

**Italian as a Heritage Language in London: An Ethnographic  
Perspective on Identity and Pedagogy in a Complementary School**

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## Abstract

Whilst mainstream schools in England may encourage multilingualism by insisting on the study of foreign languages, multilingual children are not always provided with support for the maintenance of their heritage languages (HLs). In response to this shortcoming, communities often organise themselves to support their young members (Cushing et al., 2021) and set up classes in community-based organisations, also called complementary schools, which contribute towards minority language and cultural maintenance (Creese et al., 2006; Li Wei, 2006).

This thesis discusses some of the salient aspects of complementary schooling based on a fourteen-month mixed-method research in the Italian community of London, taking a strong linguistic ethnographic orientation for the study of heritage language education in an Italian complementary school. It starts with the analysis of some of the challenges faced by the community in maintaining the HL to shed light on the reasons for complementary schooling. Then, it examines how children engage in and reflect on their multilingual practices and how they respond to critical pedagogies in their HL learning programmes. Throughout, it investigates the implications in terms of identity construction and negotiation as well as the role of space in language learning.

The study suggests that a multilingual and critical-participatory approach (Garcia, 2009; Freire, 1970, 1998) to HL education can provide children with unique opportunities to explore, discover and experiment with their multilingual and multicultural selves. Such opportunities have the potential to legitimise minority language and identity options, which are often silenced in mainstream school, and to support the development of harmonious identities in relation to language and culture in education. Expanding on Fishman's (1991) notion of "breathing space", I posit that

complementary schools represent a space where heritage languages, but also pedagogical practices, can breathe, creating the opportunities to develop new critical and multilingual modes of teaching and learning.

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## List of Abbreviations

CS(s)	Complementary School(s)
DES	Department of Education and Science
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EAL	English as Additional Language
EU	European Union
FL	Foreign Language
FLP	Family Language Policy
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HL(s)	Heritage Language(s)
KS1/2	Key Stage 1 or 2
LE	Linguistic Ethnography
MaL	Majority Language
MFL	Modern Foreign Language
MiL	Minority Language
OPOl	One Parent One Language
TA	Thematic Analysis

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## Transcription conventions

Symbol	Meaning
word	Speech or text in the original version
wor-	Truncated word unit
< word >	Proposed translation
@	Laugh
[	Overlap
:	Prosodic lengthening
,	Intonation pause
(.)	Short pause
[.]	Skipped utterance or written unit
(( ))	Contextual information
Lx	Unidentified speaker
LL	Multiple speakers
°word	Low volume
WORD	High volume
#	Unintelligible word

## Chapter One. Introduction

### 1.1. Research background

It is storytelling time in an Italian complementary school. When the teacher asks the children what character they have chosen for their stories, a pupil exclaims “my character is half British, half Italian, half French, and half Irish, just like me!”. Her classmate, whose concentration had long gone, looks puzzled now and says, “four halves is two wholes, it’s like you are two people...”. Luisa is comfortable with her multiple identity. Mario does not mind it either, but he loves maths and he felt the urge to comment on this incongruence: four halves for one whole. Luisa is indeed one whole, and she is British *and* Italian *and* French *and* Irish.

Luisa was born in the UK where she is growing up. Her mother is Italian and French, and her father is Irish. She was writing a story in Italian, one of her heritage languages (HLs) trying to bring together her multiple background. This anecdote exemplifies the complexity surrounding the theme of identity in contexts of superdiversity and multilingualism. Understanding the experiences and needs of transnational citizens in the aftermath of Brexit is a pre-requisite for shaping the future relationship between the UK and the European Union (EU), and at the heart of this challenge is the important question of how identity is shaped by dual or multiple affiliations relating to languages, cultures, and values. In this study, I explore how children’s self-perception is influenced by linguistic and cultural elements belonging to more than one community or place (Vertovec, 2001), and the development of multilingual learner identities in post-Brexit Britain, with a focus on the Italian community.

The number of working-age EU citizens, Italians included, who have relocated to the UK has significantly increased in the 2010s and particularly in London where the highest proportion of non-British citizens are registered (ONS, 2019, 2022a). The UK became one of the favourite migratory trajectories of European people in the past decade, registering a steady increase of arrivals from those countries that were highly affected by the global financial crisis of 2007-2008. This growing level of mobility has contributed to changes in London's demography and, consequently, its linguistic demography. Today's presence of post-crisis Italian migrants in London is an example of this ethnographic transformation (Cacciatore & Pepe, 2019; Pepe, 2022). The Italian community is the fourth largest group of Europeans living in the country after Polish, Romanian, and Irish (ONS, 2022b). Italian is also the fourth largest European foreign language taught in England and London's language schools offering courses in Italian, as well as other European languages, are experiencing an increased demand for activities specifically designed for children with a migratory background.

In fact, whilst mainstream schools in England may encourage multilingualism by insisting on the study of foreign languages, multilingual children are not always provided with support for the maintenance of their heritage languages. Although, in principle, English education policies praise and celebrate linguistic diversity, in practical terms such diversity does not often find space in mainstream school's teaching and learning practices. In teacher training programmes, guidance on working with language diversity is scarce or absent (Foley et al., 2018) and we still witness a lack of curriculum guidance for teachers on how to use languages other than English in their classrooms (Costley & Leung, 2020). The result is a dominant monolingual teaching practice in mainstream schools.

Many scholars in the field of multilingual education urged us "to go beyond acceptance or tolerance of children's languages" (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 103) and consider the whole linguistic repertoire of children in mainstream schools as a resource for social development but, to date, there are no specific policies for the preservation of the linguistic capital represented by heritage and community languages in mainstream schools (Costley & Leung, 2020; Cushing, 2020). Instead, language policies are often based on Standard English ideologies (Cushing, 2020) and keep moving towards "an increasingly available and explicitly conservative discourse about language, education, and nationhood" (p.426). The consequence is that multilingual children, during their schooling years, risk losing competence in their heritage languages and they may adopt English as their main and only language.

Because of the assimilationist aims of social policies in education and the monolingual teaching practices of mainstream schools (Costley, 2014; Costley & Leung, 2020), children with a migratory background may not get the opportunity to express, discover and experiment with their multilingual selves in education. This lack of opportunities brings about implications in terms of identity development and wellbeing because "when educational practices reinforce language hierarchies and subordinate students' existing identities and language practices, schools can become sites of institutional denigration of the learner's sense of self" (Leeman et al., 2011b, p. 483). Linguistic subordination can lead to a sense of dis-empowerment or even to the rejection of a foundational element of the child's experience of society, the language(s) of their family. As Heller (1996) maintains "[w]hat goes on in classroom interaction teaches students about their position both in the school and in the community" (p. 156) and the linguistic hierarchies that underlie some teaching practices in mainstream schools run the risk to transmit the idea that some languages and language varieties (and



consequently, some identity options) are more legitimate than others. In sum, by insisting on the promotion of foreign languages and ignoring the linguistic repertoires already present in mainstream school classrooms, the education system is complicit in the process of delegitimisation of minority identity options and ‘monolingualisation’ of multilingual children.

To counteract monolingual ethos and practices and promote the children’s heritage languages, communities organised themselves to provide their young members with educational spaces for the maintenance and learning of the languages of origin. I refer to such educational settings as complementary schools (CS). They operate in out of school hours and according to the latest data from the National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education, there are 3000 to 5000 such schools in the UK (HLE Network, 2021). The very existence of complementary schools addresses both the lack of multilingual opportunities in the mainstream classroom and the restrictions in the foreign language (FL) classroom, should a language like Italian be part of the curriculum in primary schools. In fact, Italian HL speakers may sit in Italian FL classes, for example, but they can be marginalised because of their language varieties and elements of their speaking that comes from language contact or, while taking proud in their proficiency, they may not find opportunities to learn (Leeman, 2005; Leeman et al., 2011a).

With the objective of helping to bridge the gap between the world of monolingual education and the reality of multilingual families and contribute towards an understanding of education that respects the needs of today’s mobile and fast-developing society, this thesis extends the research on multilingual education through an ethnographic investigation of an Italian complementary school in London. The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

**RQ1.** Why do some children in London attend Italian HL classes? Why did parents enrol them in complementary schools? And what is the role of complementary schooling in the children's experience of multilingualism?

**RQ2.** What are the language practices and policies at play in an Italian complementary school? And how do children engage in and/or contest them?

**RQ3.** How do children make sense of their multilingual repertoires and multilingual selves in education?

**RQ4.** How do teachers create spaces of and for dialogue? And how do teachers and children build community spaces in which communicative resources can be democratically accessed?

**RQ5.** Do children have a sense of agency in their learning space and if so, how do they exercise power and agency through language and through their bodies? Do they use language to resist exclusion or subordination? If yes, how?

To answer this set of questions (on which I further elaborate in the methodology chapter), I explored how children engaged in and reflected on their multilingual practices through classroom observations and interviews and investigated how they participated in learning in their HL education setting. By examining some family language practices and the parents' challenges in transmitting the HL, children's and parents' discursive construction of complementary schooling, and multilingual education in the HL classroom, I analysed how children may develop a sense of self and self-perception as multilingual learners. In this introductory chapter, I present the context in which the study was conducted and include an account of my personal and professional experience in the field of heritage language education with my rationale for conducting such research, to finally provide an outline of the thesis in Section 1.4.

## 1.2. Research rationale

The first time I realised that there were different areas of language teaching, I was working in Turkey. After having worked as an Italian FL teacher in Damascus, at the beginning of the Syrian conflict I was sent to Istanbul for a placement in a bilingual primary school. I decided to remain in Turkey and a year later, I started working at the Italian consular school teaching what I would describe today as 'Italian as an additional language' to the children who were attending the Italian school but would not use the language at home. In the evenings and at weekends, I would teach Italian as a heritage language to those students who were speaking Italian at home with their parents but attended Turkish or other international schools. My interest for the different areas of language education accompanied me in my migration journey to the UK, and in 2016 I opened a community school for children of Italian origins in London.

What had started as an exploration of a personal indignation, had taken me to study the major social and political processes, developments and structures [...], in a way that I was not prepared for. (Saukko, 2003, p. 3)

Like many researchers, I embarked on the doctoral journey driven by a personal and professional force. My experience of setting up and running a complementary school was a journey of joyful discoveries, but also frustrations and obstacles. There was some sort of blue aura (for blue being a cold colour) on the negative aspects of this experience. Financial sustainability, teacher training and communication with mainstream schools represented the areas of highest frustration. Most of the issues were linked to the little recognition afforded to such educational setting (Thorpe et al., 2020) despite their important contribution to children's education and wellbeing (Thorpe et al., 2018), hence my sense of 'indignation'. But the journey was also brightened up by the warm colours I could perceive in the time-space of the classroom when surrounded by multilingual children. This contrast motivated me to investigate

multilingualism and multilingual education in complementary schools. Thus, I framed this thesis within the challenges in heritage language maintenance faced by families and schools, but decided to present in the foreground the colourful warmth that characterises life in some CS classrooms.

When I started collecting data, I put myself to the margins of the teaching and community life. I eclipsed myself and I recognised in my notes a point of disappointment whenever participants would treat me as an insider, 'mining' the work of dissociation I was trying to achieve in order to be 'a real researcher'. Classroom observations run for the whole school year, and despite the time spent doing exercises of defamiliarization (more in Section 4.4), during the first school term I found myself battling between roles and identities that seemed incompatible. It took one more term, about six months in total, to discover and explore ways to integrate these different roles and perspectives to become my own version of 'a real researcher'. As I will explain in the methodology chapter, this process of integration and harmony-seeking between identities led to elements of methodological innovation. Yet, at the time of writing this thesis in my third year, I am still battling between being in the text and being invisible. The challenges posed by my insider position that emerged during the data collection phase re-appeared in the analysis and again, in the writing process.

I found comfort in reading *Doing research in cultural studies* by Saukko (2003). The author reflected on the drive for researching certain topics and themes, and the way we enter the research process with discourses that form our own reality, realising that discourses pre-existing research inform virtually every study. It helped me to reflect on the idea of a critical approach to both the strange and the familiar, in the so-called field, but also within myself, to be able to explore critically the things that were emotionally positive and the things that gave me negative feelings alike. I firmly believe

that research in social science is subjective and situational by nature and that “research or research methodologies are never ‘objective’ but always located, informed by particular social positions and historical moments and their agendas” (Saukko 2003 p.3). It is then essential, in my opinion, to start reading a doctoral work by reflecting on some of the personal, social and emotional experiences that shaped the researcher’s identity from before the doctoral journey, and for the time of the study. Time in which the researcher, as an individual, with her (conscious and unconscious) discourses, changed, evolved, grew. This transformative process inevitably influenced the final product, the piece of writing offered here to the reader.

The capacity and will to keep going in the search derive from the researcher as instrument with a history and a drive toward resolving the puzzle of where fragments lead. (Heath & Street, 2008, p. 41)

This work stems from my need to share, and perhaps to explain to myself, the professional and social reality I used to experience every day. The way I positioned myself in the research, with multiple roles and at times conflicting identities, shaped the way the data have been collected, analysed, and written up. The methodological contribution this study brings, for example, was not the result of a planned choice but an act that developed organically in the research context during an internal process of identity negotiation. What I describe as a process of negotiation and integration goes in parallel with my engagement in psychotherapy. My PhD journey went alongside my personal work on trauma. If a coping mechanism made me forget some significant childhood events, and in a way saved me from much despair, it also left me with a conflicting and divided adult self. The two experiences, my studies and my therapy, informed and influenced each other in that as I was trying to integrate cognition and emotions and the different views of myself in my therapy work, I was collecting data and elaborating questions about finding harmony between different languages and

identities. And while writing this section, a dilemma (re-)surfaces: how much of the personal that foreshadows doctoral studies could and should be explicitly acknowledged in the text to make sense of the story told by the thesis?

Everything I present in this study is informed by my experience as a doctoral student, language teacher, complementary school founder, social and political activist, multilingual speaker, migrant woman, semitic philology graduated. It includes the shadow (conscious and unconscious) of several other experiences that form the identities I had when entered the research world, and all the ways in which this set of identities changed by the end of the doctoral project. In the initial pursue of objectivity (fruit of a more positivist approach to science that I used to have), I worked towards removing -or at least reducing to the minimum- any bias that I could be holding and of which I was aware at the time. Yet, a range of discourses were inevitably internalised, and my experiences so strong and unique in my consciousness, that I realised I could have never really claimed a full objectivity, but most importantly, that the idea of full objectivity when describing lived experiences was bizarre in itself. In light of a more post-structuralist stance that I gradually developed in the course of my doctoral training, I came to conclude that the set of identities I brought with me in this study should be considered and acknowledged in order to make sense of the interpretations I offer and the discussions that this work joins and those that opens.

By the end of my doctoral journey, I reject a positivistic model of research in social science, where research provides clear answers. Everything that I write here portrays the explorations and interpretations of an apprentice researcher- a novice ethnographer who embraces post-structuralist as well as Marxist epistemologies. I also acknowledge that the attempt to simplify such a complex reality forced me to place some things into boxes. But I see this work as the drawing of boxes in the shape

that they had in a specific time and space (as situated interpretations of the collected information), and I care about reminding the reader that such boxes were drawn using a specific kind of pencil (my identities). Finally, many of the scenarios I illustrate in this thesis are complex in a way that does not allow to draw universal or generalizable conclusions. I choose to present and elaborate on what formed a pattern as themes emerged from the dialogue between myself and the data -and not from the data alone. In the chapters to follow I intend to share the story of some lived experiences, those of a group of children and their teacher and parents, without pretending that they can be generalisable, but with the hope that, in turn, they can generate reflections on some universal aspects of the interlink between language, identity and pedagogy. Before that, however, it is important to position the research in its geo-historical context.

### **1.3. Positioning the research**

#### **1.3.1. Brexit and Covid-19**

In 1992, the Maastricht Treaty introduced the legal concept of European citizenship and people from the different member states gained freedom of movement across the EU while the number of members was gradually growing. The introduction of a Euro currency starting from 1999 boosted the ideal of real economic integration, and therefore an interdependence that would decrease the risk of conflict. Not every EU member state, however, joined the single currency, the UK being among those. When in 2008, the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) hit Europe, the Eurozone did not withstand the financial shock, particularly in Southern and Eastern countries, leading to the so-called 2010 Eurozone crisis. This crisis generated a migration flux from the countries mostly affected, such as Italy, towards the UK as one of the favourite destinations.

While the single currency might have fostered a sense of Europeanness, the 2010 Eurozone crisis further increased the levels of citizens' dissatisfaction with the EU governance (Schmidt, 2015) especially in those countries that saw a sharp increase in unemployment rates and therefore witnessed a wave of economic emigration. But also in those places where immigration increased as a result of the crisis. Although an anti-immigrant sentiment was nothing new, political parties used this crisis to fuel mistrust towards the EU in a period of economic recession and austerity (Schmidt, 2017). The UK 2016 referendum represented a turning point for the relation between the UK and the EU and its citizens.

The victory of the Leave vote discouraged new arrivals, initially making the net migration rate substantially lower (ONS, 2020). However, while the EU immigration rate remained stable between 2017 and 2020 (ONS, 2020), data from 2023 suggest that immigration started rising again, just not from EU countries. In fact, in 2022 there were more EU nationals who left than arrived (Sturge, 2023). Nonetheless, with peaks of EU immigration in the 2010s, EU citizens in the UK continue to represent a significant proportion of the population (Sumption & Walsh, 2022), and the number of children of EU citizens, hence potential heritage speakers of European languages, is likely to grow in the upcoming years. Whilst research on heritage language maintenance in the UK started with an interest in communities from Asia and South-East Asia (Creese, 2009; Creese et al., 2006; Li Wei, 2011), with this study I intend to contribute to knowledge in the field of HL maintenance with the first study on an Italian complementary school and in the aftermath of Brexit.

The first draft of the Brexit agreement arrived on the Christmas eve of 2020 when the second wave of a global pandemic was closing borders between countries. Coincidentally, the Brexit deal was announced on the same week of the travel ban



from 52 countries which substantially impeded people to reach or leave the UK (H. Davidson, 2020). 2020 was the year of the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak which affected the whole globe, making emerging what Blommaert (2020) described as “the textbook example of contemporary globalization processes”. He wrote about how the economic interdependence of most countries caused a rapid chain reaction which led to an economic downturn across the globe even before the epidemic turned into a pandemic. The public health crisis of one country translated into an economic and social crisis in many other countries. The first measure adopted to control the epidemic was a limitation of social contact and restrictions on mobility to confine the virus in delimited geographic areas, starting from Italy for the European continent. On the 11th of March 2020, the World Health Organisation officially declared that the Covid-19 epidemic was turning into a global pandemic (WHO, 2020).

The pandemic already made pre-existing disparities more visible and it exacerbated inequalities. The general uncertainty brought by the pandemic, combined with the climate emergency, is in fact making migrations flows more difficult to predict and understand. Diaz and Callahan (Díaz & Callahan, 2020, p. 2) complicate the matter further when they point out that “against this backdrop of increased diversity, we are witnessing an equally unprecedented rise in overt displays of xenophobic, dehumanizing, rampant discrimination of the Other”, reminding us that diversity is more visible than ever before, but also not always legitimised and welcomed.

### 1.3.2. Italian communities in the UK

According to the 15th annual report of Italians abroad, *Rapporto Italiani nel Mondo* (RIM), between 2006 and 2020 Italian mobility increased by 76%. In 2017, the UK was the new favourite destination (Licata, 2017) and during 2010s', the Italian migration to the UK raised by almost 150% (Licata, 2020). A combined analysis of the list of Italians

living abroad (Anagrafe degli Italiani Residenti all'Estero, AIRE) and the Home Office data on settle and pre-settle status shows that by 2020, more than 380,000 Italian citizens were officially based in England (Home Office, 2021; Panicacci et al., 2020). The latest UK Census reports that in 2021, there were 276,669 Italian-born residents in England and Wales, 368,738 Italian passport holders (ONS, 2022a), and 160,000 people, more than double compared to the 2011 Census, said that they speak Italian as their main language and 286,000 people stated that have an Italian national identity (ONS, 2022c, 2023). Providing a clear picture of the number of Italians in the UK is challenging, and defining what counts as Italian is virtually impossible. Nonetheless, the London's consular district is one of the largest in numbers representing 8% of the Italian citizens living outside Italy (Licata 2022).

With a sharp increase in the number of young Italians leaving the country, Italy lost social and economic capital and re-discovered itself as a country of emigration- not only of immigration as portrayed by the media. Alongside what can be defined the post-war wave (Guzzo, 2014; Pepe, 2022), in the UK, and particularly in London, there is a new Italian migration wave. The new "Italian community" includes the workers who arrived after the war, the so-called second and third generations resulting from that wave, and the Italians who moved to the UK due to the 2008 global financial crisis, hence Pepe's expression "post-crisis Italian migrants in London" (2022). The study conducted by Pepe explores language practices and identity negotiations in "an intra-community super-diversity", based on Vertovec (2007) notion of superdiversity (more in Chapter 2) and pictures a fragmented community both in terms of language use and sense of belonging to the community (p.23).

As concluded by Pepe (2022), what is conventionally defined an "Italian community" is internally heterogeneous. Evidence of this can be found also in the latest consular

report showing that among the Italians registered to AIRE, half of them was born in Italy, a quarter of them was UK-born with Italian parents and the remaining fourth was born in other countries, 30% of which in Brazil (Licata, 2020; Panicacci et al., 2020). However, the diverse flux described in the statistical reports is only a part of the big picture. In fact, the Italian consulate (Panicacci et al., 2020), as well as Italian journalists, organisations (Brondolin et al., 2021) and scholars (Pepe, 2020) highlighted the phenomenon of 'unregistered Italian citizens'. Since European mobility had been characterised by low bureaucratic demands, sometimes Italian migrants were not aware of the existence of AIRE and of the need to register to their consulate. Furthermore, even if they were, the renowned complexity of the national Italian bureaucracy may have discouraged some applications. The latest immigration report from the Italian consulate mentions once again that for each Italian registered in the UK, there is probably a non-registered one (Panicacci et al., 2020). Yet, Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic may determine a significant change in figures (Brondolin et al., 2021). The Italian consulate of London estimates circa 100,000 potential returns to Italy and a substantial decrease in arrivals as well as a possible "emersion" of unregistered Italians after Brexit (Panicacci et al., 2020) as people who have lived in the consular district for many years may eventually register because of the changes in the immigration laws.

Finally, in this statistical overview of the Italian presence in the UK, we need to consider that at the dawn of Brexit, there were more than seventy-five thousand applications for Italian citizens under the age of 18 (Home Office, 2021), therefore potential bilinguals currently in education. Regardless of the precise numbers of Italian citizens or HL speakers, the Italian presence in the UK is undoubtedly substantial and, in this study, I aim to explore how such a large community supported the transmission

of the Italian language. This study conducted in (post)-Covid and post-Brexit England aims to update and provide a generational continuity to recent studies on Italian language, culture and identity in London and the UK (for example, Pepe, 2022; Guzzo, 2014).

#### **1.4. Thesis outline**

The thesis counts eight chapters, including this introduction. In Chapter 2 & 3, I introduce the conceptual underpinnings and the theories informing the research with a review of the literature on language and identity and an overview of the relevant research on HLs in the family and in schools. Chapter 4 outlines the methodology, presenting the linguistic ethnographic orientation adopted for this project, complemented by more traditional quantitative approaches to gain an overview of the research context. The following three chapters illustrate the results of this study and include a discussion.

I open by illustrating some family language practices and some of the challenges faced by the community in maintaining the HL to shed light on the reasons for complementary schooling (Chapter 5). In Chapter 6 I delve into the reasons for attending a complementary school and introduce the space of the school with an analysis of the community space and the role of materiality in developing agency in one's learning environment. Building on this, Chapter 7 illustrates the participants' language practices and the overall pedagogical approaches adopted for these HL classes to show how children participated in learning and developed a sense of self as legitimate multilingual learners. Chapter 8 brings together the thesis with a

concluding discussion, the answers to the research questions and the study's contributions and implications for policy and practice.

## Chapter Two. Conceptual underpinnings: multilingualism and identity

### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the conceptual underpinnings of this study through a review of some of the literature on language and identity, and multilingualism. I explore empirical and theoretical work on social and national identities (Anderson, 1991; Tajfel, 1976), language and identity in contexts of superdiversity (Blommaert, 2010; Vertovec, 2007; Norton, 1997, for example), language and power (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984; Heller, 1996), and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970, 1998) and discuss the translanguaging epistemological stance (Garcia, 2009; Li Wei, 2018) adopted for this research.

