUI/LEI CANTE → CANTA

CANTAMO → CANTIAMO

VOI CANTATE

LORO CANTANO

BERE:

IO BEBO → BEVO

TU BEVE → BEVI

LUI/LEI → BEVE

NOI BEVAMO → BEVIAMO

VOI BEVETE

LORO BEBONO → BEVONO

DORMIRE:

IO DORMO

TU DORME → DORMI

LUI/LEI DORME

DORMAMO → DORMIAMO

VOI DORMETE → DORMITE

LORO DORMONO

- some spontaneous sentences:

IO DORMO 12 ORE AL GIORNO.

NAWAL ~~SOD~~ → STUDIA ITALIANO A SCUOLA.

I ~~RAGASE~~ → RAGAZZI ASCOLTANO LA ~~RADUO~~ → RADIO.

MIA MAMMA LAVAVA I ~~PITE~~ → PIATTI, ~~PUCIL~~ → PULISCE LA CASA.

LA NONNA GUARDA LA ~~THIFE~~ → TELEVISIONE.

LORO LEGGONO I ~~LIBERI~~ → LIBRI.

VOI GIOCATE A CALCIO.

~~LA~~ → LE RAGAZZE LAVORANO A SPINEA.

NOI ~~SONIAMO~~ → SUONIAMO IL VIOLINO.

I ~~BABINE~~ → BAMBINI MANGIANO LA ~~BASTA~~ → PASTA.

- Exercises take from the book “Io leggo per capire” (Pivato, Martini, Funes, 2010, Piazza editore), such as dialogues to read and sentences to complete:

1) Dove vai domani? Vado al mare.

Domani vieni a casa mia? Sì, vengo in bici.

Dove vai? Vado a fare la spesa.

2) Vado a comperare il pane.

Vado in città in bici.

Vado a fare la spesa.

Vado a tagliarmi i capelli.

Vado a lavorare in macchina.

3) Il lunedì e il mercoledì la maestra Claudia va a scuola in macchina. Il martedì mattina va in piscina e il giovedì sera va a fare la spesa.

4) Io vado..... R: Io vado IN PALESTRA.

5) Io vado a scuola.

Tu vai a scuola.

Rita va a scuola.

Luca va a scuola.

6) Io ..... a fare la spesa. R.: vado

Tu ..... a fare la spesa. R.: vai

Lei..... a fare la spesa. R.: va

Lui..... a fare la spesa. R.: va



- spontaneous sentences about the verbs “andare”, “venire” and “abitare”:

MIO FRATELLO M.' VA IN MAROCCO.

IO VADO A SCUOLA TRE VOLTE ALLA SETTIMANA.

LA MAESTRA VA AL BAR PER BERE UN CAFFÈ'.

ANDIAMO A CASA ALLE SEI.

VOI ANDATE IN MACELLERIA PER COMPRARE LA CARNE.

IO VENGO A SCUOLA.

TU VIENI A CASA.

LUI/LEI VENE (viene) AL (dal) MAROCCO.

NOI VENIAMO DAL BAR.

VOI VENITE AL SUPERMERCATO.

LORO VENGONO AL (dal) SENEGAL.

IO VENGO A (da) MARRAKECH.

- DOVE ABITA TŌA → TUA MADRE?

MĒA → MIA MADRE ABITA IN MAROCCO.

- DOVE PADĪ ABITA TUO PADRE?

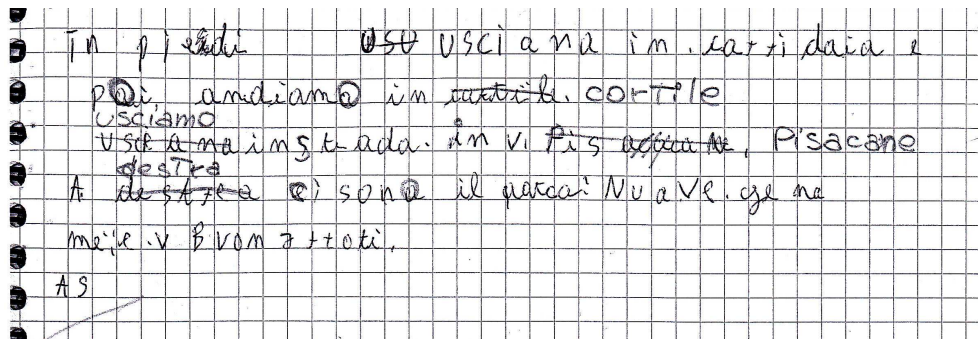
MĒO → MIO PADRE ABITA IN MAROCCO.

- DOVE ABITŌ → ABITI TU?

IO ABITO IN ITAĒIA → ITALIA A SA → SPINEA.

MIO FARATELLO → FRATELLO M.' ABITA IN ITAĒIA → ITALIA.

MIO → MIA SOLE → SORELLA F. ABITA IN MAROCCO.



USCIAMO IN CORRIDOIO E PAĪ (POI) AM (ANDIAMO) IN CORTILE.

USCIAMO IN STRADA. IN B-VIA PISACANE.

A ~~DA~~-DESTRA CI SONO IL ~~PERCO~~-PARCO “NUOVE GEMME” E ~~VIE~~  
VIA BUONARROTI. A ~~SIM~~-SINISTRA CI SONO IL COMUNE, LA  
~~POSEA~~-POSTA E POI VIA ROMA, LA STRADA PRINCIPALE.

SOPRA DI NOI CI SONO IL ~~CIELA~~-CIELO A-E IL SOLE. SOTTO DI  
NOI C'E' LA TERRA.

~~DI~~-DI FRONTE CI SONO LE CASE. ~~DI~~-DIETRO ~~CI~~-C'E' LA  
SCUOLA. CI SONO LE CASE, LE MACCHINE, I GIARDINI, GLI  
ALBERI (GLI ALBERI).