### 2.2. Social identities and the role of language

#### 2.2.1. Nations, ethnicities and languages

The adjectives ‘national’ and ‘ethnic’ share the same etymological heritage and yet, or precisely because of it, the relationship between them is utterly ambiguous in social sciences (Conversi, 2004; Fishman, 1982). There is a conceptual blurriness between these two words due to a semantic change that is historically shaped and, as explored in this chapter, socially constructed. In this first section, I will discuss the role of language in relation to nations and ethnicity by opening with a brief philological analysis of these two words in the Judeo-Christian religious tradition <sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This philological analysis has been conducted with the support of the Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft's *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1997); Danby and Segal's *Concise Hebrew-English [and] English-Hebrew Dictionary* (1954); James Strong's *Strong's concise concordances* (1999); and [www.drbo.org/lvb](http://www.drbo.org/lvb) for the Latin Vulgate.

Because of my academic background in semitic philology, I decided to go to the roots of the connection between languages and people (as nations and ethnic groups) by exploring old sacred texts. It did not take long before I found the words language and nation/ethnic in Genesis, first chapter of the Old Testament. The reason for exploring such connection in the Bible comes from my background but it also resides in my understanding that its interpretation plays an important role in the development of a Christian civilisation which, in turn, influenced how many cultures in the European continent grew. The Old Testament (or *Tanakh*) was compiled after thousands of years of oral tradition, and the eldest complete manuscripts date to about the third century BC. Its first chapter constitutes the first available artifact in the Judeo-Christian tradition describing a way in which groups of people (self-)organised themselves in societies and nations:

From these the maritime peoples spread out into their territories by their clans within their nations, each with its own language. (Genesis 10:5, Bible, The New International Version -NIV)

Based on the narrative of the Old Testament, when people resettled on earth after the Flood, they used languages as the distinctive trait of each different social group ‘within their nations’. Overall, the Hebrew Bible counts three lexemes that can be translated into the English word nation:

- *‘am* (אָם)
- *leom* (לְאוּמָה)
- *goy* (גּוֹי).

‘*Am*, meaning ‘group of people’, is the word that registers the highest number of concordance entries in the Hebrew Bible and shares its root with ‘*im* (אִם), that means ‘with’ in Ancient and Modern Hebrew. *Leom* has a lower concordance rate, and the origin of this Semitic root can be found in the Akkadian *li’mu*, used in the written text

available to date with the meaning of 'thousand'. The third word is *goy*, and its plural *goyim*. The lexeme first appears in Genesis 10, in the list of the descendance of Noah who had survived to the Flood, and therefore the first social units in the biblical narrative after the flood. *Goy* originally meant 'group of humans' or 'people' exactly like 'am. In the process of translating it from Hebrew to Greek, and then to Latin, the words nations and ethnicities emerged from *goy*. The Septuagint, the early Greek version of the Hebrew scriptures, translated the word *goy* from Genesis 10:5 with the Greek word *ethnos* (*ἔθνος*), conferring emphasis on the family linkage. The Vulgate, the Latin version which is based on both the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint, saw, instead, the employ of two different words for the lexeme *goy* in Genesis. The two terms are *gentium*, for compound of families, and *nationibus*, originating from the root of 'to be born', for compound of people. However, in some chapters, *goy* gets translated with the latinised version of the Greek version, *ethnicus*. In other words, the translation of *goy* contributed to this ambiguity.

What we discover in Genesis 10:5, however, is that according to the Old Testament humans collectively organised in ethnic groups and nations based on family linkage *and* people's languages. In its religious interpretation, ethnic subdivision was "part of an eternal divine design", where destruction or assimilation is a divine punishment, and the cultivation of an "ethnic authenticity" a moral imperative (Fishman, 1982, p. 7). The sanctified language should be preserved like a 'sacred responsibility' as part of this divine design and continuity of spiritual collectivities remains intrinsic in various religious traditions. This safeguarding ideology of religious matrix is what Fishman (1982) defined "the bedrock of maintenance bilingual education" (p.8) because the need to preserve a sense of community as anchored to religious traditions led people to continue transmitting the sacred language despite of the territories in which these



communities lived and the languages spoken there. Conversely, some other intellectual traditions based their discourse of ethnicity, and nations, on its basic instrumentality and transitionality. The assumption developed is of a re-ethnicization on constantly larger scale in order to maximise opportunities and to reach a universal brotherhood (ibid.) which can be seen in some processes of standardisations such as policies that celebrate language homogeneity for national unity. However, contemporary nations and nationalism are not primordial, nor aiming at a universal order of fraternity.

Whilst the notion of nation is old, the ideology of nationalism is a modern socially constructed concept (Anderson, 1991; Emerson, 2013; Gellner, 2008; Hobsbawm 1992; Smith, 1979). The current meaning of nation, in fact, has been determined by a series of historical events. The onset of industrialisation and urbanisation, the French revolution (Hobsbawm, 1996; Gellner, 2008; Smith, 1979), print and print-capitalism, and 19th century imperialism and secessionism (Anderson, 1991; Smith, 1979) all contributed to the development of a new system of organisation of society and the establishment of nation-states across the globe. This compound of historical events brought about a distinctive trait of contemporary communities: the development of a national identity. Anderson (1991, p.6) defined nations as “an imagined political community” since people only knew a very small fraction of the population inhabiting the territorial space of the nation-state and still, they perceived each other as members of the same social group.

National affiliation becomes the new differential factor for imagining “stretchable nets of kinship” in the political transition from kingdoms and empires to nation-states, and in the breakdown of religious traditions (Smith, 1979, p.6). This is what Anderson called “the dawn of the age of nationalism” and “the dusk of religious modes of thought”

(1991, p.11). Religion used to represent a prominent identity marker for the many and a sort of “social glue” for diverse groups of people (nations, ethnic groups, tribes, families) who imagined themselves as part of a larger community across lands because connected by a shared sacred message and spiritual tradition. The rise of national ideals and the start of a process of secularisation after the French Revolution made “[t]he people of a religion [...] become the religion of a people, of a living community, of a nation” (Smith, 1979, p.49). Anderson specifies that contrary to the Christian dream of an entirely Christian planet, imaginable thanks to a shared sacred script, “no nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind” (1991, p.7). What I say here is not that religion ceased to be an important aspect of group membership but that with the establishment of nation-states, new identity markers came to the forefront, with languages starting to be directly connected to national membership options.

Whilst Gellner’s theory of nationalism (2008) draws on more economic strands, and Smith’s and Hobsbawm’s work take a more political perspective, Anderson (1991) placed the decline of empires at the heart of the nationalistic change alongside language and print (or what he calls print-capitalism). The status of Latin, the language of Christian sacrality and print, is gradually threatened by the increasing vernacularisation of texts started in the 16th century with Martin Luther’s translations of religious scripts in German (Anderson, 1991, p.39, Smith, 1979). Slowly, vernaculars became also instrument of political administrations and eventually, of most printed texts (Anderson, 1991). Although literacy rates in the 16th-17th century were low across Europe, through print-languages, modern education and the advent of newspapers, the idea of a simultaneity through time, and the access to an intelligible communication code, allowed communities to re-imagine themselves in geographic

frames. In other words, “the fall of Latin exemplified a larger process in which the sacred communities integrated by old sacred languages were gradually fragmented, pluralized and territorialized” (ibid., p.19). According to Anderson, print also created languages-of-power because certain varieties would be closer to print-language and they automatically acquired a higher status (1991, p.45). These phenomena of language stratification will be later explored by Bourdieu (1991) who described how a standard variety became misrecognised as a superior language triggering a dynamic of power relations between communities of speakers (more in Section 2.3). Moreover, the ideology on which nation-states based their political agenda saw monolingualism as preferable, if not inevitable. Monolingualism becomes the “crowning attribute of citizenship” (Jordan, 1921, p.35, cited by Valdes et al., 2003, p.7). The principle of linguistic homologation for national unity suppressed the possibility for language varieties and community languages to be considered equal, ascribing them to an inferior status.

To conclude this brief philological and historical journey on the origins of nationalism and national identities and languages, I want to go back to the use of *goy* and its relationship with the Greek version *ethnos*. The current use of *goy* in the Jewish diaspora is in opposition to Jew. This means that *goy* is used to define members of the ‘out-group’, ergo the non-Jews or ‘the Other’. How did a term meaning ‘group of humans’ turned to signify ‘the Other’? In Genesis 12:2, the Israelites are referred to for the first time as *goy gadol*, (lit. ‘great nation’) and then, in Exodus, the people of Israel started to be labelled *goy qadosh* (lit. ‘holy nation’). With an adjective of difference, the plain use of *goy* started to signify the designation of a group of humans -or nations- different from the Israelites, and so, the ‘Other’ because not defined by an adjective such as great and holy. Not by chance, the modern use of the word *etnico* in

Italian or ethnic in English finds its root in this biblical dichotomy and still today, if lacking an adjective beforehand, it denominates the out-group: ethnic as the Other. Paradoxically, Jewish communities turned into 'The Other' in 1930s when nazism made them victims of racial discrimination and ultimately, target of a genocide (often called, *ethnic* cleansing) during the Second World War. Since then, the way of talking about race and ethnicity has been more politically questioned than ever.

### 2.2.2. Social identities in contexts of superdiversity

After experiencing ethnic discrimination in Europe because of his Polish Jewish heritage, and in search of an answer to the events of WWII, social psychologist Henri Tajfel started his academic career with an interest in social perception and social categorisation (Hogg, 2020). From his research on the development of nationalism and the cognitive aspects of prejudice, his interest in intergroups and identity led to the elaboration in the 1970s of the Social Identity Theory (SIT). In collaboration with his student John Turner, they defined social identity as the self-conception of a group member (Tajfel, 1974; Turner et al., 1979). Identity, from the latin *identitās*, refers to the quality of being the same. Thus, social identity was a perception of self as equal to others, hence member of a social group where everyone shares similar or identical features. Knowledge of and sense of belonging to a group, and its emotional and evaluative significance, defines this process of self-identification. Drawing on Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory, Tajfel (1974) posit that self-conception as part of a group lied in the existing differentiation between social groups in the difference between in-group and out-group. However, due to the non-unitary nature of human experiences, the existence of multiple (and at times, conflicting) social identities in one individual is possible, if not inevitable, and subjectivity is expected to change over time (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Hogg, 2020; Norton, 1997). This means

that identity cannot be treated as fixed and stable. Instead, it is subject to construction and re-construction based on the context, on the where and when a certain role and identity is performed and/or expected.

Nonetheless, there are components of one's identity that arise out of choices and others that, instead, are assigned or appear to be non-negotiable (Grotevant, 1992). For example, nationality is given to children based on their place of birth (*jus soli*) and/or the parents' nationality (*jus sanguinis*)<sup>2</sup>. However, nationality does not always correspond to residence, and the social environment in which one lives is crucial in determining the different sets of social membership options. In fact, national identity is usually the result of a process of choice and alignment. For this reason, a difference between nationality and national identity is drawn (Turner et al., 1979), where nationality refers to the legal citizenship status, and national identity to the sense of belonging to a nation-state. How much of one's sense of national identity, then, is determined and by what? How is it constructed and performed?

Less than two centuries from the appearance of nation-states and nationalism, understanding national identity is more complex than ever because "the range of available identity options is becoming wider" (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p.2). In condition of globalisation, identities are negotiated in social worlds that stretch over multiple locations, generating more membership possibilities. In his introduction to *The Sociolinguistics of Globalisation*, Blommaert (2010) analysed the challenges posed by globalisation to the study of communication in modern times. He reminded us that what we call globalisation is not a new process even though it did change in scale and

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<sup>2</sup> The application of the *ius soli* in Italy is still debated in parliament since 2006 and remains at the centre of the public political debate. Up to date, Law 91 of 1992 indicates the principle of *ius sanguinis* as the only means of acquiring citizenship in the Italian Republic.

speed (Blommaert, 2010). In making this comment, he urged us to redefine the role of sociolinguistics in 21st century Europe because people's networks and flows generate complex interconnections between several different languages and cultures on a constantly larger scale and traditional approaches that draw on an idea of territorialised languages are no longer suitable or applicable. This transformative mosaic of diversity is what Vertovec (2007) conceptualised as 'superdiversity'. Scholars in the past decades had already tried to theorise the 'diversification of diversity' (Hollinger, 1995) and the appearance of 'communities within communities' (Baumann 1996), but what Vertovec's superdiversity does is describing an unprecedented level of complexity. The notion of superdiversity does not stem from the increase in numbers of diverse people or the number of diverse features (e.g., an increase in number of specific ethnolinguistic groups in one city) but it comes from what Vertovec defines "a significant new conjunctions and interactions of variables" which can be found in migrant communities in the UK (ibid., p.1025). In other words, the level of intersections among the multiple features that may characterise people and communities is becoming more and more complex.

When an individual is in contact with diverse communities and places, they may choose to adopt cultural values and behaviours typical of that community or place. This multiple affiliation is conceptualised as 'transnational identity', where one's own sense of identity is shaped by multiple affiliation to languages, cultures, values but also ethnicity and citizenship (Vertovec, 2001). Blommaert (2010) also observed that the increase in cultural contacts across the globe and the intensity of what it is defined geo-cultural globalisation, does not correlate with the geo-political one and explains it as it being "a stage of development within globalisation", insisting that these processes "can only be understood as part of larger, slower and more profound changes in

society” (2010, p.14). Finally, Vertovec insists that social identity is the result of how “people conceive themselves and [how] they are characterised by others” (2001, p.573). In other words, social identity is the effect of a mediation between self-perception and social perception of oneself. Therefore, elements of national identity, for example, appear to be both given and chosen, and self-categorisation would align with the social desirability of the context in which identity is performed. This raises the question, then, of how this multiplicity is managed, negotiated and performed, and what theories and approaches would suit the investigation of multilingualism and identities in contexts of superdiversity.

### **2.3. Languages, identities and pedagogies in relations of power**

In the 1970s’, a strand of sociology posited that language, instead of being the object of inquiry, should be understood as “an instrument of action (or power)” (Bourdieu, 1977, p.645). Bourdieu (1977), and in similar ways Foucault (1972), proposed to explore communication under the lens of ‘relations of symbolic power’, in which the meaning conveyed between two interlocutors always underlie dynamics of power which assign symbolic value to speech, and consequently to the speakers. In saying that language carry symbolic value, and that different languages and varieties or registers are associated with specific values, hence potentially (mis)recognised as superior or inferior, Bourdieu suggests that one’s language(s) can be defined as a symbolic capital that determines what one can or cannot do. Consequently, one’s repertoire (or linguistic capital) becomes inseparable from one’s own sense of value and legitimacy in the social arena.

The notion of language as symbolic capital is indeed crucial to understand how people position themselves and are positioned by others and how negotiations of social identities occur for and through language. In analysing the role of language in social relations through the lens of economic exchanges, Bourdieu (1977) presupposes that the relationship between linguistic competence and power (in the sense of the recognised value and legitimacy of the speaker for them to be heard) resides in the type of market in which the communication (the exchange) occurs. Based on this marketplace analogy, specific languages and language varieties have different currencies on different markets, and to understand relations of symbolic power is essential to read the rules of such markets (intended as the context in which people use language to communicate). For this reason, to explore issues of power in discourse, one needs to understand the context and the situatedness of an enquiry. As observed by Bourdieu (*ibid.*) schools constitute a particular context in which power is determined:

The educational system is a crucial object of struggle because it has a monopoly over the production of the mass of producers and consumers, and hence over the reproduction of the market on which the value of linguistic competence depends, in other words its capacity to function as linguistic capital. (p.653)

In the case of schools in England, for example, Standard English is the highest currency. Some value is conferred to foreign languages, the European languages commonly taught because considered to be useful for business and career. But with the low value ascribed to minority languages in a standardised monolingual system, the students' perception of legitimacy and usefulness of their own symbolic capital is inevitably undermined. In short, minority languages have no currency (symbolic power), are not needed in the classroom (market) and so they are not legitimate and legitimated.



In the process of standardisation for the maximisation of profit and for domination on the market, different “modes of expression” have to be measured against the legitimate language, which means that “[t]hose who seek to defend a threatened capital [...] are forced to conduct a total struggle [...] because they cannot save the competence without saving the market” (p.652). Building on Bourdieu’s theories, scholars such as Woolard (1985), for example, noted that different markets have different language norms and that one language dominance is not the result of a numerical disparity but that dominance is linked to a wide acceptance of value and prestige, which is linked to language ideologies. Moreover, power relations are relatively stable because languages and ethnicities do not exist in direct correlation and are instead socially situated (Heller, 1996, 2007). Whilst languages and ethnicities are bound, they are contingent to the different marketplaces. For this reason, in the “renegotiation of ‘game rules,’ new identity options come into play and new values are assigned to identity options.” (Blackledge and Pavlenko, 2004, p.13). How do people in different marketplaces, then, attribute a different value to different languages and varieties? What kind of ideologies shape the process of value attribution? And do such languages, with their different supposed values, have always the same form and meaning in different places?

Drawing on Amerindian ethnographic literature, Hymes (1985) realised that the same linguistic forms could have different patterns of use if employed in different cultural contexts and elaborated on the distinction between language and speech, claiming that linguistic forms should be considered as one part of a repertoire of speech forms, posing the basis for the conceptualisation of linguistic and communicative repertoires (Rymes, 2010, more in Section 2.4). In short, he argued that the same linguistic structures can differ depending on the context and the location in which a linguistic

interaction takes place, and this means that the process of meaning-making is not solely dependent on language itself. Communication is contingent to the context and the time and space in which it occurs, revealing the importance of ethnographic methods of research to investigate communication and language use. Indeed, languages are a resource that moves in time and space, and their use is relative to contexts. Similarly, Perez-Milan (2016) defined human activities as “socially situated practices ordered across space and time” where language is the key resource for the social construction of reality, in which both agency and social structure are mutually constitutive. In other words, social reality is constructed through language, an act of choice/agency, in specific places and at specific times, and within the limits of roles and identity options in which each distinctive human activity unfolds.

For these reasons, superdiversity forces us to rethink the role of language in multicultural societies, where languages and cultures co-exist and very often blend in the same space, at a given time. Makoni and Pennycook (2007) described it as the process of “rethinking the ways we look at languages and their relation to identity and geographical location, so that we move beyond notions of linguistic territorialization in which language is linked to a geographical space” (2007, p.3). Globalisation, in fact, is not just a new time-space frame in which we study languages. Instead, it imposes a reconsideration of society and language as a whole. Exploring a critical historiography of language, Makoni and Pennycook (2007) bring together a discussion on the invention of it, for which the classification and description of languages during 17th-century evangelisation, among the other colonising processes in the Global South, generated “an ideology of languages as separate and enumerable categories” (p.2). The project of invention and colonisation of languages is one key element of European surveillance of the world which lies precisely in the process of “constructing

the history of others for them” and which developed as “a form of national-imaginary whose original focus was the European nation state” (2007, p.5).

Gardner and Martin-Jones (2012, p.4) emphasise further that “as nation-states came to be defined as linguistically homogeneous entities, bilingualism and multilingualism emerged as ‘problems’ for this essentialising project”, highlighting the contrast between the use of language as a unifying tool to forge a national identity and the reality of multilingualism in society, which comes to be perceived as a threat to the national homogeneity and unity. In the national ideological discourse, language is an identity marker and warranty seal of “purity”. Leung, Harris and Rampton (1997) assert that language use, ethnicity and social identity are indeed linked notions but challenge the “neat one-to-one correspondence between ethnicity and language” (pg. 543). In their study on the ‘idealised native speaker’ in which they reified ethnicity in the English as a Second Language (ESL, also called EAL) classroom they remind us of the importance for teachers to understand the ethnolinguistic complexity of their students because it is not possible to apply “clearly bounded ethnic and linguistic categories”, especially in multiethnic urban areas.

They offer the example of a British-born boy of Indian origins who would feel ‘the other’ in the UK because of his skin colour and ‘the other’ in India because of his low language proficiency in the local language, and of an Indian girl who shares, during the interviews, that her competence in German -which she studied as a foreign language at school- was higher than her competence in Gujarati -which was considered by the school to be her L1. Any assumption on a correspondence between language and ethnicity becomes simply inadequate (Leung et al., 1997). Members of minority communities, and children of migrant parents, cannot be positioned in fixed identities as they are in a constant process of “making, remaking and negotiating”

elements of the different ethnolinguistic worlds they live in as they construct “dynamic new ethnicities” (ibid., p.547).

While challenging some classifications that happen in schools and that do not reflect the lived ethnolinguistic experiences of children with migratory backgrounds, Leung et al. (1997) highlight the discrepancies between a pedagogy built on the idea of Standard English as defining the nation-state and assuring national cohesion, and the reality of classrooms in England where different varieties of English are at use. Hence their critique to the notion of ‘native speaker’:

The conventional TESOL assumption is that ethnic minority pupils are beginners or relative newcomers to English (or at any rate lack native-speaker expertise) but that they possess expertise in their home or community language (L1). A related assumption is that the ethnic majority pupil possesses native-speaker expertise in an undifferentiated English (i.e., no distinction is made between standard English and local vernacular Englishes). In contrast, it is difficult to assume that ethnic majority pupils [...] possess expertise in English, especially standard English for academic purposes. A further complication is that many ethnic minority pupils disclaim expertise in their putative L1 (home/community language). (p.556)

In schools where children bring with them a number of different varieties and vernaculars of the majority language, and elements of other linguistic system based on the different migratory backgrounds, ignoring the richness of such communicative capital means trying to standardise processes for maximising on profit. But such standardisation has consequences on the formation of social identities and wellbeing as well as on the learning potential and academic success of all students. A limit on the use of one’s communicative repertoire, combined with discourses of language legitimacy (where Standard English is the legitimate language of schooling and there is little or no space for minority languages), may lead to a downgraded sense of self and self-perception of children whose linguistic profile cannot be standardised.

Critical pedagogy offers a window into how agency can be fostered to achieve learning (Freire 1970) and understand legitimacy. In his work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) challenges the traditional idea of teaching in which educators hold knowledge and students “accept their ignorance as justifying the teachers existence” (p.72) in what he defined ‘the banking concept of education’. In this scenario, knowledge is treated only as a mere commodity and education is limited to depositing knowledge into students’ minds, expecting that they will memorise and uncritically adopt the information provided. Against a capitalistic understanding of education, Freire opens a debate on the relationship between power, agency, and the practice of teaching and learning. As Dowbor writes in the preface to *The pedagogy of the Heart* (1998), “a better life includes access to better things, but it also includes, and fundamentally so, the ensuing human relations ... as contexts that generate solidarity build environments where people feel more fulfilled” (p.27). In other words, knowledge transfer is removed from the main and only function of education in order to re-think learning spaces as contexts for human connection and democratic relations, where to become ‘fully human’ (ibid.). Building the learning experience on dialogue and participation, critical pedagogy presupposes that students and teachers hold and develop agency in their community space to maintain an open dialogue and a problem-solving approach in which all participants come together as legitimate participants to the collective experience of thinking and learning.

#### **2.4. ‘Doing’ multilingualism**

Language and culture are the medium through which “every human creates, explores, sustains and tests social relationships while developing a sense of agency” (Heath & Street, 2008, p.6). For this reason, the study of social practices and social identities

cannot be exempt from the analysis of language and culture, and their interconnections. There is a long-term support in anthropology and ethnography that language and culture are inseparable (Copland & Creese, 2015; Heath & Street, 2008) and that both are dynamic and developing. In fact, according to Street (1991, 2008), culture never just 'is' but 'does', and in saying so, he suggests treating culture as a verb, rejecting the stativity conferred to it by the use of a noun. Fishman (1996,1982) accords equal importance to dynamism in ethnicity when he writes that it is "the sense of *being* part of a particular people, *doing* the things that this people traditionally does, and therefore, of *knowing* (appreciating, sensing, feeling, intuiting) things this people claim to know" (1982, p.7, emphasis in the original). In other words, the relationship between culture and ethnicity lives in its being and knowing the "peopleness relatedness", and fundamentally, in the doing. On the same line is a strand of applied linguistics that supports the vision of language as a verb (Li Wei, 2018). The notion of 'linguaging' in Li Wei's work derives from a commentary on Newmeyer's essay on the origin of language, where the argument developed is of language as an activity and a process in being.

Conceptualised by Cen William in 1980s, the word 'translanguaging' (originally in Welsh), from trans- (from the Latin for 'through', 'transcend') and languaging, was used to describe a teaching strategy in which two languages were used in one lesson within mainstream education. Popularised in its English version by Baker (2001) and Garcia (2009), the notion of translanguaging expanded to mean "the act performed by bilinguals accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential" (Garcia, 2009, p.140). The verb languaging combined with the prefix *trans-* evokes the instinct to go beyond the boundaries of socially constructed named languages,

reflecting the natural use of multiple languages simultaneously in one interaction. It also represents an ontological and epistemological perspective on the nature of multilingualism.

Against a modernist view of “pure languages” that legitimises members of a culture based on language proficiency and phonetic homologation, post-structuralist approaches, with translanguaging propositions, deconstruct such social constructions (Copland & Creese, 2015) with attention to the geo-historical dimension of identity and membership options. In this regard, Flores (2019) stresses the importance of the geo-historical dimension of research, despite this being at times criticised because beyond the scope of (applied) linguistics, and states that by "bracketing the broader political and economic context ... and focusing solely on linguistic solutions, our field has been complicit [in perpetuating racial hierarchies]" (Flores, 2019, p.57).

Ultimately, the critique of essentialism and the growing body of research on translanguaging point at issue the nature of the concept of ethnicity and its use in applied linguistics (Canagarajah, 2012). In light of a conception of language that transcend prescriptive boundaries and where languages are no longer treatable as 'hermetically sealed units' (Makoni, 1998 in Makoni & Pennycook, 2007, p.27), Canagarajah (2012) supports the idea of dynamism in discourse of ethnicity by arguing for a strategic constructivism where ethnicity is treated as a changing construct. To conclude, I maintain that ethnicity is fluid. Yet, I consider its fluidity within the frame of a historical continuity (Creese et al., 2006; May 2011). In other words, ethnic, cultural and linguistic identity options are contingent to the context of identity performance and are fluid in nature, but there is a historically determined arena in which the range of such options is available.

## 2.5. Chapter summary

This chapter intended to provide an overview of the theoretical stances on language and identity which informed the present study. Starting from an exploration of the concept of nations, ethnicities and social identities, it highlighted the challenges represented by language territorialisation. The social construction -or invention- of language as linked to the formation of nation-states and colonialism (Makoni and Pennycook, 2007) combined with the development of print-capitalism (Anderson, 1991) constitutes a crucial prelude to how languages and identities intertwine today in relations of power, especially in contexts of migration.

In the contact between majority and minority languages, what emerges is a discrepancy in terms of the value ascribed to the various languages and varieties. This sense of value is inevitably reflected onto their speakers (Bourdieu, 1997), and as Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004, p.3) pointed out, when linguistic and identity options are more valued than others “negotiation is a logical outcome”. Identities can be negotiated between speakers through linguistic practices. These relations of power occur in different ‘marketplaces’ that are socially situated, and an increasing diversification of diversity, or superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007), further complicates the study of languages and identities. Post-structuralist approaches to the investigation of language and identity offer a window into how to navigate the complexity of the theme.

In pursuing knowledge beyond dichotomies, post-structuralism contributes to the deconstruction of social categories for which speakers of ‘pure languages’ are ‘legitimate members’ of specific cultures, nations and ethnicities, stressing the unfinishedness of language and identity. On this paradigm, lays my epistemological sense of direction which contemplates the translanguaging stance as a “philosophical orientation” and “a necessary mindset or framework for educating bilingual students”



(García et al., 2016, p.50). I see in translanguaging as a set of beliefs about language and communication and the classroom society that emerges from the need to push the boundaries of existing social constructs and move towards favourable conditions for fairness in society and social justice. In the next chapter, I provide an overview of the literature on heritage language maintenance at home and at school, including research on translanguaging in complementary schools.

## **Chapter Three. Literature review: heritage languages and complementary schools**

### **3.1. Introduction**

The complex migratory trajectories of the 21st century determined new demographic patterns and a diversification of minority language communities across Europe (Vertovec, 2022). New patterns are emerging as the result of different people settling in new countries which become then the place of birth, residence and education of their children. In this scenario, how do parents transmit their languages to their children? How do they support their little ones in the maintenance of their heritage languages?

In this chapter, I review some of the literature on family language practices and policies to understand how minority communities transmit their language(s) to their children. I then explore some education policies in the UK and research on complementary schools for an overview of how children are (or are not) supported in their HL maintenance beyond the family context.

### **3.2. Heritage languages at home**

#### **3.2.1. Inheritance and affiliation**

Hornberger and Wang (2008) describe heritage language speakers in English-speaking countries as “individuals with familial or ancestral ties to a language other than English” (p.6), and Valdes (2001) specifies that is “the historical and personal connection that is salient and not the actual proficiency of individual speakers” (p.38).

Indeed, heritage speakers do not use languages in isolation and their levels of proficiency vary so much from person to person that a standard profile would be unthinkable (Hornberger & Wang, 2008). In this work, I use the term heritage language to stress the intergenerational transmission and the process of inheritance of the language regardless of levels of proficiency, and to align with the scholarship on heritage language education as an emerging field of research in Canada, United States and more recently Europe (Brinton et al., 2008; Kagan et al., 2017; Lytra and Martin, 2010).

In scrutinising the use of the terms 'native speaker' and 'mother tongue' in education, and as a standard for conceptualising bilingualism, Rampton (1990) discusses the ambiguity of the expressions and advances the idea of language expertise, language affiliation and language inheritance. Since terms like native and mother tongue "emphasize the biological at the expense of the social", a first suggestion is to consider people's relations with language under the lens of *expertise*, which is something learned and not directly correlated with identification, meaning that the notion "shifts the emphasis from 'who you are' to 'what you know'" in a fairer organisation of ideas (p.99). Alongside expertise, Rampton proposes the concept of language loyalty, constituted by inheritance, as "continuity between people and groups", and affiliation, which involves a deliberate alignment to specific people and groups (ibid.). The two aspects are defined as both negotiable and, like in the idea of expertise, not necessarily a given characteristic of specific speakers like suggested by the terms native (by birth) and mother tongue (from family linkage). This difference matters a great deal in HL transmission and HL learning programs.

### 3.2.2. Multilingualism in the family: the critical domain

The family is the social unit in which the use of the heritage languages is critical for their maintenance, hence Spolsky's (2012) definition of the family in language policy studies as 'the critical domain'. Family language policy (FLP) is a relatively new field of research that tries to understand the processes behind heritage language maintenance and language shift or loss by exploring language practices, beliefs and attitudes, and language management in the home environment (King et al., 2008). Drawing on Spolsky's language policy models, FLP investigates the relationship between language practices (how family members speak), language planning or management (how they plan their language practices) and language belief or ideology (what they think about language). Curdt-Christiansen's (2018, p.420) defined FLP as "the explicit and overt as well as implicit and covert language planning by family members in relation to language choice and literacy practices within home domains and among family members". In comprising both the explicit-overt and the implicit-covert aspects, Curdt-Christiansen highlighted the relationship between the families' unconscious process of linguistic and cultural transmission with their conscious and unconscious choices of language use and language management.

A key question in heritage languages and FLP research is why some families practise and transmit their HLs to their children and other families do not (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009). In the 1980s, Saunders published the first study on language practices in the family and suggested that a one parent one language strategy (OPOL) was a way for families to support bilingualism. The study received critiques, and Saunders decided to systematically investigate his own experience of parenting. In fact, in the 1980s started emerging a strand of longitudinal studies of parental experiences in two or more language (e.g., Fantini 1985; Hoffman, 1985 as mentioned in King and Fogle,

2013), followed by studies taking a language socialization approach (Lanza 1992). Whilst the initial interest was on children's bilingual development in a psycholinguistic perspective, Lanza's (1992) work represented a shift of perspective with a study on code-switching before the age of three, in which she concluded that the use of multiple languages was primarily a sociolinguistic phenomenon (King and Fogle, 2013). Building on this, Li Wei's (1994) study on Chinese families in England revealed the importance of sociality and social networks. The move towards an interest in family language practices under the lens and models of language policy, however, emerged with De Houwer's (1999) call for investigating parental beliefs and attitudes. Her interest in moving beyond practices alone opened the road to investigating practices alongside language attitudes and planning.

To date, Spolsky's model continues to provide a framework for FLP, but some studies suggest that the three components (practice, belief, management) of policies are not always interdependent. By means of quantitative analysis, Hollebeke et al. (2022) explored the correlations between the components and concluded that the framework is indeed a 'non-unitary concept' when applied to the family domain. They confirm that the practices, beliefs and managements are positively related to one another, but they point at a possible mismatch between belief and management or practice. Discrepancies of this kind emerged, for example, in examining parental attitudes towards translanguaging in the UK (Wilson, 2020). Wilson noticed that a translingual ideology is making its way into multilingual families but that "parental positive attitudes towards translanguaging do not necessarily translate into flexible practices at home." (p.73). Indeed, language ideologies are believed to be a driving force in FLP but the expressed attitudes of research participants conflicted with observed and reported

language practices showing that parents' belief and their language management and practices may not always interdepend.

Wilson brings two practical examples to explain this type of incongruence. In one case, one of the French-speaking parents that she interviewed expressed a positive attitude towards translanguaging and the use of both English and French but also explained that he decided to adopt an only French approach at home as an act of resistance against the overwhelming presence of English in his children's life. Conversely, another French parent embraced the idea of translanguaging but her reasons for engaging in such practices was mainly to 'avoid creating tension' and ensure reciprocal understanding. Her flexible approach to language use was a necessity to avoid complications instead of a language management choice directly guided by her belief (Wilson, 2020, p.71). These two cases are emblematic of how families may negotiate external pressures with internal desires, and how different priorities may guide the language management and practice of parents and children beyond their beliefs and ideologies.

Although family members can engage in various language practices developing language use habits among them, the family is never a "self-contained institution that can adopt its own strategies and devices for language transmission" (Canagarajah, 2008, p.171) because, how Curdt-Christiansen (2013) points out, family members need to reconcile "the realities of social pressure, political impositions, and public education demands on the one hand, and the desire for cultural loyalty and linguistic continuity on the other" (p.1). In other words, families need to negotiate their language transmission desire with external social demands. In fact, more recent work in the field of FLP moved from questioning if and how certain policies are successful in terms of children's language proficiency, and calls, instead, for a close examination of how FLP

are established in multilingual families: how family members manage and negotiate internal and external forces (Canagarajah, 2008; Curdt-Christiansen, 2013) and how such language negotiations are related to identity negotiation process (Lanza and Li Wei, 2016; King and Lanza 2017). Furthermore, whilst prior work in FLP focused on parental language ideologies and how they related to language planning and practices, recent studies interrogated the role of children's agency and how this impacts on parental decisions, as well as how internal and external ideologies affect both children's and parents' practices, calling for greater attention to the critical role of children in FLP (Fogle and King 2011) since it would enhance our understanding of "not only children's own language development, but also their school success and, more broadly, the maintenance of minority languages in a globalizing society" (p.21).

In sum, families and communities bear the responsibility of HL transmission but there are social factors influencing the language ecology of a family and the people's attitudes towards minority languages. In the following sub-section, I provide an overview of some education policies in relation to community languages to understand how young members of minority communities are supported in the process of HL maintenance beyond family.

### **3.3. Heritage languages at school**

#### **3.3.1. Heritage languages in policy and complementary schools**

In the years between 1966 and 1999, schools with large proportions of immigrant children received financial support through the Local Government Act, Section 11. In 1999, the scheme was replaced by the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) managed by UK Local Authorities (LA). Funds were often used for the support to EAL

pupils in learning English but virtually nothing was done for the maintenance of the languages of origin as responsibility remained entirely on the family and community. In 1975, the release of a major statement, *A Language for Life* (DES, 1975), also known as the *Bullock Report*, offered a hopeful message as it suggested that all teachers are first and foremost teachers of languages and valued community languages and cultures by stating:

No child should be expected to cast off the language and culture of the home as he crosses the school threshold, nor to live and act as though school and home represent two totally separate and different cultures [...] (DES, 1975:286)

Yet, the system remained largely monolingual and teaching practices rarely made space for minority languages. The EMAG provided funding to support children from “underachieving ethnic minority groups” until 2011, when the funds were mainstreamed into the wider schools’ grant.

In the meantime, in 1985, the Department of Education and Science (DES) published a final report on the school experience of ethnic minorities, *Education for All* (also known as the *Swann Report*). In what Conteh et al. (2007, p.9) defined “perhaps the clearest statement”, it was stated that linguistic and cultural maintenance “is best achieved within the ethnic minority communities themselves rather than within mainstream schools, but with considerable support from and liaison with the latter” (DES, 1985, p.406), meaning that communities alone are responsible for heritage language education rather than primary and secondary schools, but that collaboration between institutions is encouraged.

The report stressed the unfeasibility of a project of heritage language learning within mainstream education because it was against the principle of equal provision since separate provision would generate inequalities between ethnic minority students and



English ones. In addition, it reinforced the sense of a preferable monolingualism by adding that:

On the contrary, the key to equality of opportunity, to academic success and, more broadly, to participation on equal terms as a full member of society, is good command of **English** and the emphasis must therefore be on the learning of English. (DES, 1985:407; bold in the original)

Several initiatives took place “in relation to, in response to, and perhaps even in spite of, a strongly felt public discourse of monolingualism and homogeneity in the multilingual, heterogeneous state” (Creese and Blackledge, 2011, p.1197) but they were, and to date still are, too often solely conducted by local communities. Such initiatives led to the establishment of some community/complementary schools, which are all organised in different ways (Li Wei, 2006, more in the next subsection). They often financially depend on the fees paid by parents and community members who sometimes are also involved in the activities of the school by volunteering and supporting teaching, admin or fund-raising. By doing so, they extend the function of the school for language and culture maintenance and transform these realities in social spaces for the community (Lytra and Martin, 2010; Li Wei and Wu 2010). Nonetheless, formal support from schools has not been forthcoming (Conteh et al., 2007).

The interest in language education in the UK primary schools came only two decades ago with the National Language Strategy (DfES, 2002) which aimed to enable all primary school children to learn a foreign language. Whilst it opened with the vision of “changing the country’s attitude to teaching and learning languages” and recognises that “language skills [are] central to breaking down barriers both within this country and between our nation and others” (DfES, 2002, p.4), the document failed to provide a holistic vision of language education in line with the multilingual reality of the UK population and it entirely focused on MFL education- which will be officially introduced

in the KS2 curriculum in 2014 (DfE, 2013). A year later, a new Department for Education and Skills (DfES) publication (*Raising Attainment for Minority Ethnic Pupils*, 2003) was dedicated to ethnic minority pupils. It recognised the challenges faced by communities in providing children with educational experiences in the languages of origin and suggested collaborations between mainstream schools and communities as it reads that:

Successful schools reach out to their communities. They often make premises available for community use, which can build bridges and develop dialogue. Many pupils have also benefited greatly from out-of-school-hours learning in community-run initiatives such as supplementary schools.” (DfES, 2003:26)

[...] Many bilingual pupils continue to develop oral and written skills in their mother tongue by attendance at supplementary or complementary schools and we will continue to encourage mainstream schools to make meaningful links with supplementary schools which recognise the value of the educational contribution made by these organisations. (DfES, 2003:30)

To date, classes promoted by the countries of origin of (potential) multilingual pupils are often offered within the premises of mainstream schools that, however, ask the promoting organisation of HL courses to pay (often high) rent fees, limiting the access to this learning opportunity to economically advantaged students. Moreover, communication between complementary and mainstream schools remains limited (Kenner and Ruby, 2012).

### 3.3.2. Languages and identities in complementary schools

Complementary schools in the UK started emerging in the late 1950s within the Afro-Caribbean community in and around London (Li Wei, 2006). These schools were run by and for members of the community and the language used was often the Black English Vernacular, against the British Standard English imposed by mainstream education. Another group of schools was formed in the late 1960s and 1970s among Muslim communities as a need to rebalance "the Christian-dominated or secular ethos

of mainstream schools" (Li Wei, 2006, p.77). Not long after, several schools for the cultural and linguistic maintenance of other immigrant communities (for example, Chinese, Turkish, etc.) were set up. Li Wei unmasks the common patterns in the history of these three main groups as he states that "they were set up in response to the failure of the mainstream education system to meet the needs of the ethnic minority children and their communities" (2006, p.78). These schools provide examples of multilingual and multicultural education, but they are not without complexity. In this section, I provide a brief overview of the literature on how the different languages and cultures are managed, in between and through boundaries, and how teachers and students navigate multiple languages and identities.

The declared objective of complementary schools is the maintenance of heritage languages and the development of literacy skills in those languages (Creese, 2009) but language is not the only reason. As part of an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)-funded study of six Chinese schools in England, Francis et al. (2009, 2010) investigated the pupils', parents' and teachers' perceptions and construction of the purpose of complementary schooling. The pupils' focus was "very clearly on language" and when explaining the benefits of developing their language skills in their HL, two main reasons were given: instrumental benefits, and identity (Francis et al., 2009, p.523). In terms of instrumental benefits, a common perception was that Chinese was important to communicate with relatives, and, in some cases, to help family members who were not literate. Other instrumental benefits included adding a GCSE exam, and expanding language skills for job opportunities in the future. Whilst a small number of participants said that attending a CSs helped them learning more about Chinese culture intended as history and traditions, more students defined language as culture and identity in itself when they responded that "they needed to

learn the Chinese language *because they are Chinese*" (p.529, emphasis in the original).

Instead, parents and teachers expressed their view of CSs as places for language maintenance but also, and importantly, for culture in more explicit terms, considering both of them key for developing a sense of identity as Chinese people (Francis et al., 2010). A teacher, for example, stated that the CS serves different purposes but first of all she says, "we hope the kids that grow up here will have an identity" (ibid., p.104), challenging understandings of CSs as simply places of language learning. In terms of instrumental purposes, being able to communicate with other Chinese people, most importantly the older generations, was among the first reasons provided by parents. Teachers as well as parents saw in the development of language skills an economic benefit drawing on the idea of China as a global economic force (ibid., p.106). Finally, the analysis shows an additional pragmatic explanation for attending the Chinese CS: avoiding future regrets.

Although community and complementary schools have been around for some decades, there is a general lack of awareness of their existence in both mainstream schools and in society more broadly, and research in these settings are relatively recent (Li Wei, 2014). Between 2004 and 2007, two large research projects led by the University of Birmingham investigated multilingualism in complementary schools in England<sup>3</sup> to explore the social, cultural and linguistic significance of these schools, the range of linguistic practices at play and how such practices may reflect identity positioning and negotiating. The data generated by these studies laid the foundation

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<sup>3</sup> The two projects are *Complementary Schools and their Communities in Leicester* and *Investigating Multilingualism in Complementary Schools in Four Communities*. The CSs participating in the latter were run by the Chinese community in Manchester, the Turkish community in London, the Gujarati speaking community in Leicester and the Bangladeshi community in Birmingham.

for several publications exploring language and identity in HL education in England, with an interest in identity negotiation and translanguaging practices and pedagogy (Blackledge and Creese, 2010, Creese et al., 2006; Lytra, 2011, for example).

First, Creese and Blackledge (2011) elaborated on the different language approaches adopted by teachers in CS classroom and building on what Garcia (2009) defines translanguaging, labelled the use of more languages in one lesson *flexible bilingualism*. They called it 'flexible' in contrast with an approach of 'separate bilingualism', like what Heller (1999) labelled *parallel monolingualism* or Fishman (1967) *bilingualism with diglossia*. By investigating four different contexts, Creese and Blackledge (2011) noted that the two approaches, despite appearing in contradiction, they often happened simultaneously and state:

This impetus towards the erasure of minority immigrant languages is resisted where complementary schools have been set up by communities which have gathered whatever resources are at their disposal to teach and maintain the heritage/ community language. At the same time, the complementary schools often appear to argue for a static, reified version of 'culture' and 'heritage', which may be remote from their students' experience (Blackledge and Creese, 2008). In this complex ideological context complementary schools become sites where subtle, nuanced negotiations of identities frequently occur. (p.1197)

In other words, the CS becomes a place of resistance against the domination of English over the community languages but also against discourses of monolingualism and homogeneity and the tension between the two aspects surfaces in identity negotiations through language.

Named by Creese et al. (2006) 'heritage/community identity', this option is considered to be tied to the performance of the learner identity in the context of complementary school. In their analysis of an ethnographic investigation of Gujarati complementary schools in Leicester, Creese et al. (2006) described the emergence of three interlinked identities: heritage, learner and multicultural identity. Heritage identity is encouraged

by the school, with parents and administrators stressing the importance of language maintenance and cultural continuum across generations. Learner identity, instead, is a significant identity option in classrooms and it is central in view of academic achievement, also measured in qualifications. Whilst these two options are 'explicitly encouraged', a multicultural identity resulted to be just 'allowed'. Creese et al. noticed that despite multiculturalism per se did not seem to be an explicit goal of heritage language education in the researched complementary schools, multicultural identities were constantly performed by students who felt connected with their peers as sharing a sense of multiple affiliation.

In the example of a group interview with teenage girls, the term 'freshy' stood out in describing the outsider who recently moved to England. The new student grew up in another country and did not share cultural features of the CSs students who, instead, built their ethnic identity while growing up in England. The authors explain such perception and state that "a lack of bilingualism links the freshie to static ethnic identity category" (ibid., p.38), which means that the mismatch between repertoires signalled a difference in identity performance compared to the other multilingual and multicultural students. They specify that even though the school did not explicitly encourage multicultural identities, it still provided a safe space for considering and exploring "fluid ethnicities" and that "bilingualism becomes a key resource in negotiating these complex identities" (ibid., p.41).

On the other hand, when the school encouraged a heritage identity and operated on an ideology of separate bilingualism, the language taught came to symbolise cultural heritage strictly linked to ideas of nationhood. For example, HL classes may transmit cultural values and moral codes that are strictly bounded to the countries of origin like explored by Li Wei and Wu (2010) in the study of what they defined as 'socialisational

teaching'. They observed the process for which "a grammatic drill is transformed into a socialisation process" (p.37) depending on the examples that teachers choose to explain grammar or the historical narrative and facts used in worksheets which draw solely on the history of the country of origin. This separatist and monocultural approach seemed to generate resistance in pupils who struggled to see a connection between lessons content and their diasporic cultural identity and reacted by posing challenging questions and putting in doubt, eventually, the need for acquiring such knowledge (Li Wei & Wu, 2010).

In fact, even though students may value the importance of maintaining their HL, their language use is "firmly anchored in the locality" (Sneddon, 2010, p.55). For this reason, complementary schools need to find meaningful ways to transmit the cultural heritage of a community whose experiences are grounded in one place (the nation-state or lands of origin) but are developed in a different geo graphical and social context (the host country). Self-identification in this space is not uniformed with one fixed image of society, but it is a multi-layered process where "a multi-dimensional narrative of ethnic change itself [is] influenced by ethnic boundary erosion, inter-generational shifts and symbolic ethnicity" (Arvanitis, 2014, p.62). Children with a migratory background experience a sense of difference within the family itself and this process of boundaries erosion within the same family may be difficult to make sense of. Whilst mainstream school education builds around a "uniformed" portray of "one society" that shares English language and British value, CSs can be seen as sites of identity negotiation where new diasporic cultural identities constantly re-shape. In these spaces students have the chance to maintain a "a self-reflexive posture of their identity" and reflect on "the here and the elsewhere, produced as a dynamic characteristic of cosmopolitan vision" (Tsolidis, 2011, p.4).

Research on CSs has primarily focused on language use and identity negotiation. However, some studies reveal the pedagogical potential of such educational realities. In investigating the practices of a Chinese complementary school in the UK, Li Wei (2014) sheds light on the intersection between translanguaging and what is defined *funds of knowledge*: “the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for households and individual functioning and well-being” (Moll et al. 1992, p.133, cited by Li Wei, 2014, p.162). Li Wei brings the example of some interaction in the Chinese Mandarin HL class in which all the students speak English and some of the students speak Cantonese. In those dialogues it is evident how discussing words, their pronunciation or the way of writing them in the different languages and varieties allows teachers and students to learn from one another as they bring into the classroom space their out-of-school knowledge. In finding opportunities for dialogue through instances of translanguaging practices, the participants gained the opportunity to enrich their learning experiences and exchange knowledge. However, it is important to understand how to utilise “the different funds of knowledge so that both the teachers and the pupils can gain something positive and beneficial” (ibid., p.177).