- *The present perfect:*

- Io sono andato a Venezia.
- Lei è salita sul treno.
- Nawal è seduta davanti a me.
- Mio *frattelo* (mio fratello) è parteto (partito) *dua* (due) settimane fa.
- Tu hai visto il vento fuori (dalla) finestra.
- Ho preso il passaporto in ambosciata (ambasciata). Ho aspettato un mese.

Ho comprato il biglietto dell'aereo. *O* (ho) *prepaerato* (preparato) *lo* (la) valigia: ho messo tante cose, il computer, i cd di musica.

Ho salutoto (salutato) i miei amici è (e) la mia famiglia. Abbiamo pianto tanto.

Sono andata (andato) in aeroporto per prendere l'aereo. *Lo* (la) polizia ha controllato tutti i documenti e sono salito in *oereo* (aereo).

Mi sono *sadoto* (seduto) nel mio posto , ho messo la cintura.

L'aereo è partito e ho visto fuori dal finestrino.

Ho visto il cielo, le nuvole, il mare, la terra, gli alberi, le case e le città.

Ho pensato come è l'Italia. Poi l'aereo è arrivato, sono sceso e ho visto tante cose.

- *The definite article, gender and number:*

la bocca

il piede

la *mana* (la mano)

il *deto* (il dito)  
il naso  
la spalla  
il torace  
il fianco  
la coscia  
il ginocchio  
la caviglia

-The following exercise required to link one part of the body to its number:

e.g.	le gambe	→	2
	le dita	→	10
	il naso	→	1
	la bocca	→	1
	le mani	→	2
	le braccia	→	2
	il quaderno	→	i quaderni
	la matita	→	li matite (le)
	la gomma	→	le gomme
	la colla	→	le colle
	la forbice	→	le forbici
	il libro	→	il banco
	lo zaino	→	gli zaini

- *The verb agreement:*

Here we report some examples of the sentences we formed (the first six sentences are taken from the book):

1. Tina fa il *bocato* (bucato).
2. Tina *spoivera* (spolvera) i *mobile* (mobili).
3. Tina *cocina* (cucina) la *basta* (pasta).
4. Lino lava i *pte-piatte* (piatti).
5. Lino stende il bucato.
6. Lino fa la *speza* (spesa).
7. La ragazza è bella.

8. Le ragazze ~~zona~~ (sono) belle.
9. Il ragazzo è ~~bella~~ (bello).
10. I ragazzi ~~sona~~-(sono) ~~berri~~-(belli).
11. Tu hai il libro.
12. Voi avete i ~~libari~~-(libri).
13. Io ho la borsa.
14. Noi abbiamo ~~#~~ (le) borse.
15. La mamma ha il figlio/la figlia in Italia.
16. Le mamme hanno i figli/ le figlie in Italia.
17. La mela è buona.
18. Le mele sono buone.
19. Monir ha il cappello.
20. Monir e Rachid ~~honne~~ (hanno) i cappelli.
21. La moglie è al supermercato.
22. Le mogli sono al ~~sopermercato~~-(supermercato).
23. L'elefante è grande.
24. Gli elefanti sono grandi.
25. La stazione è grande.
26. Le stazioni sono grandi.

3. *Lexicon:*

- about sports:

borasa (borsa)	<i>ggunte</i> (guanti)
<i>malaia</i> (maglia)	<i>batulne</i> (pantaloni)
<i>sacabe</i> (scarpe)	palestara (palestra)
<i>facei</i> (fascia)	<i>caso</i> (casco)
<i>acimno- acigamno</i> (asciugamano)	

- about work:

Oggi Luca lavora in casa. Con il maratiro (martillo) e un coiodo (chiodo) appende un quadro al muro del salotto.

Con il cacciavete (cacciavite) e una vete (vite) ripara la gamba del tavolo.

Con la pinsa (pinza) e un dado ripara il robinto (rubinetto).

Con la sega taglia la legna per la stufa.

Luca è stanco e si addormenta sul defano (divano).

contadeno (contadino)

midico (medico)

posteno (postino)

operaie (operaio)

comessa (commessa)

moratore (muratore)

*mencano- mecaneco* (meccanico)

avvocato

camereere (cameriere)

*falene* ( falegname)

- about clothes:

La gonna

il maglione

la (le) scarpe

I pantalone (pantaloni)

la maglietta

la gamicia (camicia)

il cappotto

la borsa

la giacca (giacca)

- about the human body:

Io sono alto e atletico.

Ho i capelli corti e neri.

Ho gli occhi neri.

Ho il naso grosso.

Ho la bocca grande.

Ho le mani grandi.

Federica è alta e magra.

“ ha i capelli corti e *marone* (marroni).

“ ha (gli) occhi marroni.

“ ha *i* (il) naso sottile.

“ la bocca normale.

- insertion of missing words:

La casalinga lavora in caza (casa).

L'operaio lavora in of- fabirica (fabbrica).

La cameriera lavora in pizzeria.

Il medeco (medico) lavora in ambulatorio.

La segretaria lavora in ufficio.

L'insegnante lavora a socala (scuola).

- sentence dictation:

1. Quando *o* (ho) mal di dente (denti), vado dal *dentizta* (dentista).
2. Il *midicco* (medico) dei bambine (bambini) è il *pedirta* (pediatra).
3. Lino ha una gamba rotta, va dall'ortopedico.
4. Amena (Amina) è *incita* (incinta), il suo medico è il ginecologo.
5. Mio papà *a* (ha) *parobleme* (problemi) di *coore* (cuore), il suo medico si chiama *cardeologo* (cardiologo).

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