In fact, similar situations in which different languages and language varieties come into contact showcase potential challenges. In examining the dynamics at play in a Greek complementary school in London, Karatsareas (2021a, 2021b) identified in the policy and practice of teaching Standard Greek in the CS, and Standard English in mainstream schools, the obstacle to the legitimisation of the Cypriot variety, which would be part of some children’s ‘funds of knowledge’. Through examples of how some Cypriot terms were rejected in favour of the Standard Greek variety, and how the pupils elaborated on oracy vs literacy binary and used the label ‘slang’ for Cypriot Greek, this



study illuminates on the role of language policies in education as it shows how students “internalised the hierarchised binary contrasts that standardised and non-standardised varieties form within both the Greek and the English parts of their linguistic repertoires” (Karatsareas, 2021a, p.834).

### **3.4. Chapter summary**

This literature review incorporated elements of heritage language learning and maintenance both in the family and in complementary schools. The brief historical excursus of the research on FLP shows how the field moved from an interest in raising children to be bilingual and proficient in two or more languages to an interest in the social factors influencing FLP and how family members manage and negotiate internal and external forces (Canagarajah, 2008; Curdt-Christianen, 2013) and how such language negotiations relate to identity negotiation process (Lanza and Li Wei, 2016; King and Lanza, 2017). This study adds to this literature by investigating language practices and the challenges of HL maintenance in a peculiar moment in time, which is that of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Then, an exploration of community language policies in education in the UK illuminates on some of the reasons for complementary schooling and shows that they were indeed set up in response to a shortcoming of the mainstream education system (Li Wei, 2006). An overview of some research projects in CSs shows the complexity of language and identity management in such educational settings but also the possibilities and the potential of translanguaging approaches to HL education.

The present study on the Italian community of London will update the literature on complementary schools in the UK, which mostly draw on older data, as it investigates

HL education after the changes brought by the Eurozone and Global Financial Crisis, and Brexit. It also intends to help cover the gap on EU heritage languages, currently representing a minority of the studies on CSs in the UK. Finally, this doctoral thesis expands on the literature on language and identity and translanguaging in CSs by delving into the important role of critical-participatory pedagogies in promoting and legitimising minority language and identity options.

## Chapter Four. Methodology

### 4.1. Introduction

Numerous scholars in the field of socio- and applied linguistics have questioned how ethnicity, language and culture are connected to social practices and to the processes of identity positioning and negotiation (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Creese et al., 2006; Fishman & García, 2010; Lytra, 2011; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Pérez-Milans, 2016, for example). In this study, I observed how participants performed and negotiated identities by investigating multilingual practices and pedagogy in a London complementary school. The need to interpret social communication prompted Linguistic Ethnography (LE) because of its interpretative design and interdisciplinary approach (Snell et al., 2016; Copland & Creese, 2015). A strong LE orientation was complemented by elements of quantitative research for the contextualisation of the study as before entering the 'field', a questionnaire was distributed to London-based families of Italian origin and the statistical results served to better understand the reasons for complementary schooling, and HL education more broadly.

In this chapter, I present the research context and discuss the methodological choices I took in the course of this study to help answer my research questions. I describe how data were collected and analysed, including some reflections on the implications of running the study during the Covid-19 pandemic. The chapter is organised into four main parts. I first outline the research questions and discuss my methodological orientation with some reflections about researcher's positionality, expanding on what has already been presented in the introduction chapter (Section 1.2). Section 4.5 provides an overview of the research context as I introduce the community, and the

children, parents and teachers at an Italian complementary school. After some considerations about ethics, access and consent, in Section 4.6 I present the strategies and tools employed for this study. I illustrate, chronologically, the process of data collection and provide details of the ways in which I used the different data collection tools, including an account of participatory ethnography for which children took active part in the process of collecting data. Finally, I outline the process of data analysis and describe the procedure for the quantitative analysis of the questionnaires and the approaches adopted for the analysis of ethnographic data.

## **4.2. Research questions**

The importance of endorsing reflexivity throughout the research process (Copland & Creese, 2015; Martin-Jones, 2016) means, amongst other things, understanding how research questions are developed over time, and how they evolve based on changing contexts and circumstances. Questions are indeed dynamic and changing and for this reason, building resilience, as the ability to adaptation to the unpredictability of the research journey, was essential in learning about ethnography, and for running doctoral research more in general. Circumstances, views, and ideas changed, and finding new ways to research, and continue to learn how to learn, was a regular exercise during this doctoral project. But in embracing the ethnographic way, the research questions represented mainly a guiding line in the iterative process that moves from theory to principle, from principles to practice, and from practice to theory again. In substance, affirming research questions proved to be a journey through uncertainty and intuition.

The initial project was designed before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and contemplated research in mainstream *and* complementary primary schools, with an interest in the maintenance of European heritage languages. The initial research questions were about (1) the impact of the intra-European migration on the language background of children in London's primary schools, (2) the practices for supporting HL maintenance in mainstream schools, if any, and (3) multilingualism and multilingual pedagogies in complementary schools. These three questions changed during the doctoral research in different ways. They needed to be re-adjusted to the circumstance and were inevitably reshaped, resized or withdrawn.

The first question was intended to provide an overview of the broader setting of the research. The intention to analyse demographic statistics and school censuses stemmed from the wish to better understand the distribution of heritage languages in primary education. My objective was to estimate, even if approximately, how many multilingual pupils were enrolled in primary schools at the dawn of Brexit. I was also interested in finding out if the migration patterns of the last decade, in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, brought about a change in the numbers of heritage speakers of European languages in London's primary schools.

However, data collected in school censuses are limited, and not always publicly accessible. By examining the questions in the school census again and most importantly, by talking with members of my community, I understood that the languages reported in the census could not be representative of multilingualism in any way. Home languages were reported for pupils who were considered by the school to be EAL student, but there were no questions about heritage languages should English be reported as the child's main language. This research question was withdrawn. Although not representing a finding in systematic terms, the fact that information about

heritage languages in primary schools is absent or difficult to form is useful in itself to contextualise this study.

The second question implied the participation of at least one mainstream school. Whilst my direct involvement in the sector of complementary schooling could still help keep some hope alive, the outbreak of the pandemic and the lockdowns between 2020 and 2021 constituted a too big obstacle for researching in mainstream school settings. For this reason, I decided to reframe the whole proposal and entirely focus on complementary schools. The question about multilingual pedagogies in complementary schools constituted in the end the first guiding frame of this inquiry.

To gain an understanding of heritage language education and social practices in complementary schools, I sought to answer the following questions:

**RQ1.** Why do some children in London attend Italian HL classes? Why did parents enrol them in complementary schools? And what is the role of complementary schooling in the children's experience of multilingualism?

**RQ2.** What are the language practices and policies at play in an Italian complementary school? And how do children engage in and/or contest them?

**RQ3.** How do children make sense of their multilingual repertoires and multilingual selves in education?

In order to explore these questions, I needed a research design able to capture the complexity of social interaction. Linguistic ethnography (LE) proved to be an effective way to apprehend how interaction among children and between teachers and students in CS contribute to the development of a sense of belonging and a sense of self. While conducting my observations and delving into the literature, new questions surfaced as I started to develop curiosity about the role of space, the learning design and the

overall pedagogical approach adopted by the teacher of the two participating groups. Consequently, further questions emerged in relation to the ways in which a multilingual critical approach to teaching was delineating itself and how children responded to such pedagogies:

**RQ4.** How do teachers create spaces of and for dialogue? And how do teachers and children build community spaces in which communicative resources can be democratically accessed?

**RQ5.** Do children have a sense of agency in their learning space and if so, how do they exercise power and agency through language and through their bodies? Do they use language to resist exclusion or subordination? If yes, how?

The research combined 10 months of field work in an Italian complementary school in London and an online questionnaire distributed to the Italian community in the previous 4 months (table of data in Section 4.6.2). Between September 2021 and July 2022, I collected documents, fieldnotes, audio-recording of classroom interaction, audio-recording of interviews with children and parents, photographs and children's work as well as children's fieldnotes, keeping in mind that ethnography follows a circular flow process in which the dialectic between theory, interpretation and data leads to changes, in varying degrees, of the research questions (Rampton et al. 2015). In fact, while exploring data and literature that would help answer the first questions, new aspects of classroom interaction revealed to be relevant and important to make sense of the whole story. In summary, questions emerged in a chain sequence of events as they were unfolding before and during the data collection and data analysis. In the next section, I explain the reasons for taking a linguistic ethnographic orientation to answer most of questions.

### 4.3. A linguistic ethnographic orientation

Linguistic ethnography combines linguistic and ethnographic methods of research to investigate social issues which involve language as it emerges from the principle that language and the social world are mutually shaping (Rampton et al., 2004). Ethnographic research entails observing and participating in social practices and systematically recording what happens in a particular environment. While linguistics can tie down the ethnography by analysing more “clearly delimitable processes”, ethnography opens up linguistic investigation by “inviting reflexive sensitivity to the processes involved in the production of linguistic claims and to the potential importance of what gets left out” (ibid., p.4). Because of my curiosity about the ways in which language and the social world of the complementary school were mutually configuring each other, and how the use of different semiotic and linguistic resources allowed social actors to perform social identities, I needed an approach that could capture the complexity of interaction and the situatedness of it.

Therefore, I decided to combine elements of quantitative research with a strong LE orientation as I assessed the wider context through a survey to then focus on the dynamics at play in a complementary school by means of ethnographic methods. This decision allowed me to better frame the study within the challenges for HL maintenance, while exploring qualitatively and in-depth the themes of identity and multilingualism in this educational setting. Here I explain how taking an ethnographic perspective helped me to understand the children’s experience of language learning.

First, as introduced in Chapter 2, the conceptualisation of multilingualism adopted for this work lies on its interpretative assumption that languages are a “social construct centrally linked to the construction of discourses of State and nations” (Heller, 2008; see also Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). Observation of spontaneously occurring



interactions had the potential to reveal the ways in which such constructs were navigated and/or contested. The potential of ethnographic observations combined with the notion of communicative repertoires (Rymes, 2010) allowed me to analyse communication beyond discourses of language and nation-states, exploring the multifaceted reality of lived lives in contexts of migration.

Language use and language choice are inseparable from “[the] interlocutors’ view of their own and others’ identities” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p.1) and play a crucial role in communicating, or contesting, an identity position (Creese et al., 2016). People may draw on different elements of their own communicative repertoires to “achieve maximum communicative potential” (Garcia, 2009) but also to express their social membership. Because I see identity as fluid, dynamic and mutable and, more importantly, contingent to the context of interaction (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Rampton et al., 2015; Norton & Toohey, 2011), I needed a research approach that could grasp this essential variable: change. Through a sustained period of time in the research context it was possible to observe and analyse changes across time and delve into the ways in which participants’ experiences and interactions shaped their identities-in-being. Indeed, observing social processes over time “allow(s) us to see the complexity and connections, to understand the history and geography of language” (Heller, 2008, p.250) and to gain a deeper awareness of change in social interactions and identity performance and negotiation.

Furthermore, since available identity options are widening (Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004, p.2), I sought to identify and analyse the ways in which social actors navigated a reality of discontinuity and uncertainty, and how they adapted and re-invented social identities accordingly realising how, in navigating multilingual spaces, communities generate always new identity options. In this, I believe that the approach I adopted

allowed me to explore the complexity of identity and multilingualism in times of globalisation, and so help to answer my research questions constructively and effectively.

Finally, given that this study looks at language and identity in an educational context, it is important to mention that research shifted the focus from the larger question of 'what' adults teach children to 'how' children learn (James, 2001) but also how children and teachers co-create learning spaces. In investigating participatory approaches to HL education, ethnographic observations allowed me to explore how all participants (students and teachers alike) navigated the collaborative space of the CS classroom. Through a LE perspective I was able to engage with some of the children's view in the non-essentialist attempt to render them accessible to other adults through what Geertz (1973) labels *thick description*. Ethnography, in this sense, was for me the act of "grasping and rendering" the "multiplicity of complex conceptual structures" of that I observed during fieldwork (Geertz, 1973, pp.9-10), with recognition that "what passes for reality rests on socially shared conventions" (Delamont & Atkinson, 2021, p.16).

For all of these reasons, linguistic ethnography has proved to be a useful orientation to investigate the interconnection between multilingualism and identity negotiation and to analyse the variability of identity options, to reach some level of understanding of how the children may transpose and incorporate the meaning of a multilingual learning context in their sense of self.

#### **4.4. Researcher's positionality**

While making the strange familiar can be usual task for anthropologists (Gordon et al., 2001), researching environments 'from within' and studying one's own society requires

the reverse process: fighting familiarity (Geer, 1964). Even though I do not consider myself necessarily an insider in outsider-insider binary terms, I am involved in the activities of the Italian complementary schools of London and my pre-existing relationship with some of the people in the researched community made me an insider in the researched setting. How does this proximity, then, influenced my perspective? How could I find the right balance between distance and familiarity?

Both positions, in- and out-group, bring along different kinds of methodological challenges. Delamont and Atkinson (2021) stress the importance of positionality and researcher's self-awareness because "position gives perspective", it guides and shapes the research, and so "an understanding of one's own social position(s) is vital in a sustained comprehension of all aspects of research" (p.23). They point out at the many different standpoints that inform each study and how these reflect the researchers' personal biographies as well as the inevitability of holding multiple positions simultaneously.

As thoroughly illustrated in Section 2.1, my different roles and identity positions shaped the way I entered the research and how the project itself developed based on the different processes of internal and external negotiations.

First of all, my own linguistic repertoire played a role in the way data were collected and analysed. As a member myself of the Italian community of London, the way I use the named languages English and Italian is very similar to that of the parents and teachers in the Italian complementary schools. I also speak some other languages spoken by the participants (see for example the interview with Rosa, Section 7.3), and this enabled me to communicate with all of the participants freely and spontaneously. Sharing repertoires also meant that it was easier to build strong relationships of trust

as, at least in linguistic terms, we could fully understand each other. The result is rich (and multilingual) data. In the analysis, I benefitted of a more nuanced understanding of participants' views as I processed the information in more languages, in the original and in the proposed translations.

My migration and professional trajectories also informed how I approached the topic. As a language teacher who worked in both MFL and HL education in a number of countries, I was able to spot linguistic differences and commonalities between Italian HL speakers in the UK and elsewhere as well as some peculiarities in the teaching and learning of HLs. Such understanding of processes in different countries and in different sectors of language education allowed me to notice and give relevance to some specific elements of the activities design in this school.

Furthermore, my experience of setting up a complementary school constituted a great resource for understanding some of the logistics behind the provision of classes in the researched setting. For example, the attention to the role of space (Section 6.3) was the result of my broad experience in different classrooms and my understanding of the (physical) needs for HL classes since I had to rent rooms for my school, in London and elsewhere, and as a teacher, I experienced how different spaces can serve well or not at all HL education programmes with young learners.

The different roles, standpoints, political and ideological allegiances, as Delamont and Atkinson conclude, "are intrinsic to the entire process, pervading the formulation of research and the framing of research topics" (p.24). Positioning and re-positioning oneself in the course of a research project is inevitable, and indispensable if the aim is representing a fragment of 'real life' in the 'real world'. It is precisely the juxtaposition of multiple perspective, which is the result of the different positions, roles, identities

adopted by the different researchers in different contexts that allows fragments of knowledge to come together in the kaleidoscope of scholarship. Reflection -or reflexivity- on my own positionality was not time framed or spatially located but it was rather an ongoing process of mindful noticing through the exploration and juxtaposition of partial knowledge of social phenomena.

Geer (1964) reminds us of the importance of minimising preconceptions to avoid overdetermining the project and invites researchers to use early period of the fieldwork to de-familiarise. Making the familiar strange for me meant taking time at the beginning of the study to identify what appeared new to my eyes alongside what I assumed, thought to know and indeed knew. Due to a change in the Covid-19 guidelines from the government after my ethical approval (see Section 4.5.3), in the last school term of 2020/2021 I had the chance to practice observations and do some exercises of 'noticing'. During the pandemic, especially in periods of lockdown, I practiced more often exercises of mindfulness meditation, which is the practice of allowing the mind to wonder while simply noticing what thoughts pass by, without any judgment and trying to avoid re-directing one's mind anywhere else. It is the practice of simply noticing. With this mindset on, I went to the school. During the summer term 2021 I was helping with the logistics of Covid-19 protocols when face-to-face classes resumed but my ethical approval only contemplated data collection to happen remotely/online, and so I was in this limbo where I could not collect data but I could still spend some time in a CS to help my community.

On that occasion, I had the opportunity to observe some classes without worrying about taking notes and collecting data. The chance to experiment my position in the school before starting the 'actual research' proved invaluable. In those moments, I paid attention to how my perception of things was slowing down as I observed what

was happening in the school without the pressure of writing down notes, placing the recorder, taking pictures, and examining interactions that would relate to my research questions. I was simply looking at what was happening in the process of defamiliarisation (Geer, 1964).

I remember once noticing that most children were not wearing shoes. It was so known to me that I never thought about it again. It was a choice I contributed to take. One day in my class the children all took their shoes off because of the heavy rain. I remember that class to be fun and that children seemed more relaxed as they felt comfortable without their shoes on. When a classroom in that community centre was refurbished, I remember suggesting having a very soft carpet to allow children to take their shoes off during the lesson. Being able to notice something that was until then unnoticed because taken for granted, helped me realise the importance of taking time to find some distance in a familiar space to be able to move from a practitioner to a researcher viewpoint. In Section 4.6, I will illustrate how I navigated the process of collecting data in the classroom and how negotiating between the role of practitioner and researcher led to develop new modes of collecting data.

## **4.5. Research context**

### **4.5.1. An Italian complementary school in London**

The Italian complementary school that took part in this research is managed in partnership by one of the promoting organisations for the Italian consulate of London and a grassroots organisation operating locally in a London borough. I will refer to them respectively as *Scuola Manzoni* and *Scuola Pirandello* (pseudonyms). The CS run Italian classes in out of school hours, mainly between 4 pm and 7 pm from Monday

to Friday, and it followed the mainstream school calendar operating on average 33 weeks per year. Children attended their classes once a week and lessons lasted between one and one and a half hour. The children enrolled in this CS attended primary and secondary schools, with an age ranging from 4 to 14 (from Reception class to Year 11). However, in the year of this study, the school activated courses in this borough only for primary school children. Groups were organised by age and, sometimes, by level of proficiency and based on the years of CS attendance. The number of students per group was between 8 and 12. Students were usually based in the neighbourhood, and some travelled from other neighbourhoods for up to half an hour journey. Other complementary schools in the area have not been identified, but a group of Brazilian families organised some Portuguese classes for children in the same community centre in which the researched Italian groups operated and it is possible that some other minority language speaking communities gathered, more or less formally, in other venues around the neighbourhood.

Originally, most Italian language courses for children in the consular district of London were managed by a different promoting organisation which had been operating in London for 47 years, until it closed in 2018. A new organisation took over to continue with the offer of the extra-curricular Italian classes. The new organisation was registered as a charity, and it received financial support from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A financial contribution also came from the families that paid a yearly fee to enrol their children. At the time of this study, the school counted about 80 courses in different boroughs and a total of more than 1000 students enrolled between primary and secondary school children.

The new promoting organisation of the consulate, Scuola Manzoni (SM), in continuity with the work of the previous institution, promoted classes of Italian language and

culture across the metropolitan area of London and surroundings. Most of their students were children born in the UK for whom Italian would be a heritage language, however classes were open to all regardless of family ties with Italy. The school referred to this service as extra-curricular courses for the promotion of Italian language and culture 'abroad'. Conversely, the grassroots organisation, Scuola Pirandello (SP), had been operating in one specific borough and it was opened by a community specifically to support Italian heritage language speakers. The community project established itself in 2017 and during the pandemic, the community asked SM for support with the management of the Italian courses.

CSs often need to hire classroom in schools or community centres as they rarely have their own dedicated space (Thorpe et al., 2018) and the need to pay a rent which translates in having to ask parents to pay higher fees compared to those paid for extra-curricular activities directly promoted by the mainstream schools. This is not the place for a discussion on the logistics behind the provision of after-school HL classes (see Arthur & Souza, 2023; Souza & Arthur, 2020; Thorpe et al., 2020) but some information is necessary here to explain the rationale and the criticality of this work. SP used to run Italian HL afterschool clubs within the premises of local primary schools while sustaining itself through the provision of MFL classes, playgroups and private lessons. In the school year 2017-2018, various events shaped the nature of this organisation and effectively transformed it into a locally operating CS. Alongside the growth in the number of requests for support and the natural formation of a social network around the children's activities, the desire to establish its presence in the area with its own venue stemmed from the frustration arising from the collaboration with mainstream schools.



In 2017, I was involved in the activities of SP with the provision of Spanish after-school clubs in a local primary school where the CS was also running the Italian club for heritage speakers. Whilst in the first case the CS was offered a remuneration of about £40 per session, in the case of the Italian clubs the CS was, instead, asked to pay £40 for the rent of the classroom or library space. In the first scenario, the CS would create a lesson plan for introducing children to Spanish as a foreign language, with little to no issues in finding teaching resources and planning the lessons. The received £40 per session were used to cover the cost of the teacher, the teaching material and some general admin costs. It was very straightforward. On the contrary, in the case of Italian as heritage language classes, the programme was completely tailored to the learners' needs, session by session, and learning resources were constantly created by the teachers as there were no published textbooks for Italian as a heritage language or specific material for HL education broadly. The CS had to pay the rent, to which it had to add all the costs above mentioned (the teacher, teaching material and admin costs) as well as an insurance. The overall cost of the course per term was high and it was possible to activate classes only thanks to the fees paid by the parents, but the fees were much higher compared to the ones paid for any other after-school activity in the same venue. This is one of the examples of how complementary schools and HL learning programmes in general are "financially fragile" (Thorpe et al., 2020, p. 129).

In the role of teacher, I was feeling a sense of frustration seeing this high discrepancy in the level of support offered by the institution. There was an attempt from the CS to convince the after-school club manager at the mainstream school to consider the inclusion of language clubs for heritage speakers in their offer. The school explained that they could not include an afterschool club that would be offered only to a segment of the students because it would go against their principles of inclusivity and equality,

and that the CS could keep on renting the space but fees were non-negotiable. During the same school year, other Italian speaking parents from the same school gathered and formed a new small group, and with their help the CS was able to find an affordable venue in a community centre located in the same neighbourhood. This is how the complementary school came into being with its own site.

At the end of the school year 2020/2021, due to the pandemic, the operational capability of SP reduced, and stakeholders decided to ask for support to one of the consulate's promoting organisations. The courses coordinators agreed on including the SP site in their offer and opened the enrolments for children from Year 1 to Year 6. The groups I observed in this research are formed by both members of the community involved in the grassroots organisation and children enrolled directly to Scuola Manzoni.

#### 4.5.2. Key participants

The data collection was possible thanks to the contribution of the local community at an Italian complementary school and the Italian community of London at large in the case of the questionnaires. The first phase of data collection was an online questionnaire for which I received responses from 97 families, for a total of 283 participants. Overall, the families that took part in the survey were based in London, had children of primary school age and at least one of the parents was Italian. It is considered Italian in this case someone who was born and/or raised in Italy as well as someone who had Italian descents and/or grew up speaking Italian, regardless of citizenship status. The structure of the questionnaire and the process of distribution will be described in Section 4.6.2. and the profiles of the respondents will be presented more in detail in Chapter 5.

The real protagonists of this study are the 18 children enrolled at an Italian complementary school in the school year 2021/2022 who agreed to take part in this research project (see Tables 4.1 and 4.2). Two groups and one teacher took part in the ethnographic part of this study for a total of 19 participants, plus 16 parents (8 couples) during the interview stage. Below I introduce the children by group (KS1 and KS2) and the adults (the teacher and the parents). Overall, the two classes represented an heterogeneous group of participants in terms of background and places of origin (10 different Italian regions and 9 other countries) and levels of multilingualism in the family, as well as commitment to the heritage language courses as it will be explored in Chapter 6. All the participants have been assigned pseudonyms for confidentiality. At the beginning of my classroom observations, children were asked to pick a pseudonym themselves.

### **KS1 (Year 1 to Year 2)**

The first group had 9 children (out of the 10 students enrolled in the class) all in Key Stage 1: three boys and four girls in Year 2 and one boy and one girl in Year 1 (Table 4.1). Only one child decided to not take part in the study from the beginning. One other child interrupted his attendance halfway through the year and the family asked to withdraw from the study as well, making the number of key participants in this group 8. Of these, 6 had attended a CS for one or two years prior the study while 2 students were new to the CS. All of them were interviewed.

All the children had one parent coming from Italy or with Italian origins, and one who was not Italian, nor English. In fact, only one of the participants had a parent born and raised in England and with English origins. Another non-Italian parent grew up in England but had different origins. In one case, both parents did not live in Italy but had Italian origins and grew up speaking Italian. The Italian parents came from 6 different

regions (Lombardia, Tuscany, Sardinia, Campania, Umbria, Puglia) and the non-Italian parents from 6 different countries: Switzerland, Czech Republic, Poland, Lebanon, United States, and Cyprus. All the Italian parents were fluent in English while out of the 8 non-Italian parents, 3 had a good command of Italian, 3 had some basic levels of proficiency and 2 others reported to not speak the language. All the children spoke two or more languages at home. Apart from English and Italian, the other home languages were German, Polish, Arabic and Spanish.

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Year group</b>	<b>Languages used at home</b>	<b>Year of CS attendance</b>
Chiara	5/6	Yr1	English, Italian	1st
Rosa	6/7	Yr2	Italian, Spanish, some English	1st
Giuliano	6/7	Yr2	Italian, Polish, some English	2nd
Carola	6/7	Yr2	English, Italian	2nd
Peter	6/7	Yr2	English, Italian	3rd
Arianna	6/7	Yr2	English, Italian	3rd
Viola	6/7	Yr2	English, Italian, some Arabic	3rd
Alessandro	6/7	Yr2	Italian, German, some English	3rd

**TABLE 4.1 LIST OF PARTICIPANTS KS1**

### KS2 (Year 3 to Year 5)

The second group is composed by 9 children (out of 10) all in Key Stage 2 and it counts one boy and three girls in Year 3, two boys and two girls in Year 4, and one girl in Year 5 (Table 4.2). Eight of them also took part in the interview stage. Only one child was not a key participant in the study as the family did not return the consent forms for him and his sibling in KS1. Seven children had attended the Scuola Pirandello for two to five years prior the study, one child attended a different CS for a year and only one child was new to complementary schooling. All the children had at least one parent who grew up in Italy or had Italian origins. In two cases both parents were Italian who grew up in Italy and had Italian origins. Two of the children had parents originally from Italy but who grew up in various different countries. The Italian parents reported coming from six different regions (Emilia-Romagna, Lazio, Lombardia, Piemonte, Sicilia, Tuscany). Six of the children had a British parent (five English and one Scottish) and other countries of origin were Australia and the Republic of South Africa. All the Italian parents were fluent in English. Out of the seven non-Italian parents, three had good command of Italian, and four had a basic understanding of the language. All the children spoke two languages at home, and in two cases Italian was the main language of the family.

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Year group</b>	<b>Languages used at home</b>	<b>Year of CS attendance</b>
Amelia	7/8	Yr3	Italian, some English	1st
Rossella	7/8	Yr3	Italian, some English	2nd
Alex	7/8	Yr3	English, Italian	3rd

Annabel	7/8	Yr3	English, Italian	4th
Maria	8/9	Yr4	English, some Italian	2nd
Guido	8/9	Yr4	English, Italian	4th
Ludovico	8/9	Yr4	English, Italian	4th
Valentina	8/9	Yr4	English, Italian	4th
Violetta	9/10	Yr5	English, Italian	5th

**TABLE 4.2 LIST OF PARTICIPANTS KS2**

### **Adults (teachers and parents)**

Only one teacher took part in the study as a key participant, Emma. She started working in HL education during the pandemic as a collaborator of Scuola Pirandello (the grassroots organisation) and joined Scuola Manzoni (the consular promoting organisation) at the beginning of this study. Emma was in her thirties; she completed a master's degree in TESOL and prior to her studies she worked as a language teacher for migrants and refugees in Italy and as a private language teacher as well as a nanny for English-Italian bilingual families in London. Her previous involvement in a research project on multilingualism in the role of a research assistant meant that she had great interest in the subject, and she expressed enthusiasm in taking part in this project from the beginning.

Other adults involved were the children's parents. They were invited to participate to the interviews stage in the last school term and were encouraged to take part in the interviews as couples. A total of eight couples were interviewed for a total of sixteen people. One of the parents in each couple was born and/or grew up in Italy and relocated to the UK as an adult. In one case, both parents were Italian. The non-Italian

parents had various background and the places of origin included England, Scotland, Australia, United States, Cyprus, Switzerland.

#### 4.5.3. Ethics, access and consent

This study was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, and this influenced substantially the procedure of ethical clearance. I applied for the first time in February 2021 during one of the UK lockdowns and in April, I received approval for remote-only research activities. However, as mentioned in Section 4.4, after receiving my approval, the CS resumed lessons in person and I could not start with observations as they were no longer online. The ethical clearance also covered the distribution of the questionnaires online and so I proceeded with this first phase of the data collection in the spring/summer 2021.

In July, the government announced a full release of the restriction and I submitted my application for significant amendment which included a Covid-19 risk assessment, a personal risk assessment, and the Covid-19 risk assessment of the research site. With the condition of passing a mask face fitting test, I was finally granted the approval for research face-to-face.

Because of my involvement in the CS sector, approaching gatekeeper occurred organically. Within the Italian community, we continued to update each other on how to support our young members during times of national lockdown and with the re-openings, I approached one of the schools and organised a meeting to discuss the possibility of conducting the study in one of their sites for the school year 2021-2022. Members of the board of trustees expressed interest and enthusiasm for my research project and shortly after, I received confirmation of the full board's interest in supporting my study.

The questionnaire, originally designed for the students of the groups that I was going to observe at the CS, turned into a useful tool to collect data safely while restrictions were in place. I agreed with my supervisors to extend the target and decided to make the survey circulate amongst Italian families in London more broadly, and expanding on its scope, it turned into a more quantitative tool of research.

While collecting responses to the survey, Scuola Manzoni opened the enrolments for the year 2021-2022. Two groups were selected and an email to inform parents of the possibility to join my study was sent on the first week of school. Parents were invited to take part in a Zoom meeting to inform their decision by better understanding the project and asking any questions they may had about the participant information sheet forwarded, and the study in general. I received oral consent from all the parents, except for one family who had a child in the KS1 group and one in the KS2 class. On my first official visit to the school, on the first week of October 2021, I printed and distributed the consent forms (one for the parents and one for the children). Most of them were collected in person and a few were sent by email.

#### **4.6. Data collection**

Since this study is oriented towards the discovery of what happens in a specific community, and how it happens to understand why things happen in certain ways, describing activities was a primary commitment (Heller, 2008). Descriptions of naturally occurring social events cannot be confined to one mode of data but involve the use of a diverse range of tools that could allow the researcher to make sense of the context in which events unfold and the way in which they unfold to elaborate on and interpret social processes. Gathering information about what occurs in certain



places at certain times means recording what people say (e.g., audio-recording), where they are and how they move in that space (e.g., photographs, videorecording or fieldnotes) but also how they reflect on their practices (e.g., interviews) or how they report on their practices (e.g., questionnaires). In this section, I present the range of data collection tools I used for this study by following the chronological order in which they have been employed (see Table 4.3 for details on the timeline of data collection) and the ways in which I engaged with them.

#### 4.6.1. Data collection tools

##### 4.6.1.1. Questionnaires

The first phase of data collection saw the distribution of a questionnaire on linguistic background and multilingual practices to the target community: Italian/Italian-speaking families in London with children of primary school age. The questionnaire (Appendix D) was designed to inform the ethnographic part of the study with questions for all members of a family unit and it was distributed through two different channels: the mailing list of two complementary schools and some private groups of Italian parents in London via social media (Facebook). Most of the recipients in the mailing lists of the CSs were contacts of families whose children were enrolled or had been enrolled in Italian classes, whilst the families who were invited via Facebook may be or be not part of a CS community but were likely to be active members of the digital community of Italian parents in London. The questionnaire required 15 to 20 minutes to be completed. No incentives were offered.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections, and it comprised a total of 40 questions. The first section collected information about parents with 10 multiple-choice questions, 5 open-ended questions and 2 matrix tables. The section was repeated for

Parent 1 and for Parent 2. Questions about the languages spoken were in form of multiple choice, with nominal coded values, and the ones on language practices were designed in matrix tables, with coded numeric values between 0 and 1. Questions on language proficiency and language practices were based on the sociolinguistic questionnaire employed by Schmid and Dusseldorp (2010) for the investigation of extralinguistic factors in language attrition and were coded accordingly. Some demographic questions were open for a qualitative analysis and required short answers. Other aspects investigated were migration to the UK and the sense of belonging to the Italian community.

The children section followed a similar pattern of questions, and it counted 9 multiple choice questions, 2 open-ended questions and one matrix table. In addition to questions about languages, language practices and national and ethnic background, the questionnaire collected data on languages used at school as medium of instruction and whether the child was considered an EAL student or not. The last section was centred on Italian as a heritage language and it asked about the challenges and strategies for the maintenance of the HL, the impact of the pandemic on the activities for HL maintenance and on the children's language development, and it concluded with open questions about the children's experience of complementary schooling. It featured 2 yes/no questions, one multiple choices, 2 matrix tables and 6 open-ended questions.

Qualtrics was deemed a suitable tool to build the survey as it was developed specifically for research, and it was available through my institution. An important aspect to bear in mind was that questionnaires had to be kept short, and it should not take more than half an hour to complete (Dornyei, 2007). An advantage in using Qualtrics was the calculation of estimated time for completion, which helped in

narrowing down the questions and the final version was estimated to require between 15 and 20 minutes.

A first version of the questionnaire in English was completed in March 2021 and piloted on three families whose difference from the target community was the age of the children or the residence at the time of the survey. Receiving some external feedback on questionnaires is indispensable to collect data that are coherent and consistent, both for quantitative and qualitative data (ibid., p.112). Piloting the questionnaire on a group very similar to the target helps, for example, to understand if respondents intended the questions in the way the designer did, and if not, the items can be rephrased and reorganised accordingly before distributing the questionnaires.

The families were sent an anonymous link to self-administer the questionnaire online and afterwards, they sent me some feedback via email. During lockdown, I also invited two more parents for a final check. I separately invited them to a Zoom meeting in which I shared my screen on the questionnaire in preview on Qualtrics and invited them to answer the questions. After each question, we briefly discussed how they interpreted them. As a result of such dialogues, some of the open-ended questions were re-phrased and made clearer.

In agreement with my supervisors' suggestion, the updated version was then translated into Italian to provide participants with more choice, and to have the chance to potentially analyse that choice. I benefitted from the support of the students of the Masters in translation at my institution, and interestingly, every student used a different terminology to transpose the concept of heritage language in Italian. In most cases the term would be closer to the concept of mother tongue or native. I eventually opted for *lingua d'origine* (lit. language of origin) as a closer translation to HL. I published the

survey and started the distribution in June 2021.

I kept a distribution log and circulated the link to the survey using different channels of distribution. In June, the questionnaire was sent via email to the mailing list of Scuola Manzoni (approx. 1,000 contacts), two weeks later to the Scuola Pirandello community's mailing list (approx. 150 contacts), and at the end of July, I started promoting it on Facebook's private groups of Italian parents in London (8 private groups to which I had previously registered). A reminder was sent again through all channels at a week distance each. In September, some more responses were registered from key participants at the CS. 97 families self-administrated the questionnaire for a total of 283 participants between parents and children, with a 67% of families connected to a CS and 33% recruited on the social media platform Facebook (based on the time of completion). Some of the questionnaires were only partially filled or completed by families who were not fitting the criteria. The validation gave a final number of 85 questionnaires for a total of 260 participants.

#### 4.6.1.2. Classroom observations

During the school year 2021-2022, between October and July, I run classroom observations in two groups, on Monday and Tuesday afternoons. The school operated 33 weeks per school year and the year was organised into 3 school terms of about 11 weeks each. In each school term there was a one-week break half-way through (also called half-term), generating a total of 6 mid-terms of about 6 or 7 weeks each. I visited each group every two weeks on average for a total of 32 classes observed during the school year (15 in KS1 and 17 in KS2). I coordinated with the teacher for the visits and ensured that I could include the first and last class of each mid-term to better explore how dynamics would change before and after holiday breaks. In the second term, I also observed one online class for each group since the teacher had to recover a

missed week due to Covid and decided to move the lesson online before the Easter break.

During my visits, I would use two recording devices to audio-record classroom interaction, and I would take notes on my notepad as well as taking pictures using my mobile phone. Children were informed of the study by their teacher and by their parents before my first visit, and when I joined them for the first time, the teacher and I explained to the whole group that I would be in the classroom every two weeks to understand how they were learning Italian and what they were doing at the Italian school. We explained that to do so I had to take notes of what it was happening and that it would have been useful to record what people were saying. Introducing the recorder required some time as the children were curious about the device and how it worked. We gave them time to understand how it worked by making some short recordings and listening to them together. Then, we identified two places that would help capture most of classroom interactions. Due to the Covid protocols for the research, children were not supposed to touch the recorder.

Based on the conditions of my ethical approval, I had to make sure that I had no contact with the children and that I was sitting next to the window at least one meter from the desks, always wearing a face mask and testing for Covid before each visit. However, the activities were not always happening at the desk nor children would be sitting at their place for the whole lesson. I had to be flexible and find strategies to move around the classroom based on how the participants were moving in the space and try to avoid close contact. During the second term, the management of the pandemic changed substantially as in February 2022 the UK government ended the routine contact tracing and removed legal requirements for people who tested positive.

During the first two terms, I collected fieldnotes for an ethnographic account of classroom life and to help contextualising the recordings. In what Geertz (1973, p.19) defines “inscription” of social discourses, I gathered information and reflections on the experience of the field by writing down notes, and so recording narratives of lived experiences alongside the audio recording and other visual elements like the photographs. Writing notes as events unfolded, more or less simultaneously, allowed me to capture key events and reflections which, at the time of analysis, constituted a crucial starting point for the exploration of themes across time (for as in change in classroom life and in the direction of the research in itself) and they constituted a primary tool for organising the ethnographic narrative as a whole.

Taking notes during the lessons allowed to “preserve the immediacy of feelings and impressions” (Emerson et al., 2007, p.360) on which I could build an understanding of the unfolding process of research. Because of this immediacy, a particularly helpful insight for the analysis was the collection of fieldnotes produced by the children themselves. During the last school term, I focused on running interviews and I invited the children ‘to do my job’ and take notes of what they could see and hear and what was generally happening in the classroom. In total, 9 different children joined this activity, producing 1043 words in fieldnotes. As they were recording their own views of classroom life, my understanding of their learning experience deepened. In Section 4.6.3, I will describe the process of collecting data with the participants and expand on the significance of the children’s notes for the analysis.

Although not intended to provide a complete record (Atkinson, 1992), fieldnotes preserve a passed event and in its inscription and “the event continues to exist” (Geertz, 1973, p.20). Instead of separating notes about the events and notes with my reflections, I incorporated some of my own sense making of the events in the account

of what was observable in the classroom. Whilst in writing notes, social dynamics are confined to the boundaries of a given textual form (Atkinson, 1992, p.8), recording what it was happening as well as my unfolding thoughts and preliminary interpretations means that the text came to reflect the research purposes as research questions were evolving and shaping from observation to observation as well as reflecting some changing attitudes and focus. At the beginning of data collection, notes were longer and more detailed as the focus was not yet clear. But as intentions and questions sharpened, the accounts became more oriented towards specific aspects of classroom interaction (e.g., peer-to-peer learning opportunities, examples of agency).

Whilst I conferred fieldnotes a central role, not all of the observation can be said to be detailed accounts of what was occurring as sometimes writing fieldnotes could interfere with the fieldwork and “spending long periods of time participating in other ways of life can generate deep, intuitive insight and perception without day-to-day note-taking” (Emerson et al., 2007, p.359). First, to ensure that children were feeling comfortable in my presence, I avoided spending the entire lesson scribbling on my notepad. Instead, I participated in some parts of the classes. The teacher also tried to involve me whenever possible. For example, when children could not decide between two activities, they would ask me what I would prefer, as an active but marginal participant, giving me sometimes the role of the referee. Moreover, on many occasions participating in the classroom activities meant feeling and sensing the experience of classroom life while continuing to build trust. In sum, I combined some writing on site with participation in classroom life trying to “calibrate jottings to the unfolding context of the interaction” (Emerson et al., 2007, p.361).

An important aspect of my fieldnotes is the languages used. I mostly jotted notes down by hand on a notepad. Handwriting was not clean, some words were abbreviated,

sometimes I used the first syllable or only the initial of a pseudonym to write about participants and I used both Italian and English. To ensure that I had a readable account at time distance, and to have a digital back up of my fieldnotes, all the notes were typed into a Word document in the evening after my visit at the school or the day after at the latest. I spelled words in full and cleaned the text, at times I added some elements that were still vivid in my memory and that would have helped contextualising a note. I decided, however, to keep the same syntax -regardless of grammar conventions- and the same language flow to remain faithful to the first impressions *on situ*. By flow I intend the natural confluence of sentences and words in Italian and in English, as well as registers. The move from a named language to another and across registers revealed useful for reflecting on researcher positionality in the initial phases of the research in that I could recognize in the text how my researcher and my practitioner roles were emerging and intertwining during data collection.

Lastly, I collected pictures of classroom interaction of some of the children's work by using my smartphone. Whilst initially I found difficult to understand the right time for taking photos, and at times seemed to be a distraction and interruption of the activity, I then developed a sensibility to the timing for pictures and ensured that the children were concentrating on some activities and would not notice me or I made sure that I was far enough or even, pretending that I was just checking something on my phone. On some occasions, the children would notice me taking a picture and would place themselves at the centre and smile or make silly faces. I would smile and play with them on this but would then pause and ask them if I could take a picture of their worksheets, and with that they were often losing interest in my activities.



#### 4.6.1.3. Interviews and language portraits

During the last school term, I invited key participants to take part in the interview stage to complement the questionnaires and the naturally occurring speech from classroom observations with declarative data on language use (Codò, 2008). By doing so I would be able to elicit an account of participants' sense of social positioning as well as an idea of the values and ideologies which informed their practices (Heller, 2008). Children were interviewed one by one, except for two siblings of different ages and groups who asked to be interviewed together, and parents were all interviewed in couples. I scheduled the children's interviews before and after their classes, agreeing with their parents that they could drop them off earlier or pick them up later than usual. The teacher was always in the building at the time of the interviews. On a couple of occasions, the parents and the teacher agreed for the child to be interviewed towards the end of the lesson despite them missing part of it. Interviews were conducted at the complementary school in a room with all door lights, with the glass ensuring that the parents and/or the teacher could see inside but providing interviewees with the sense of privacy in being in a separate room. However, as by the end of the year trust was established with all the families (with some families knowing me from before the study), parents did not necessarily stay around during the interviews. Most couples were interviewed in that same room in the evenings or at weekends while some others preferred the online mode and we scheduled interviews to be done via Zoom.

On average, interviews with the children lasted 15 to 20 minutes and were organised in four parts (see Appendix E). I initially invited them to choose an international competition between European football championship, the Olympics and the Eurovision. I then played a short video (approx. 30 seconds) showing the Italian team winning. Then, I asked them if they remembered that moment and where they were

when that happened if they watched the competition. After a broad discussion on supporting teams at international competitions and exploring the sense of belonging based on their different family ties and wider connections, I invited them to choose three cards from the following options: Italian, English, British, European and Londoner. In elaborating the reasons behind their choices, they shared some ideas about national, global and local identities with several conversations that led to a discussion about languages as well. Linking on their comments, I asked them about their families and their use of language at home, in the community and at school. In the last part, they were invited to complete their language portraits.

Language portraits consist of an empty body silhouette that participants can fill in with different colours or drawing patterns to visually represent their linguistic repertoires and may include captions to describe what each colour or drawing represents (Krumm and Jenkins, 2001; Busch, 2006, 2018). It can be a creative research tool to engage children in exploring their multilingual experience in multimodal ways “creating an interpretative story of their embodied languages” (Soares et al., 2021, p.25). Children completed their portraits autonomously at the end of the interview and shared some thoughts about them afterwards. On three occasions, children took the portrait at home because they were either tired or the interview exceeded the planned time but then they forgot to return them and I did not insist. However, the teacher embraced the idea of reflecting on language and identity through language portraits and decided to include the activity in the last classes of the term as well. In total, I collected 13 portraits at the interview stage and another 13 as completed during class. Although portraits do not directly feature the analysis presented in this thesis, they helped me to better understand the children’s understanding of their linguistic repertoires and how they connected them to their lived experiences by examining the colours and the spaces

chosen for the languages in the silhouette.

The interviews with the parents followed a similar cycle (Appendix E), including more time for the semi-structured discussion. The meetings lasted 45 minutes on average with the shortest being 36 minutes and the longest 59. The first part was the same as the children's interview and it helped in breaking the ice by talking in most cases about the Euros 2020, when Italy and England played against each other in the final match. Whilst we did not use cards like the children, the second part was about identity with an exploration of the parents' biographies. The central part of the conversation was language use at home and in their respective families to then move talking about the role of complementary school and the reasons for enrolling their children. The last part of the interviews was a family language portrait in which each parent was invited to fill in the portraits for all the family members based on their own different perceptions of language use and identity.

The language used for the interviews with the children was depending on how communication throughout the year was already established and it was mainly in Italian. However, since we were in the CS, in order to avoid giving them the pressure of performance and the idea that they would need to speak Italian for learning purposes I used more often English to ask questions. Some children engaged in a fully multilingual dialogue, moving freely between English and Italian (and Spanish in one case), some opted for speaking mainly or only English and some others decided to stick to Italian for most of the interview (more in Chapter 6). Parents, instead, often asked at the beginning of the interview what language they should use. I specified that I was the person who was going to listen to the recordings so any language that I could understand and that we had in common would have worked. Some of the Italian parents addressed me in Italian based on how communication between us was

established through time, even when their partner was not necessarily fluent in it, while some others opted for doing the whole interview in English to be sure that everyone could understand and join the conversation at any time.

#### 4.6.2. Summary of data

Questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations form the core of the data. However, a range of non-observational activities also informed this study. Classic ethnography involves a long and sustained time in the research context, and it is exploratory in nature. Indeed, the researcher engages in a series of activities within the community researched more often as an active participant (Jeffrey and Troman, 2004; Heath and Street, 2008). For this reason, I followed an iterative process of data collection and analysis which implied gathering data to interpret and understand the next data to gather by means of living the field and making sense of the research context in its entirety -or at least, as much as possible. This means that I actively immersed myself in and interacted with the research context and participants sometimes beyond the researcher's role in order to build trust and gain a deeper understanding of the community participating in this project.

Overall, data collection lasted 14 months from June 2021 to July 2022 (included).

Below is a timeline of the full data collection process (Table 4.3).

<b><u>Data collection timeline</u></b>	
January- February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selecting CS for research</li> <li>• Designing questionnaires</li> <li>• Ethics application</li> </ul>
April 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with trustees of CS</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilot project of questionnaires</li> <li>• Ethical approval</li> <li>• (First phase of easing covid-19 restrictions)</li> <li>• Defamiliarisation exercises in the school</li> </ul>
June 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distributing online questionnaires (via CSs mailing lists)</li> </ul>
July 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distributing online questionnaires (via social media)</li> <li>• Ethical application: significant amendment for face-to-face research (approved with conditions in August)</li> </ul>
September 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mask face-fitting test, ethical approval</li> <li>• Participant recruitment at the CS</li> <li>• First meeting with parents and teacher (via zoom)</li> <li>• Visiting the school and introducing the project to the children</li> <li>• Closing the survey</li> </ul>
5 <sup>th</sup> October 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collecting consent forms</li> <li>• First classroom observation</li> </ul>
April 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design of semi structured interviews</li> <li>• New ethical approval for interviews</li> <li>• Recruiting participants among the families already taking part in the project</li> </ul>
May 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starting interviews with children and parents</li> </ul>
11 <sup>th</sup> July 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Last classroom observation</li> </ul>
19 <sup>th</sup> July 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Last interview</li> </ul>

**TABLE 4.3 DATA COLLECTION TIMELINE**

The data collected comprise fieldnotes, photographs, audio-recordings and (partial) transcripts of classroom observations, audio-recording and full transcripts of the interviews with children and parents, documents and language portraits, the children's fieldnotes and copies of children's work/drawings. Table 4.4 summaries the data corpus by type.

<b><u>Data type</u></b>	<b><u>Participants involved</u></b>	<b><u>Total data collected</u></b>
<b>Questionnaires (survey)</b>	Families of Italian origins in London (one questionnaire per family)	97 questionnaires, 283 participants (Validated: 85 questionnaires, 260 participants)
<b>Audio-recorded classroom observations</b>	Children at the CS in two classes: 9 children in KS1 and 9 children in KS2 (one withdrawn); 1 teacher; 1 researcher	15 sessions in KS1, 17 sessions in KS2 for a total of 32 sessions (2 of which online)  37,5 hours of audio-recording
<b>Fieldnotes of classroom observations</b>	18 (17) children, 1 teacher, 1 researcher (first and second school terms)	17,165 words
<b>Children's fieldnotes</b>	17 children, 1 teacher, 1 researcher  Written by 9 children (third/last school term)	1043 words
<b>Semi structured interviews (children)</b>	17 children (16 children from key participants and one sibling at the CS)	5 hours and 12 minutes of audio-recording  39,012 words transcribed

<b>Semi structured interviews (parents)</b>	8 couples (16 parents)	6 hours and 39 minutes of audio-recording  66,281 words transcribed
<b>Language portraits</b>	15 children and 8 parents at interview stage + 13 children during class	36 portraits in total
<b>Children's work</b>	17 children	54 pages
<b>Documents</b>	Teacher (CS)	1 Syllabus overview  2 Teacher's class register
<b>Photographs</b>	18 (17) children, 1 teacher	192 photos

**TABLE 4.4 DATA COLLECTED BY TYPE**

To conclude this section on the data collection tools, in the next part I expand on how participants were involved in the process of collecting data.

#### 4.6.3. Elements of participatory ethnography

Ethnography is already collaborative and participatory by design since it sees the researcher and the researched building relationships of trust and participating in the life of the community for a sustained period of time. Nonetheless, there is scope for ethnography to be more actively and deliberately participatory when participants have the occasion to purposely join in the process of doing research (Campbell and Lassiter, 2010; Winstanley, 2022, for example). In line with the participatory pedagogical approach characterising this CS (Chapter 6 and 7), this study took a more collaborative stance by explicitly involving the children in collecting data. Despite it not

having been planned in the original research design, thanks to the established relationships of trust and the pedagogical orientation of the researched setting, a more participatory way of engaging the children in the process of doing research developed during data collection in the form of a collective fieldnotes taking.

In the course of the last school term, between May and July 2022, the children produced their own fieldnotes. As introduced in Section 1.2 and 4.4, during the data collection at the CS I regularly found myself reflecting on and exploring ways to position myself in the research with my different roles in the community. This process of roles and identities negotiation and integration eventually led to the inclusion of elements of participatory ethnography as participants were directly and actively involved in the process of collecting data, moving from being solely informants to being “co-creators of new insights” (Szabo and Troyer, 2017, p.308). Below I share how a more collaborative stance organically developed during the research.

It was the first class after the Easter break and I could not join the class because I had Covid. When I managed to go again to the school in May, I was still particularly fatigued, and I was struggling to concentrate and taking notes. About halfway through the first lesson in the KS2 group, I decided to not put myself under pressure and told myself that I could take some more pictures and observe the lesson without the imperative of collecting notes for a moment. In the meantime, the children were playing at the whiteboard and Annabel (age 8), who was slightly over excited on that day and was interrupting the flow of the game very often, was called by the teacher. Initially, the teacher asked her to play with the other team, to then realise that it could not work because Annabel already knew the strategies of her first team. While the teacher was thinking about ways to engage her in the activity minimising the level of disruption, I very spontaneously called Annabel and playfully asked her if she could



take the notes for me because I was particularly tired. Although I said it as a joke, she immediately expressed enthusiasm for my proposal and asked me how she could help. The teacher had nothing against it and so I showed Annabel my notes and explained her that I was writing down what was going on in the classroom. She took the notepad and started writing about what was happening, according to her. She continued taking notes for about 15 minutes.

On a Monday afternoon, the following week, I remember noticing Viola (age 7, KS1 group) wondering around the classroom and not playing with the other children at the whiteboard. The teacher invited her to join the game but she replied that she did not want to play. My researcher-self felt the urge to understand why she was isolating herself and my practitioner-self wondered what I could do to help her regaining interest in the lesson's activities. In the attempt to reconcile the two identities, teacher and researcher, I elaborated an idea, consulted the teacher and decided to try. I approached Viola and asked her if she could help me in my job and take some notes on my notepad while I was going to the toilet. She expressed interest in this idea and asked what it was exactly that I was writing on this notepad. I explained her that I was writing down what I could see, hear or touch and what was going on in the classroom, like what people were doing and saying. She took a chair and sat in a corner to start writing. Since the last two sentences I wrote on the page were in bullet points, Viola started writing sentences in the style of bullet point lists.

I was almost sure that it could not work for long but I thought, as a practitioner, that it was still a successful attempt to have her engaged in an activity for the moment. Yet, Viola did not interrupt her new activity when I came back into the room and she continued to take notes, in Italian, until the end of the game. She was very focused and so, the teacher agreed to let her continue with that and I decided to participate in

the class activities without taking notes myself since I had asked her to do my job and she looked happy in having that responsibility.

On the way home I reflected on what happened in both groups. I looked at the notes that Annabel and Viola took and realised that I never saw them writing that much in Italian outside of more structured learning activities in the classroom. I also noticed that they produced interesting texts using their full repertoires and I appreciated the potential of involving the children in collecting data in the form of fieldnotes. Based on the principle of beneficence, for which the researcher should act in ways that benefit the participants and do not harm them, on my following visit to the school I spoke to the teacher and shared the notes of the girls to discuss the potential involvement of the children in notes taking and whether this was going to be a beneficial or an unfavourable activity. The teacher was also impressed by the fieldnotes and agreed on asking the children if they wanted to take part in this research activity confident that it could help boosting their literacy skills and that it could be a valuable part of the lesson. Because I was also starting with the interviews, from that day, we invited the children to volunteer in 'doing my job' while I was busy with the interviews and this is how 9 different children, 4 in KS1 and 5 in KS2, all girls, produced their own fieldnotes in the following 5 visits.

The children were given freedom to choose how to take their notes, the teacher and I explained them that they were in charge of the activity, and it was up to them how the notes were taken. Only one child decided to write exclusively in English, while all the others wrote in Italian including elements of their repertoires such as English or words and expressions from regional varieties, but also drawings and emojis. Their notes proved pivotal in the analysis (Section 4.7) and their view on the dynamics of the classes revealed important insights into the children's learning experience in the CS.

Combining the children's views with my own offered a deeper perspective on HL learning as reading what they deemed significant in classroom interaction and classroom life pointed me in more specific research directions. I discovered what was relevant to the children (for example, where people were in the classroom and their relationship with space) and this allowed me to explore aspects emerging also from my own notes as I considered them more important because featuring the children's fieldnotes as well. The opportunity to gather information about classroom activities through the children's eyes -and not as observed by or in interaction with the researcher- proved insightful. This activity allowed for a broader perspective on the children's reporting of their experience since fieldnotes were a reporting *in situ*, which means in the time and space in which the experience occurred. Whilst during the interviews children were invited to share their views, ideas and emotions about multilingualism by reporting on what happened or usually happens at other times in other places, taking fieldnotes represented a unique opportunity for the children to reflect on events as they unfolded and to share (with the researcher) ideas and emotions in real time.

Moreover, considering that researching with children may bring about more power relations issues compared to research with adults (e.g., Camponovo et al., 2023), I understand this practice to be helpful in moving towards less unbalanced dynamics between researcher and participants. However, it is important to specify that the application of such practice (collective fieldnotes) was likely to be facilitated by the pedagogical approach already in place in the CS (more in Chapter 7). First, the teacher not only agreed on involving the children in fieldnotes taking but welcomed the suggestion as an opportunity to integrate something new in her teaching practice. Secondly, because of the approach to learning in place, children were already

introduced to practices that would challenge their sense of who holds power and expertise in the classroom and volunteered to take notes taking responsibility of it with the freedom to write their impressions without the pressure of performing a “learner identity”. For example, they had no issues in writing that a friend was sitting on the table or was playing with the flag instead of displaying some “good behaviour” -for which children are expected to sit neatly on their chairs and work. The fieldnotes produced, in fact, reflected the pedagogical practices of this CS classroom with the participatory principles shaping this ethnography. For this reason, similar to other researchers who engaged in collaborative practices (e.g., Winstanley, 2022), I locate these research’s “collaborative impulses” in pedagogies that “seek to redistribute authority” (Campbell and Lassiter, 2010, p.381).

Finally, this practice cannot be classified as co-production research in strict terms (e.g., aims and objectives and RQs were not developed directly with the participants; data were treated and analysed only by the researcher) and I do not intend to claim changes in power dynamic as that would give a sense of ‘false equality’ (Bell and Pahl, 2018, p.14). Yet, producing collective fieldnotes with children, I posit, can be one of the practices that help enhancing the potential of ethnographic methods of research for social equity while giving children a chance to reflect on their classroom experience as events unfold.

## **4.7. Data analysis**

### **4.7.1. Overview**

For this study, I made use of different approaches for the exploration and analysis of the data. Ethnography, and ethnographically oriented research more broadly, does not

come “with a set of recipes” but it builds on the ontological and epistemological stances of the researcher and the kind of question she asks, which are mainly oriented to the discovery of *how* phenomena occurs and *how* they link (Heller, 2008, p.254). The process of linking the different phenomena through different types of data, from audio recording to fieldnotes, photographs and interviews, allows for a broad exploration and understanding of the contexts of interactions, uncovering patterns of occurrence and examining practices and accounts in relation to one another (ibid.). In this section, I outline the process of analysis and describe the way I engaged with both quantitative and qualitative methods.

For the questionnaires, I employed descriptive and inferential statistics as a quantitative method of analysis using SPSS 27 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Ethnographic qualitative data, like fieldnotes, transcripts of classroom interaction and interviews, were analysed combining elements of thematic and discourse analysis. As explained in the Introduction Chapter, in the course of the doctoral training I moved from some positivistic-influenced models of knowledge and research to a more post-structuralist stance, and in the process of defining my researcher role, I visualised myself as part of this research and not as a distant spectator -who is there to provide neutral and objective perspectives on some social interaction. The natural consequence of such epistemological stance was the adoption of a reflexive approach to qualitative analysis.

I define reflexive my approach to thematic analysis because I engaged in qualitative data coding acknowledging my active role in the analytic process as “researchers are active participants in the construction of knowledge” (Heller, 2008, p.250), and I conceptualised codes as the production and the result of my own interaction with this dataset. The idea behind this process is that researcher subjectivity constitutes “an

analytic resource, rather than a source of “bias” (Braun and Clark, 2020, p.3). For example, I considered my experience in education management in CSs foundational to understand the logistics behind the provision of HL classes and such understanding provided me with depth, for example, in analysing the role of space (Chapter 6). The selection of themes and areas of analysis was never coincidental but, instead, influenced by my views which were resulting from the set of identities I carried with me in the research field.

In the qualitative analysis of ethnographic data, I also included elements of discourse analysis in order to gain a deeper understanding of uncovering subject positions in defined moments in time. This allowed me to combine “diachronic’ ethnographic methods and ‘synchronic’ micro-analysis of discourse” (Baxter, 2008, p.15). Building on the epistemological approach promoted by Bourdieu (1986, 1991), I adopted a Marxist-oriented post-structuralist stance for the study of multilingual practices and engaged with a type of analysis that would allow me to explore the multiple and changing identity positions of the participants in dynamics of power. Instead of identifying and examining the different classroom discourses, I focused on how, in different moments in time, children may perform different and potentially opposite identities.

#### 4.7.2. Analysis procedure

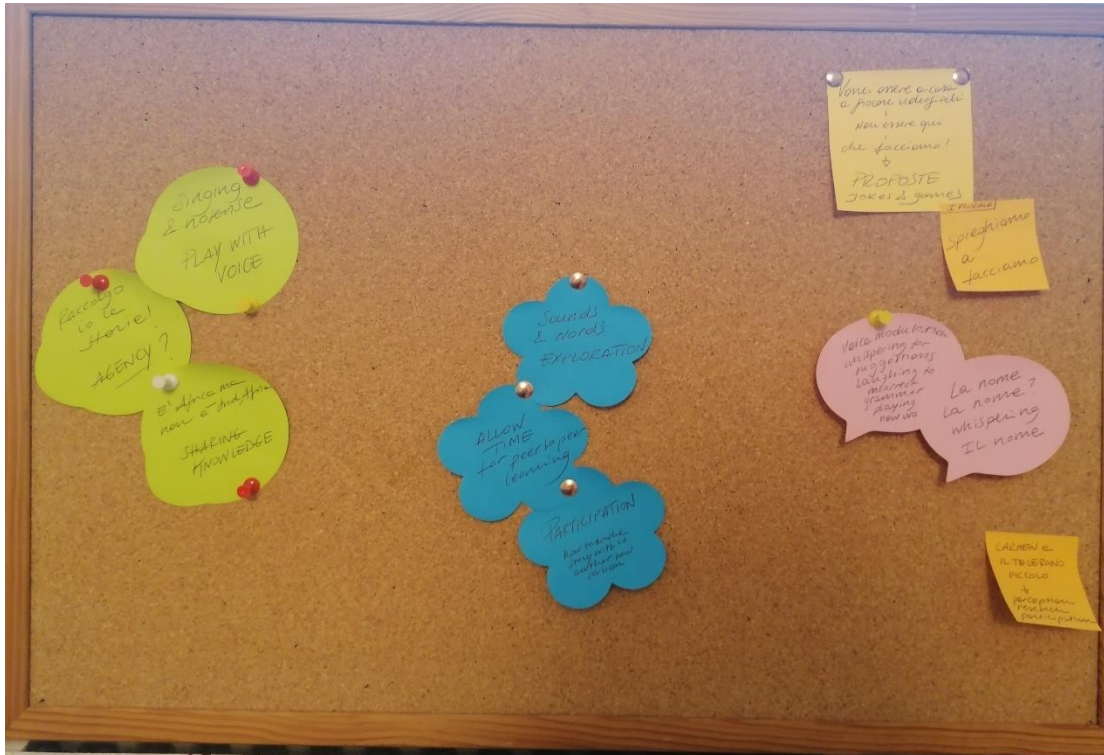
Considering that I spent a sustained period of time in the research field, with time I came to develop some different data exploration routines. Whilst at the very beginning I was trying to identify what would be directly connected to my research questions, such as explicit expressions of identity positioning and negotiations or particular

instances of translanguaging, later on, I let the data guide my reflections, shifting from an initial deductive style to a more inductive mode in the work of discovery that moves from empirical evidence towards theory (Blommaert and Jie, 2010).

During the time of my observations, I was also organising the responses from the questionnaires and started processing some statistical analysis. The data processing was guided by an evolution of the questions arising about language practices at home (Chapter 5). The results of the quantitative analysis generated some guidelines for the semi structured interviews (Appendix E) but also influenced the way in which I listened to some of the interactions in the audio-recordings and then in the classroom. For example, after I found out that, based on the questionnaires, Ludovico, one of the key participants, was speaking only English at home, I noticed myself paying more attention to his use of English and Italian during classroom observations. In fact, the ethnographic approaches are “informed by a sophisticated inductivism, in which data collection, analysis and writing up are not discrete phases, but inextricably linked” (O’Reilly, 2011, p.180), and the quantitative part of this research came to be part of this iterative process.

In the first round of data listening, I would pay attention to my reactions and explore themes at a more inductive and intuitive level while also practicing ‘making the familiar strange’. At times it was not possible to listen to the recording after class but as a habit developed during lockdowns, on a regular basis I would take a movement and screen break, bring the recorder with me, and go for a walk to the park or around the neighbourhood to listen to classroom recordings while walking. The movement helped me in that as the interactions were unfolding, the space around me was changing and that provided me with a sense of flux and transition. Most importantly, I could follow the flow of interaction without the urge to keep track of what was happening. On the

way back, I would add post-its of different shapes and colours on a pin board (Figure 4.1) with the themes that seemed prominent as guided by both the research questions and my own subjective engagement with the data.



#### FIELDNOTES 4.1 PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS (NOTES AFTER WALK)

Listening to the recordings far from the desk without the pressure of noting things down or interrupting the flow to check the literature, for example, allowed me to experience the stream of spontaneous interaction. In this phase, I engaged in a deliberate ‘unconscious work’ and I considered ‘strong themes’ the ones that would stay with me at the time when I took the headphones down and the pen up.

During the second school term, I started noticing patterns in the notes (the post-it with key words for the episodes that I noticed after a walk) and I identified recurring areas of interest. The thematic domains that appeared prominent were related to voice, agency and participation, linguistic and communicative explorations, and humour. Another area was the role of space. When listening to the audio files in motion, I would



notice how much children were moving in the classroom space since the volume of their voices would change based on how close or far from the recorder they were. Such auditory feeling (the volume of voices) with space around me changing at every step made me more aware of movement in the classroom space and more interested in the role of space in the children's experience of learning.

During the last term, I conducted interviews alongside recording classes and involving the children in writing their own fieldnotes (more in Section 4.6.3). Children's fieldnotes revealed to be critical for my understanding of classroom interaction and played a pivotal role in the process of analysis. Some notes allowed me to identify crucial elements of the children's experience in the CS, such as their own perception of roles in the classroom as explored in Chapter 6 and 7. The semantic analysis of the verbs used by the children to describe the interaction between the students and the teacher and among students, for example, provided with great depth in their perception of power dynamics, where children may 'correct' their peer's homework while the teacher is, instead, 'just' helping (Section 7.2.2).

I maintained consistency in my 'walking approach' with the interviews and I listened to all of them in motion, walking or while on trains and buses on my way back home. Guided by the question about the role of multilingual education in the children's sense of identity (RQ3), in this phase I was able to start examining the interlink between what people said or did and how people reported on what they said and did, but also my interpretation of their feelings and their accounts on their feelings, in order to grasp and interpret why things happen the way they do (Heller, 2008).

Due to the multiple languages and non-standard use of languages, technology could not be of support and all transcriptions had to be done manually. This process revealed

to be particularly helpful. At the time of transcription, I entered a new level of analysis and familiarisation with the interview data because carefully listening to each utterance and giving it a visual form in written words on the screen, allowed for deeper reflections on the participants' values and ideologies. Transcription represented a first step towards interpretation (Turell and Moyer, 2008; Braun and Clark, 2006). I highlighted and colour-coded statements that would stand out in parents' interviews and explored themes only in relation to their reasons for complementary schooling. I conducted a more systematic analysis of the children's interviews. For each question I selected a representative extract and combined the 17 answers under each question. I started colour-coding for e.g., the use of pronouns and active and passive use of verbs, keeping my interest anchored in identity positioning and negotiation. I then transferred part of this selection on an Excel spreadsheet and grouped up the open codes in a smaller number of categories/topical themes, aiming at an average of three main categories per question (Figure 4.2).

Pseudonym	Why attending CS	Open codes	Topical themes	Emerging themes
Chiara	<p>“perchè vai alla scuola di italiano? A non lo so</p>	Don't know	Don't know	<i>reflecting on reasons while participating in research</i>
Rosa	<p>R and why do you go there? A e io vado lì perchè i miei genitori vogliono che parlo più italiano visto che non sono così brava a parlare in italiano. vuol dire che le mie professoresse- eh voglio dire che i miei genitori vogliono che imparo meglio per quando vado alla spiaggia con la mia cugina non mi prendono in giro visto che non so così di tanto R ti prendono in giro? chi ti prende in giro sulla spiaggia? (sad voice) A cugina R e cosa ti dice? A dice 'dai amie puoi almeno provare di parlare bene in italiano?'</p>	family connection; intra-generational relations; proficiency (to improve); parents decision	Parents want- to speak with family	<i>achieving language proficiency for connection (with family); language as a tool of power</i>
Giuliano	<p>R che cosa- “perchè vieni alla scuola di italiano visto che già lo parli l'italiano? B boh? R boh@ secondo te perchè ti hanno [ti mandano alla scuola di italiano B [così che B sono un esperto di italiano?</p>	Boh (not know)	Don't know- become an expert	<i>reflecting on reasons while participating in research</i>
Arianna	<p>R alla scuola di italiano ma perchè andate alla scuola di italiano? O ehm perchè vojo studiare più italiano? L cosa lui hai ha detto R but is there a specific reason why you're [here? who decided O [it's because O my daddy is italian like i learn his language? L a bit more: O so i can understand what he says [without L [ye::s</p>	to learn parent's language; to improve; family connection	To learn parent's language	<i>achieving language proficiency for connection (with family)</i>

FIGURE 4.1 EXAMPLE OF CODING

As I was familiarising more with the observations at time distance from when the data were collected, the themes of agency, participation and linguistic explorations kept on surfacing with prominence in my consciousness being reflected in the notes I was examining, leading to the formulation of RQ 4 and 5 (Section 4.2) and a marked interest in the pedagogical approach.

Whilst I initially made scarce use of the visual data, after the analysis of fieldnotes, I brought together all the photos taken during the school year and the images of some of the children's work and language portraits for a first glance. Shortly after, I explored the images as contextualised with the fieldnotes and the integrated transcripts. I went through the children's interviews transcripts once again before I started integrating interviews extract with related transcripts of classroom interactions, fieldnotes and images all in one document. Going back and forth between the literature and the selected data (Heath and Street, 2008) I implemented the document with notes from relevant theories and other empirical studies. Finally, I could identify the topical themes in the narrative that I organically generated, resolving into five categories of interest:

- Students' investment
- The classroom space
- Enabling voice and agency
- Affiliative practices and humour
- Translanguaging and literacy

After sharing this selection with my main supervisor, while she was asking specific questions about the relevance and implications of my preliminary analysis, I reached an awareness of the significance of such themes/areas of interest coming together as the result of engaging in dialogue with my mentor. Indeed, dialogue with supervisors

and other researchers and some participants represented a crucial part of my analysis as informal chats provided the space for more open and free flow of ideas, including the necessary exploration that would shape questions and rise doubts. After such conversations, I would be able to return to my data with purpose and more sense of direction in relation to doubts and spontaneous ideas. In other words, the analysis conducted for this study has been developed on the basis of reflexive and analytic explorations of data as well as meaningful dialogues with other people. Dialogues were indeed the heart of my doctoral experience.

The categories (or topical themes) that I generated in the iterative process between data and literature intersected with the selected domains and this provided the scaffolding for elaborating on conceptual themes. Such themes were transversal to some domains. For example, the conceptual theme labelled “appreciation for flexible language use as distinctive trait of the CS” falls in the areas of policy and practice (vs “ideology of language separation in education as developed in mainstream”) but also features in the analysis of the children’s construction of the teaching and learning (alongside the theme “games: teaching design as distinctive marker”). To build a coherent narrative, I needed to organise themes and domains in sections. From initial codes, a number of topical themes were identified and organised by either frequency or significance to the research question. Within topical themes, patterns (of similarities and differences) would be analysed, and the selected extracts would be clustered under a new label for each category as first step to a conceptual level, hence generating themes according to thematic analysis. Here is an example of this procedure.

Under the domain ‘reasons for joining the CS’, open codes included ‘to read and write’; ‘to improve’; ‘to become an expert’; ‘to learn parent’s language’. Within each code

cluster I analysed similarities and differences. I found significant, for instance, that under 'to read and write' the answers suggested that either the child was aware that it was their parents' decision to attend and parents wanted the child to acquire reading and writing skills, or the child was not aware of the reasons (of their parents) and assumed, during the interview, that it was to learn how to read and write. At this point I organised the answers in three more conceptual themes: 'for parent's language'; 'parents want'; 'don't know' (Figure 4.1; see Appendix G for full example). I examined the answers again for each newly organised theme in order to reach the conceptual level and produced the following themes: "achieving language proficiency for connection (with family)"; "language as a tool of power"; "reflecting on reasons while participating in research". Finally, at the writing stage, I selected one or two emblematic answers from each category to illustrate the children's perception and construction of the reasons for attending the CS. In this phase, the analysis was deepened by a new iterative exploration of the literature, producing a discussion of the results together with the presentation of the findings.

In sum, the iterative process of engagement with data at collection, analysis and writing up stages, defined the selection of topics or domains, each including a number of conceptual themes, that would allow to portray this story and provide an ethnographic narrative.

#### **4.8. Chapter summary**

This chapter focused on the methodological choices I took to develop the present study and the ways in which they helped me answer my research questions. The need to investigate social practices in the community and in the complementary school,

prompted a linguistic ethnographic orientation which I combined with elements of statistics.

I thoroughly presented in Section 4.6 and 4.7 the data collection and data analysis procedure. In outlining the process of collecting data, some elements of participatory ethnography were presented and discussed. For the analysis of data, I made use of some descriptive statistics, thematic analysis and elements of discourse analysis. Below is a summary of the full procedure.

- Quantitative analysis of the responses to the questionnaire and exploration of the themes emerging from open questions
- Listening to audio-recording straight after collecting a piece of data (classroom observations and interviews). Intuitive exploration and process of noticing in the first listening
- Regularly reading fieldnotes (mine and those produced by the children)
- Listening to recordings while walking (analysis in motion) and production of notes with initial codes
- Manual transcription of audio-recordings and further familiarisation with data
- Some systematic reflexive TA at the end of data collection, generating codes and conceptual themes applying elements of discourse analysis
- Formulation and selection of the domains
- Exploration of visual data as integrated to selection of themes and categories
- Selection of emblematic extracts for each theme and organisation of data across domains
- Integration with literature. Back and forth between data and literature throughout all stages (collection, analysis, write up)

- Continuous analysis by elaborating on the discussion while writing up the results

In what follows, I present the results of this analysis as I introduce the key findings of the questionnaires (Chapter 5) to provide context for the analysis of interviews and classroom interaction as illustrated in Chapter 6 and 7, in which I present multilingual practices, pedagogies and identities in the complementary school classroom.

## **Chapter Five. Italian as a heritage language in London: some key results**

### **5.1. Introduction**

Questionnaires are largely used in research on heritage languages (HLs) and family language policy (FLP). Although forcing social practices into discrete categories can be an oversimplification of what happens in multilingual families, surveys allow to start drawing patterns of language use as it is possible to collect information about the practices of a high number of families that share similar characteristics. They can be one of the tools employed alongside interviews and/or observations (Curdt-Christiansen and La Morgia, 2018, for example), or they may represent the main corpus of data in some large-scale studies (like De Houwer, 2007; Roberts, 2021). I made use of questionnaires to get a preliminary understanding of the research context as I explored the background of some children of primary school age who have Italian origins in London and analysed their language practices at home (as reported by families) alongside the potential challenges that parents face in transmitting the heritage language to their children. Building on this, I explored the role of heritage language education in the families' experiences of multilingualism by examining how parents reported on activities and strategies for the HL maintenance at home and the reasons for enrolling their children in complementary schools.

This questionnaire (Appendix D) was designed for family units, and it consisted of 42 questions about language, national and ethnic background, language practices and HL maintenance. It was organised into three sections: (1) parents, (2) children and (3) language and education. The questionnaires were distributed through Italian



complementary schools' mailing lists and private Facebook groups and responses were collected anonymously online. Therefore, participants were self-selected. A total of 97 questionnaires were registered during the summer 2021, and the responses validated for the analysis were 85, counting 143 parents and 117 children for a total of 260 participants.

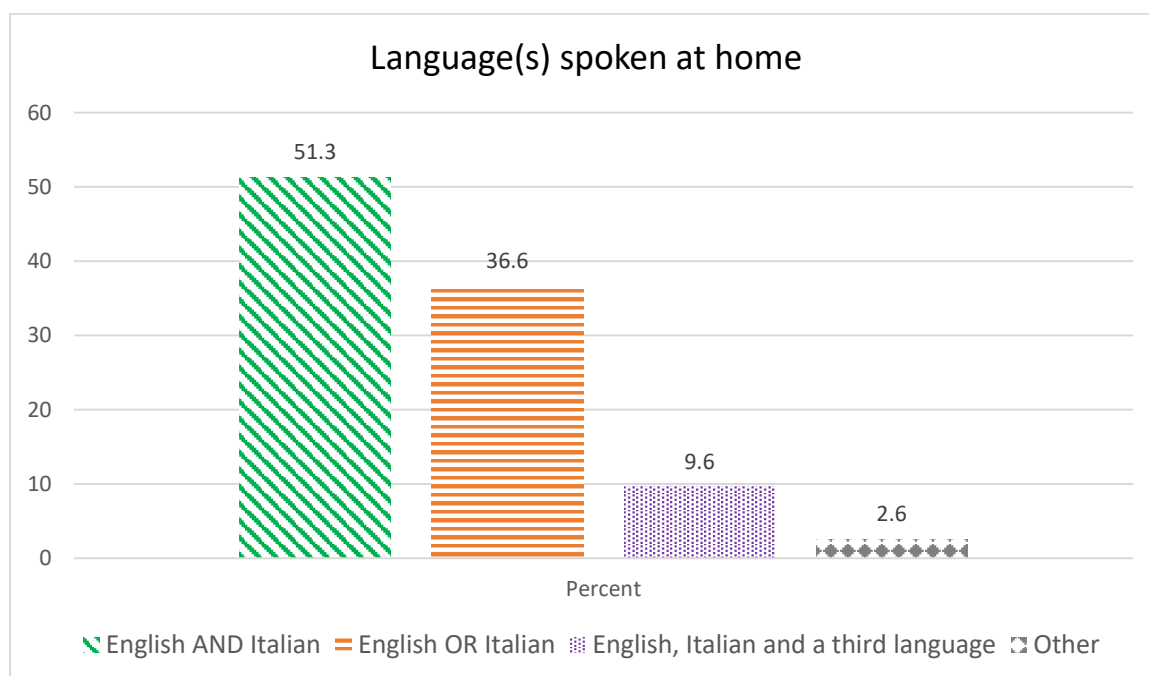
## **5.2. Italian parents and children in London and their repertoires**

In this section, I introduce the participants to the survey that was circulated among Italian families in London at the beginning of this study. The families that took part in this survey were based in London, had children of primary school age and at least one of the two parents was Italian. It is considered Italian here someone who was born and/or raised in Italy as well as someone of Italian descents or that grew up speaking Italian, regardless of the citizenship status.

The results of the questionnaires provided a broad picture of the background and the language practices of families in which one or more children of primary school age have Italian origins and may speak Italian as a heritage language. Participating children were born between 2010 and 2017, with an average age of 8 at the time of the study ( $N=117$ ,  $M=8.11$ ,  $SD=1.739$ ). In terms of school years, it was a heterogeneous group, with slightly more children in Reception class and KS1 than in Year 5 and 6. 19.1% of the participants had an Italian/EU citizenship and not a British one, whilst most of the participants declared either a British citizenship or a dual one (British and Italian/EU). Because most of the participants received the invitation to complete the questionnaire through the mailing lists of some Italian complementary

schools in London, 60% (N= 51) of the families involved said that their children were attending HL classes at the time of the survey.

To the question about the languages spoken at home (Figure 5.1), 51.3% (N=59) of participants declared using both English and Italian, and a 9.6% (N=11) reported speaking English, Italian and a third language. There is a 36.5% (N=42) of families that considered only English (21.7%) or only Italian (14.8%) to be the language of the household, and only in 3 cases (2.6%), English was said to be not spoken at home with 2 of these families using only Italian and Polish.



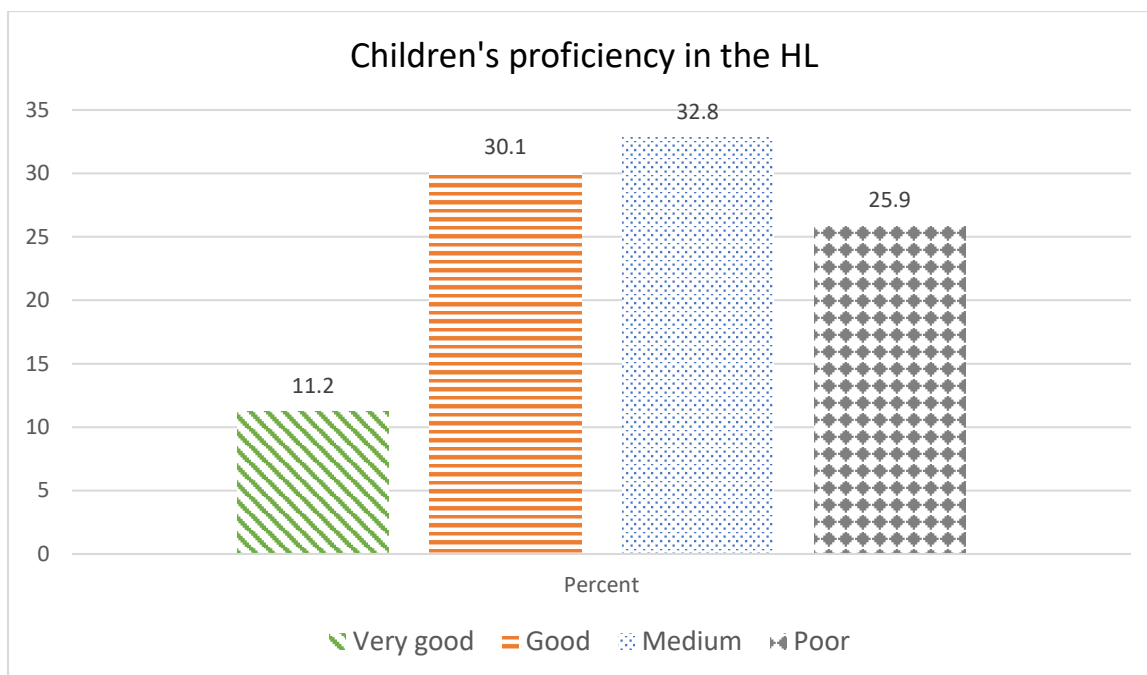
**FIGURE 5.1 LANGUAGE(S) SPOKEN AT HOME**

When asking about the languages spoken by the children, 92.2% (N=106) of children were reported to speak both English and Italian, with 22.6% of them speaking also a third language, these being Polish, Spanish, French, German, Chinese, Arabic. The remaining 7.8% was said to speak only English, or only Italian, or four languages (including English and Italian). Yet, when informing about the children's main language, only 6% (N=7) of the participants were thought to speak Italian as their main

language, against a majority of responses for English as the child's main language. The remaining other 6% was composed by children whose main language was French or Arabic, and children for whom the option 'other' had been selected among the answers to assert the impossibility to pick one main language as in the text space parents specified that they could not answer the question because both English and Italian were their children's main languages.

These results already illustrate the complex mosaic of languages in the community. To recap, all the children in this survey had Italian origins and lived with at least one Italian parent; English and Italian were the languages spoken at home with some families reporting additional languages; all the children spoke English, mostly declared as the main language, and some Italian; only 7 out 117 considered Italian to be their main language.

The children's repertoires were also varied in terms of proficiency (Figure 5.2). The question about proficiency in the HL offered 5 answer options, from 'none' to 'very good'. There were no reported cases of children that did not speak Italian. Most children appeared to have a medium or a good level of language skills in Italian (63%, N=73). However, one quarter of the respondents defined 'poor' the level of proficiency of their children and only the 11.2% (N=13) of families said that their children had a high level of proficiency in the HL. How these different levels of proficiency are the results or not of diverse family's language practices will be explored in Section 5.3. Below is the reported children's levels of proficiency in Italian.



**FIGURE 5.2 CHILDREN'S PROFICIENCY IN ITALIAN**

As regards the section of the questionnaire about the parents' background, it is important to remind that most of parents receiving the invitation to the survey were likely to be Italian themselves. All entries were completed in the Parent 1 section (the section for the Italian-speaking parent) but not all families answered to the Parent 2 section. For this reason, in the analysis of 'native languages' among all parents, Italian featured at a high frequency, 66.4% (N=95), followed by English for a 23.8% (N=34). The question about 'native language' had three answer options: English, Italian and Other. Other native languages reported (9.8%, N=14) were Polish, Greek, Spanish, French, German, Czech and Arabic. Amongst the parents who reported a native language different from Italian or English, there were also some participants who refused to pick *one* native language when the design of the questionnaire forced them to choose one answer and under the option 'other' they specified that both English and Italian were their languages. In two cases, the respondents wrote Friulan and Venetian as their native languages. Defining them languages, dialect or varieties here goes beyond the scope of this work, but it is important to acknowledge the strength of

linguistic affiliations in Italy, where several regional varieties -or languages- are very present and widely spoken.

In terms of multilingual repertoires, 50% (N=71) of parents in this community reported to speak 3 or more languages, 40% (N=57) spoke two languages and only a 10% (N=15) declared to speak one language only, this being always English. Again, amongst the ones declaring 3 or more languages, regional varieties/languages appeared 4 times (from different participants than the ones mentioned before). This result brings to a total of 6 parents (4.2% of respondents) who included regional varieties as part of their linguistic repertoire alongside Italian, English and other named languages. When asked about language proficiency in English, 95.8% (N=137) of parents reported speaking English well or very well (above B2 level of CEFR). Only 4.2% (N=6) declared to speak English at a B1 level or below. Finally, the level of education of parents in this group lay on the high end, with 50.3% (N=72) holding a postgraduate degree and 13.3% (N=19) also a PhD.

### **5.3. Family language practices and emerging policies**

As explored in Section 3.2 of the literature review, research on multilingualism in the family initially emerged in the 1980s and it flourished in the last 20 years with several studies investigating how parents and children communicate at home when at least one of the parents speaks a minority language (for example, Curdt-Christiansen, 2013, 2016; Luykx, 2003, 2005; Gafaranga, 2010; Roberts, 2021). Such studies took various methodological orientations, from quantitative to qualitative, including ethnographic approaches (e.g., Zhu Hua and Li Wei, 2016) and they were often designed to investigate how parents transmitted a minority language to their children and to

understand why some children developed competences in their heritage language(s) and some other did not.

In order to gain a better understanding of my research context, I decided to include in this study some elements of family language practices and policies and I collected and analysed how the different members of a family of Italian origins in London reported on their language practices at home. By means of quantitative analysis, in this section I illustrate some family language practices and emerging policies as revealed by the respondents. Throughout, I consider the challenges of HL maintenance as well as the important role of children in shaping the family language ecology.

### 5.3.1. Language practices

I collected data on the languages spoken and language use in interaction between each two members of the family for a total of 10 questions about language practices in a four-member family (Table 5.1). The questionnaire asked about the language(s) used by each parent with their children as well as the one(s) used by each child with each parent, the language use of the sibling pairs, and the language(s) of parent-to-parent interaction.

	Parent 1	Parent 2	Child 1	Child 2
Parent 1		X	X	
Parent 2	X		X	
Child 1	X	X		X
Child 2	X	X	X	

TABLE 5.1 FAMILY PAIRS FOR QUESTIONS

In other words, I collected and analysed two variables per interaction between each two members of the family. A similar approach was adopted by Schwartz (2008) in her study on Russian-speaking families in Israel. However, her questionnaire asked if children and parents were speaking (1) only the minority language, (2) only the majority language or (3) both, giving three options for the answer instead of five. Like other large-scale studies (e.g., De Houwer 2007; Roberts, 2021), the answers in the present questionnaire were coded on a five-point ordinal scale that ranges from 'Only <majority language>' to 'Only <minority language>' in order to offer latitude in the analysis of multilingual practices. I have opted for a 0 to 1 coding with intervals of 0.25 drawing from Schmid and Dusseldorp's (2010) questionnaires on language attrition. The difference between whole numbers (0 and 1) and decimals (0.25; 0.50; 0.75) portrayed the difference between making use of one language only (0,1) or recurring to different elements of one's repertoire as reflected in the decimal numbers. Answers were sorted from only English (0) to only Italian (1) and each variance in the use of the two languages was identified in segments of 0.25: 'mostly English' (0.25), 'as much English as Italian' (0.5) and 'mostly Italian' (0.75).

The coding system does not constitute a significant difference because the same statistical process can be applied to different coding patterns, but a comprehensive analysis of potential language shifts could only occur in presence of two language input data. The combination of a two-way variable on a five-point scale provided a picture of how parents speak to children as well as how children speak to each of their parents and how children speak to each other. Instead of asking *what language do Child 1 and Child 2 use with each other? English, Italian or both?* I was interested in what language(s) Child 1 used with Child 2 as well as what language(s) Child 2 used

with Child 1, and whether that was English or Italian or if there was some more nuance revealing a broader use of their repertoires.

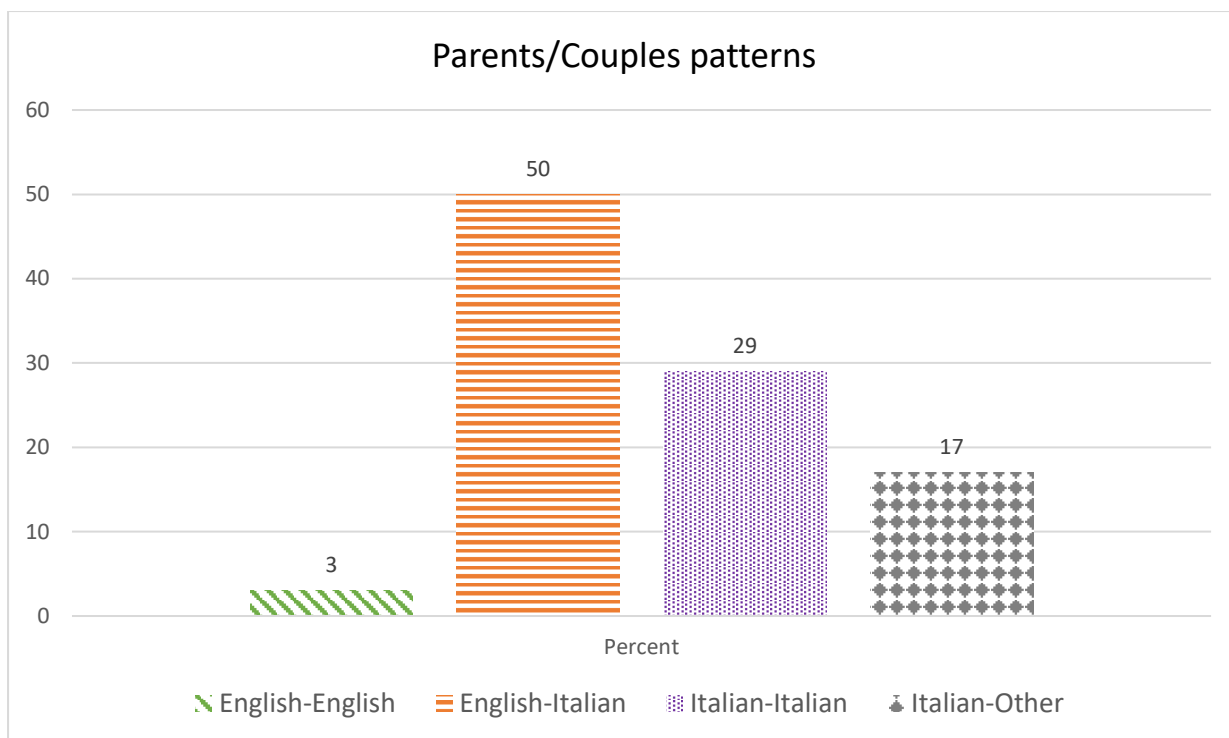
For this analysis, I used the ten variables collected to explore the patterns of language use in each household with the aim to understand how the different members of the family contributed to shaping their language ecology. Based the coding system 0 to 1, I identified four potential patterns of interaction as each two answers could fall in one of these orders:

- Majority Language prevalent (**MaL**)= Both practices between 0 and 0.5
- Minority Language prevalent (**MiL**)= Both practices between 0.5 and 1
- One-parent one-language (**OPOL**)= Both practices between 0-0.25 and 0.75-1
- Full multilingualism (**FM**)= Both practices between 0.25 and 0.75

### **Parent to Parent**

The parent section was completed for both parents by 58 families (68%) out of the 85 who participated in the survey. I selected those responses to investigate how the different couples were assorted in terms of repertoires. Although I acknowledge that it is a conventional simplification, the answers to the question on native languages provided a first picture of the couple's linguistic background. Based on the reported native languages, four patterns of couples were identified (Figure 5.3). Except for two occurrences in which both parent 1 and parent 2 had English as their native language (where at least one of the parents had Italian origins), most families were composed by Italian-English couples (N=29, 50%) followed by only Italian couples (N=17, 29.3%) and 10 families (17%) in which one parent was considered an Italian native-speaker and the other reported a native language different from Italian or English (Polish, Greek, Spanish, French, German, Czech and Arabic).





**FIGURE 5.3 COUPLES PATTERNS BY NATIVE LANGUAGE**

To understand whether parents had the same habits of language use with each other and get a grasp of how much of their repertoires were employed to communicate (for example, if both P1 and P2 used mainly Italian to speak to each other or if one spoke mainly Italian and the other mainly English), I conducted a correlations analysis on the language use of P1 with P2 and of P2 with P1. Correlation was highly significant, meaning that the practices reported were mostly matching for P1 and P2, with a R value of 1 ( $r=1$ ,  $n=58$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Parents had similar patterns of language use in communication with each other, using their repertoires in similar ways to interact. However, P1 and P2 repertoires revealed asymmetrical in terms of proficiency. The parents who reported Italian as their native language were generally fluent in the majority language, English, while parents who considered themselves English native speaker reported low levels of proficiency in the minority language, Italian. In fact, the analysis of language use patterns shows that more than half of the couples used (had to use?) mainly English to speak to each other (Table 5.2).

This result confirms that the minority language is usually less spoken in the family as the language of society is also the one mainly used by parents to talk to each other. It is interesting to notice, however, that in studies where English was the minority language (e.g., Roberts, 2023; English as a HL in Sweden), parents who spoke the majority language, Swedish, were also fluent in the minority language, English, whilst English speakers were not often proficient in the language of society and would use mainly English to communicate with each other.

The second most common pattern was the use of mainly Italian (41.1%) that was registered among the Italian-Italian couples, but also by 2 of the 29 Italian-English couples and 5 of the 10 Italian-Other Language couples, where both parents were speakers of a minority language and used one of them, Italian, to speak to each other.

<i>Parent to parent</i>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>MaL</b>	31	53.4
<b>MiL</b>	24	41.2
<b>FM</b>	3	5.2
<b>Total</b>	58	100.0

**TABLE 5.2 PARENT TO PARENT LANGUAGE PRACTICES**

Finally, I examined the use patterns based on whether both parents opted for an English or Italian only answer (coded 0 and 1) or if they declared to adopt a multilingual approach to communication. Despite the rich repertoires of this community, with 90% of participants declaring to speak 2 or more languages, the interaction between parents appeared to occur mainly monolingually (70.7%, N=41); only one quarter of participants reported engaging in multilingual practices by selecting a mostly English/Italian or as much English as Italian options.

### Parents to Children

The questionnaire asked parents to report on the languages they used with their children. The analysis (Table 5.3) shows a prevalence of parents providing a monolingual input in English (N=28) with the most frequent combination being one parent speaking only English and the other mostly Italian (0\*0.75). Based to the four patterns of language use explained above, the respondents can be considered to be largely adopting an OPOL strategy, one-parent one-language (50%, N=29), followed by a use of mainly the minority language, Italian (MiL, 32.8%) and mainly majority language, English (MaL, 15.5%). Only in one case parents said to use both languages in the same measure.

<i>Parents to children</i>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>MaL</b>	9	15.5
<b>MiL</b>	19	32.8
<b>OPOL</b>	29	50.0
<b>FM</b>	1	1.7
<b>Total</b>	58	100.0

**TABLE 5.3 PARENTS TO CHILDREN LANGUAGE PRACTICES**

The most common pattern is the one in which one parent spoke only English (0) and the other mainly Italian (0.75). In contrast with the previous analysis where parents were using mainly one language to speak with their partners, only in 12% (N=7) of cases both parents used one language only to speak to their children, revealing a broader use of their repertoires in communication with their little ones. Whilst between parents' practices were consistently congruent in the sense that both parents used either only one or both languages to speak to each other, in speaking with their children, the common pattern was more variegated as one parent used only one

language and the other used two (46.6% of cases).

### **Child 1 to Parents**

Although 50% of parents adopted an OPOL strategy, only in 24.1% of cases the older child appeared to conform to the proposed strategy and used only or mostly one language with each parent (0 to 0.25 or 0.75 to 1). Most children appeared to prefer English to speak to both parents with a 53.1% of children falling into the MaL pattern (Table 5.4). Out of the 19 children exposed to a prevalent use of Italian at home (with a parents' use pattern of 'mainly Italian'), 13 embraced the suggested practice and used mainly or only Italian to communicate with both their parents as reported by participants in the questionnaires.

<i>Child 1 to Parents</i>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>MaL</b>	31	53.4
<b>MiL</b>	13	22.4
<b>OPOL</b>	14	24.2
<b>Total</b>	58	100.0

**TABLE 5.4 CHILD 1 TO PARENTS LANGUAGE PRACTICES**

In communicating with their parents, half of the children made use of their repertoire with one parent but not necessarily with the other, with whom they seemed to communicate monolingually. In 50% (N=29) of cases, child 1 used only one language with one of their parents and both languages with the other parent, broadening the use of their repertoire with the parent speaking the minority language.

### **Child 2 to Parents**

The analysis of language patterns between the young child and their parents brings about a similar scenario, but the language shift becomes more visible (Table 5.5). The valid percent of children that used the majority language, English, to address to both

their parents is 66.7%. The percentile values for the MiL pattern (mostly minority language) remained fairly in line with the ones available for child 1 while a conforming response to the OPOL strategy (used by half of the families) occurred in less than 10% of the cases: only 1 child out of 10 would use English with one of the parent and Italian with the other in response to an OPOL kind of input; the others would opt for speaking English to both parents. This result means that the younger children preferred English to speak to their parents regardless of how the parents addressed to them, reducing their use of other languages in their repertoires compared to the older child, and highly contested the proposed OPOL practice.

<i>Child 2 to Parents</i>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid percent</b>
<b>MaL</b>	14	24.1	66.7
<b>MiL</b>	4	6.9	19.0
<b>OPOL</b>	2	3.4	9.5
<b>FM</b>	1	1.7	4.8
<b>Total</b>	21	36.2	100.0
<b>Missing (n/a)</b>	37	63.8	
<b>Total</b>	58	100.0	

**TABLE 5.5 CHILD 2 TO PARENTS LANGUAGE PRACTICES**

### **Child to Child**

Finally, some level of language shift can be seen in the practices among siblings (Table 5.6). Children's practices resulted highly correlated ( $r=0.883$ ,  $n=29$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) with most siblings' pairs sharing the same language use. There were no reported cases of interaction in Italian only between siblings and, except for two pairs for whom Italian was mostly used, most children opted for mainly or only English to speak with each other (71.5%, 15 out of 21 pairs). On a similar note, Roberts's data (2021)

revealed a preference for the majority language (Swedish) in the declared child-to-child language practices, with ‘only minority language’ being the least common outcome. This confirms other studies that inform of the language choice in siblings’ interaction and state that children prefer to use the language of school and society as their shared main language to speak to each other (es. Canagarajah, 2008; Roberts, 2021; Romanowski, 2021). Regarding the use of one or more languages, half of the sibling pairs were reported to prefer a monolingual mode of communication (N=11) while the other half made more use of their repertoires (N=10).

		C2 to C1				Total
		Only ENG	Mostly ENG	ENG-ITA	Mostly ITA	
C1 to C2	Only ENG	11	0	0	0	11
	Mostly ENG	0	4	1	0	5
	ENG-ITA	0	0	2	0	2
	Mostly ITA	0	0	0	2	2
	Only ITA	0	1	0	0	1
Total		11	5	3	2	21

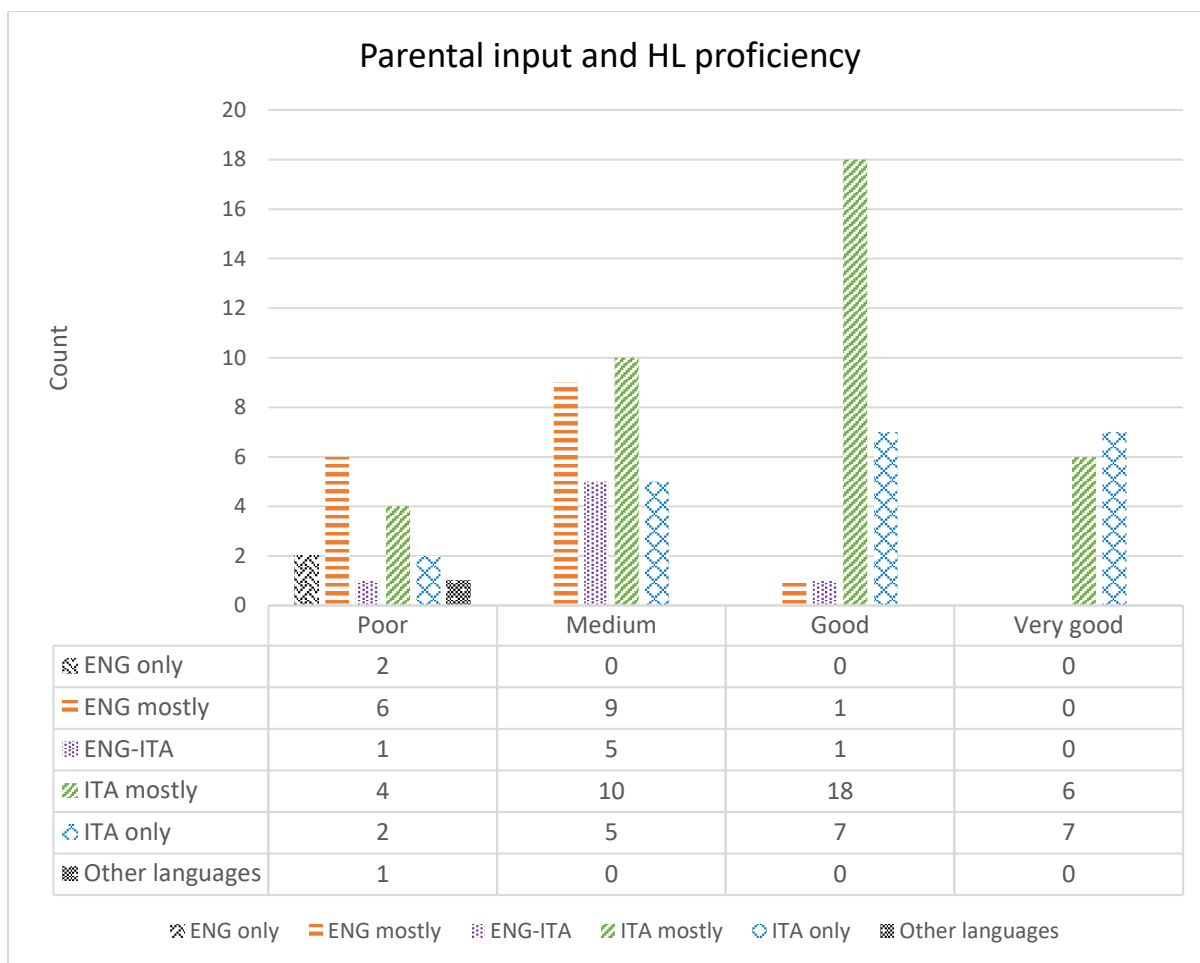
TABLE 5.6 CHILDREN’S LANGUAGE PRACTICES (CROSSTABULATION)

### 5.3.2. The role of parental input on HL proficiency

To the question *What are the challenges of HL maintenance?* one of the answers was ‘*I am the main challenge*’ (F66). These five words encase the difficulties of the Italian parents to guarantee continuity in speaking the minority language and ensuring some level of HL maintenance for their children. In this subsection, I explore the role of the

Italian-speaking parent's practices in establishing a set of language use patterns and the influence of parental input on the children's proficiency in the HL. It does not mean that the management and practices of the Italian parent (P1) determine the family's policy or the success in terms of children's bilingualism, but several relationships between variables suggest that a shift towards the majority language is seen already in the parent 1's practices. First, when comparing the statistical frequencies of the answers for 'native languages' with the ones about the 'main languages' of parents, it can be found that there is a mild shift towards English with a 11.2% increase in parents who consider Italian to be their native language and English to be their main language. Second, due to the low levels of proficiency of the English-speaking parents in the minority language, the minority language speaking parent often needs to be the most flexible and must adapt to a frequent use of English at home.

The frequency analysis of parental input from both parents (including Italian and non-Italian parents; Figure 5.4) reveals that except for a 20% (N=30) of parents who reported speaking only or mainly English to their children, the HL was always present to varying degrees, with a 18% of cases where the input was said to be only in the HL. Most children with a good level of proficiency in Italian appeared to receive a parental input in mostly Italian.



**FIGURE 5.4 CHILDREN'S HL PROFICIENCY AND PARENTAL INPUT CORRELATION**

The graph illustrates that more input in the HL leads to a greater proficiency as 'very good' level of proficiencies in the HL appear to be the result of parental input in mostly or only Italian. This correlation confirms a number of research. In a comparative study of three communities in the UK, Curdt-Christiansen and La Morgia (2018) found that children's active use of the HL was higher in the Chinese community, where the use of the HL was more consistent compared to Italian and Pakistani families in which, instead, the use of English was more common. Arnaus Gil et al. (2021) claimed that competence in the HL is higher if no majority language was spoken at home. This hypothesis was also sustained by De Houwer (2007) who showed that there were higher chances of effective bilingualism if both parents spoke the HL at home. In this data, whilst poor or medium proficiency was the result of all sorts of parental input



styles, only children who received input in mostly or only Italian (0.75-1) reported a 'very good' level of proficiency in the HL (Figure 5.3). However, these cases were mostly children raised in families where both parents were native Italian speakers and both were born and/or raised in Italy, leaving us with the question of how the HL can be maintained in families where only one of the parents is an Italian speaker.

To answer this question, I ran some correlation analysis. In examining how the proficiency in Italian of the non-Italian parent may influence the overall HL proficiency of the children, I did not find correlations ( $r=0.220$ ,  $n=40$ ,  $p=0.173$ ). One significant correlation was found, instead, between how the non-Italian parent (P2) spoke to the Italian parent (P1) and how the latter spoke to the children ( $r=0.567$ ,  $n=58$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Although the P2's proficiency in Italian was not directly connected to the children's proficiency in the HL, it is worth to consider that the reported -and perhaps the perceived- proficiency in Italian of P2 influenced the way in which P1 spoke to the children. The strong correlation between how the non-Italian parent spoke to the Italian parent and the way the Italian parent spoke to the children suggests that the language used in the couple has great influence on the way the minority language is used in the family, and consequently, how much the parent speaking the minority language is able to provide their children with input in the HL. The reason of this reduced use of the HL may reside in the need to ensure a good level of understanding between all members of the family, but it appears that regardless of P2's proficiency in Italian, if P2 uses little or no Italian with their partner, their partner, P1, may use less Italian also with their children.

Unsurprisingly, the parent speaking the minority language embraced a higher level of flexibility compared to the English-speaking parent -whose native language corresponded to the language of society. However, a more coherent order of practice

in relation to the dynamics of P2's language use was found in the group of P1s who considered Italian to be their native language but English their main language. This means that when Parent 1, the Italian parent, considered English to be their main language (15 out of 85 parents), children appeared to use mostly/only English with them in 67% of cases. This means that if a parent feels that English is their main language, even when they use Italian with their children, the children are more prone to use English in response. Finally, because speaking with P1 is an opportunity for the children to practice their heritage language, reported proficiency was indeed higher when the HL was declared to be used by the child to communicate with P1. By quantitative means, it is clear that the output supports proficiency. In fact, the children's use of the HL with parent 1 was positively correlated with high significance ( $r=0.678$ ,  $n=115$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

To conclude, children had higher chances to develop a good level of proficiency in the HL when provided with input in the HL by both parents, and when they used the HL to speak to their parents. Children of mixed families (where one parent was as an Italian native speaker and the other an English native speaker) appeared to have lower levels of proficiency specifically when the Italian parent used mostly English to speak to their partner and when they considered Italian to be their native language but English their main one.

### 5.3.3. Emerging family language policies

The analysis of both parental input and children language use brings to light different linguistic configurations of family practices. I explored the patterns of language use of parents with children in relation to the patterns of children's language use with their parents (Table 5.7). These combinations of parents' and children' language choices were mostly matching but not in all cases. In fact, the most recorded pattern

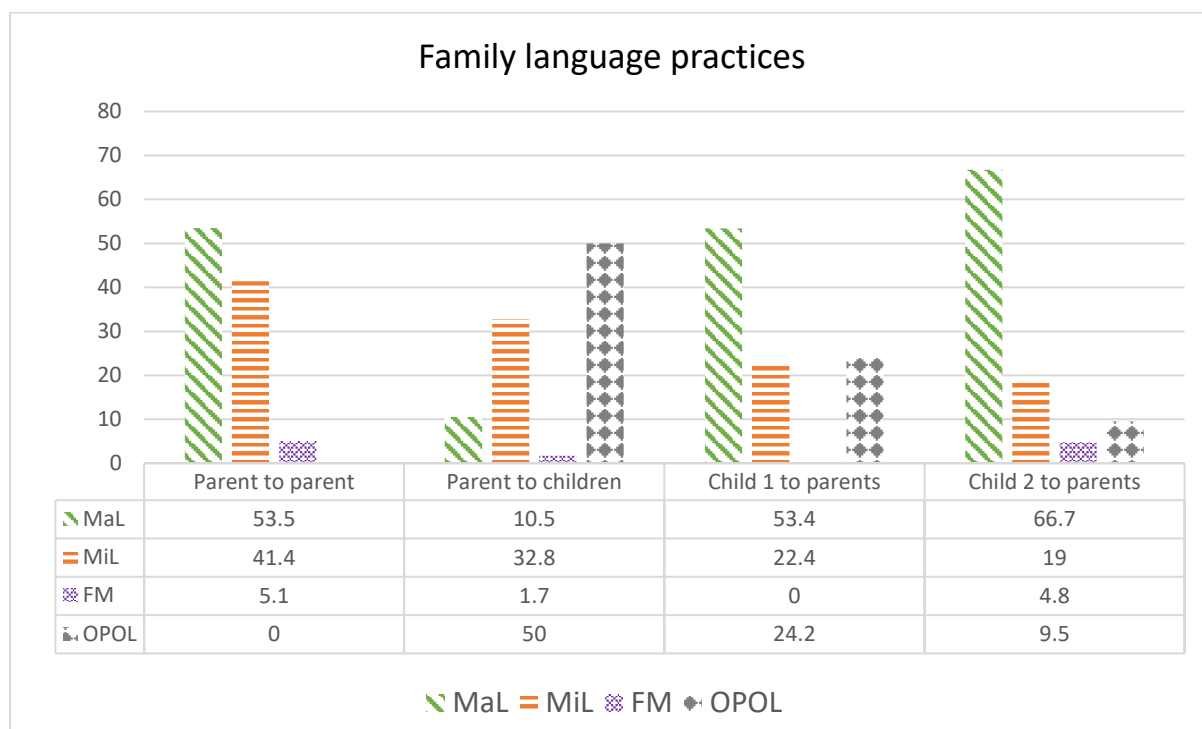
combination was OPOL-MaL (Table 5.7) where the parents were suggesting a one-parent one-language approach and spoke mostly/only Italian one and mostly/only English the other, but children were answering mainly or only English to both parents. In 50% of cases (N=29) parents opted for an OPOL approach. However, more than half of the times (55%, N=16) the children contested such practice and preferred to use the majority language, English, with all the members of the family. This means that parents applied (more or less purposefully) an OPOL strategy but their children (especially the younger siblings) did not conform to the proposed practice revealing agency in their choices of language use and influencing the family's language ecology.

		Parental input				Total
		MaL	MiL	OPOL	FM	
Children input	MaL	9	3	16	0	28
	MiL	0	11	0	0	11
	OPOL	0	2	12	0	14
	FM	0	2	0	1	3
	Other	0	1	1	0	2
Total		9	19	29	1	58

**TABLE 5.7 PATTERNS OF LANGUAGE USE BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN**

This result shows the agency of children in terms of language choices and their active role in shaping FLP through their practice. The different ways in which children used their repertoires at home and how this is not necessarily reflecting the proposed strategies such as OPOL is also visible in the graph below (Figure 5.5), where the patterns of language use between the parents to children and the children to parents'

look significantly different. It is similar, however, the pattern between the ‘parent to parent’ and the ‘children to parents’ practices in which, based on the correlations explained in the previous subsection, should parents use more English, the children would also use more English but also the way children use language may have a direct impact on how parents speak to each other and consequently, to their children.



**FIGURE 5.5 FAMILY LANGUAGE PRACTICES**

These results are limited to the quantitative analysis of the families’ answers on language practices in the questionnaires and cannot provide a clear picture of how different members of the family together negotiate practices and shape their language ecologies. One thing that emerges with clarity, however, is that the minority language has limited space in the family’s practices and that children, but also the Italian speaking parents, tend to shift towards the majority language, English. In the following section, I expand on this by illustrating the challenges that parents face and perceive in HL maintenance and how they try to support their little ones.

#### 5.4. Heritage language maintenance and education

From exploring the language practices of some families in which Italian is one of the languages spoken and the children's HL, it emerged that raising children to be multilingual and to speak Italian is not always easy. Although all these families lived somehow a multilingual life, in some cases the use of the HL at home was limited, with children negotiating language practices in favour of the majority language, English. The questionnaires investigated how families felt about this process of maintaining, practicing and learning Italian as a HL. In this section, I illustrate the challenges of HL maintenance as shared by parents as well as some of the common activities and strategies adopted for ensuring that children were exposed to the HL and the reasons for enrolling them in Italian language courses in complementary schools.

Through the qualitative analysis of the answers about the difficulties that families face in transmitting the Italian language, I provide an overview of the challenges of HL maintenance as I discuss the themes of (1) English as the dominating language in the children's lives, (2) the need for social connection for a varied language use, and (3) learning the Italian language far from the Italian land. After a sketch of some common activities for the use of the HL before and during the pandemic, in the following subsection, I examine the impact of the pandemic on the children's HL development and show how some families, if left alone, may struggle to retain the minority language, highlighting the risks of considering the family the sole responsible for the maintenance of minority languages, and so, for the safeguarding of society's multilingual capital. Because of the numerous challenges in HL maintenance, some families decided to send their children to a complementary school. The last part of this section explains the parents' reasons for enrolling their children in Italian HL courses. Two broad

aspects are examined about the need for a CS: supporting language and literacy development and strengthening social connection and cultural awareness.

#### 5.4.1. 'I am the main challenge': transmitting a heritage language

One of the questions asked in the survey was *What do you consider to be the challenge(s) in the maintenance of the home/heritage language(s)?* The responses received outline a complex interplay of factors that hinder the transmission of the minority language. Three topical themes were identified: (1) the dominance of English, (2) social connection, and (3) Italian language and the Italian land.

The most cited obstacle to HL maintenance was the dominance of the English language in the children's lives (65 of the 85 families mentioned this), with specific reference to the scarcity of opportunities to speak the minority language, Italian, in the environments where the children spend most of their day. This can be the school but also the home setting as already noticed in the previous section on family language practices and as it can be seen in the following statements:

"The default is English for them, and they have worked out that I speak English so they now address me in English. And dad doesn't speak a lot of Italian so they go straight to English" (F18)

"I am the main challenge. It's easier for me not to switch to Italian. After having lived here for more than 15 years..." (F66)

"It is very hard to have a deep conversation in Italian, it is frustrating for them to not understand when they have deep feelings to express, so I switch to English in order to fully communicate with them. Plus also, I have mainly been a parent in the UK, so a lot of children's terminology, don't know it in Italian."  
(F17)

The children are indeed negotiating the use of their repertoires and may act as “language socializers” of their parents (Luykx, 2005, p.1410). They struggle to perceive the need for using Italian when parents are able to speak the language of society, English. Parents, on their end, find easier to use English when addressed in English for various reasons, sometimes because of the amount of time they spent in an English-speaking society (“after having lived here for more than 15 years...”) or because the experience of parenthood happened only in an English-speaking society (“lots of children’s terminology, don’t know it in Italian”). Indeed, it can be noticed that all these comments were written in English, despite choice of language, English or Italian, was offered in the questionnaire.

In addition to language negotiation practices, parents described a situation in which there is little space and little time for Italian in their children’s lives outside the family context. School was mentioned several times as it is the place where children spend most of their day and it is seen as the place where English becomes the children’s “dominant language”.

“It’s really hard as the English language is predominant due to school” (F33)

The exposure to English at school is reported to be a crucial factor in the children’s choice of language at home that, in return, shapes some of the parents’ language practices like this parent recounts:

“Many [challenges]! Since he started school, English is his preferred language and often we parents reply to him in English too- it is difficult not to, because we are also losing variety of vocabulary in Italian” (F39)

A sense of frustration can be perceived in the response of this parent who says that the time and space for Italian decreased also due to language attrition for which “a

speaker's language may be affected by cross-linguistic interference and non-use" (Schmid and Kopke, 2019, p.1) and parents themselves feel that their repertoire in Italian is fading in what they described as "losing variety of vocabulary".

Overall, the environment around parents and children is mostly English-speaking, including entertainment products:

"School and friends are all British, TV is British" (F55).

In this case, the connection between the English language and Britishness is striking. Places, people, and entertainment are British, hence an obstacle to the development of Italian language skills because being British is, by default, equivalent of English-speaking. The scarcity of books and other entertainment tools in Italian, or in an Italian that would be suitable for a heritage speaker, was mentioned among the challenges 5 times. In one case, however, the potential of on-demand platforms was highlighted:

"Tv streaming sites like Netflix have been a blessing as from an early age our child could see her favourite cartoon heroes speak both languages fluently, exactly like Mamma" (F75)

The second major theme was that of social connection, mentioned by 36 families. Many parents stated that a great challenge was represented by the distance from the Italian speaking family but also by the limited contact with the local Italian community, with specific mention to the difficulties of finding affordable and accessible activities for children and families. Research on HLs (for example, Li Wei, 1994) shed light on the crucial role of community in the maintenance of minority languages since social networks are of high importance in determining language use across generations. Sometimes, however, contact with the community speaking the language is not available to families (Guardado 2002). Some of the respondents who referred to the



limited connection with the local Italian community as a hinderance to the HL transmission, stressed the challenge of finding accessible and affordable learning activities like language courses for the children:

“The main challenge is the lack of affordable courses nearby” (F15)

“La mancanza di scuole italiane e se ci sono non sono affidabili” (F22) <*the lack of Italian schools and if there are they are not affordable*>

“I corsi sono a pagamento e quindi escludono una parte dei bambini” (F37) <*the courses expect a service fee and so they exclude part of the children*>

“The lack of activities due to poor support from Italy” (F04)

The problem of accessibility was brought up with a critique of the costs of the courses for Italian children (“*non sono affidabili*”, using a semantic loan from the English ‘affordable’) and with a perception of receiving “poor support” from the country of origin which is hence deemed responsible for the maintenance of the Italian language.

A consequence of such a challenge is a reduced variety of social situations for the child to be exposed to the Italian language. Circumstances for the use of the language are homogenous meaning that children are not sufficiently exposed to a variety of contexts and situations for the use of Italian and that parents become then “the only funnel to Italianness” (F75), feeling that they have to bear alone the responsibility of language transmission.

Finally, a slightly less common but salient theme is that of learning the Italian language far away from the Italian land (coded as “far from Italy, far from Italian”, mentioned by 22 families). On one side, most of the challenges revolved around the here and now, the life of Italian speakers in London, with the dominance of English in the children’s

lives being the main obstacle. On the other side, part of the respondents talked about the difficulties of HL maintenance linking the Italian language to the Italian peninsula, supposing an unlikelihood of becoming a “true speaker” of Italian “in a foreign country”. The sense of being foreign appeared often in correlation to a sense of language correctness, in a prescriptive discourse of language as it can be seen in some of the following examples:

“[...] The children often don’t see the point of learning Italian as we don’t live in Italy” (F76)

“The kids perpetuate mistakes without even realising that they are, and without a community all around to check them. It is hard to keep our identity, it must be constantly underlined and reconfirmed. One feels alone in the challenge of making our culture and values being known and valued [...]” (F68)

“Correct grammar knowledge, correct pronunciation, fluency in speaking/reading/writing [...]” (F14)

In a discourse that strictly links the Italian language to a standard variety and to the physical space of the Italian nation-state, some parents expressed concerns about the ‘kind of Italian language’ that children learn in the UK. But they also stressed the difficulties of being a minority community in general, and particularly one in which identities “must be constantly underlined and reconfirmed”. Although not directly mentioned in the responses to the questionnaire, considering the time of the study, this feeling of loneliness in “the challenge of making our culture valued” may be aggravated by the changes brought by Brexit. After the referendum, the sense of safety and acceptance in the British society that EU citizens may have had was compromised. As Guma and Dafydd Jones (2019) suggest, Brexit was perceived, and

should be understood as, “an ongoing process of “othering” and unsettling” (p.2). In response to this rupture, and to a more ‘nationalistic’ atmosphere, some parents may have developed a stronger attachment to the idea of “correct grammar” and Italianness, taking a defensive approach, and/or grew worries about assimilation (“we don’t live in Italy”).

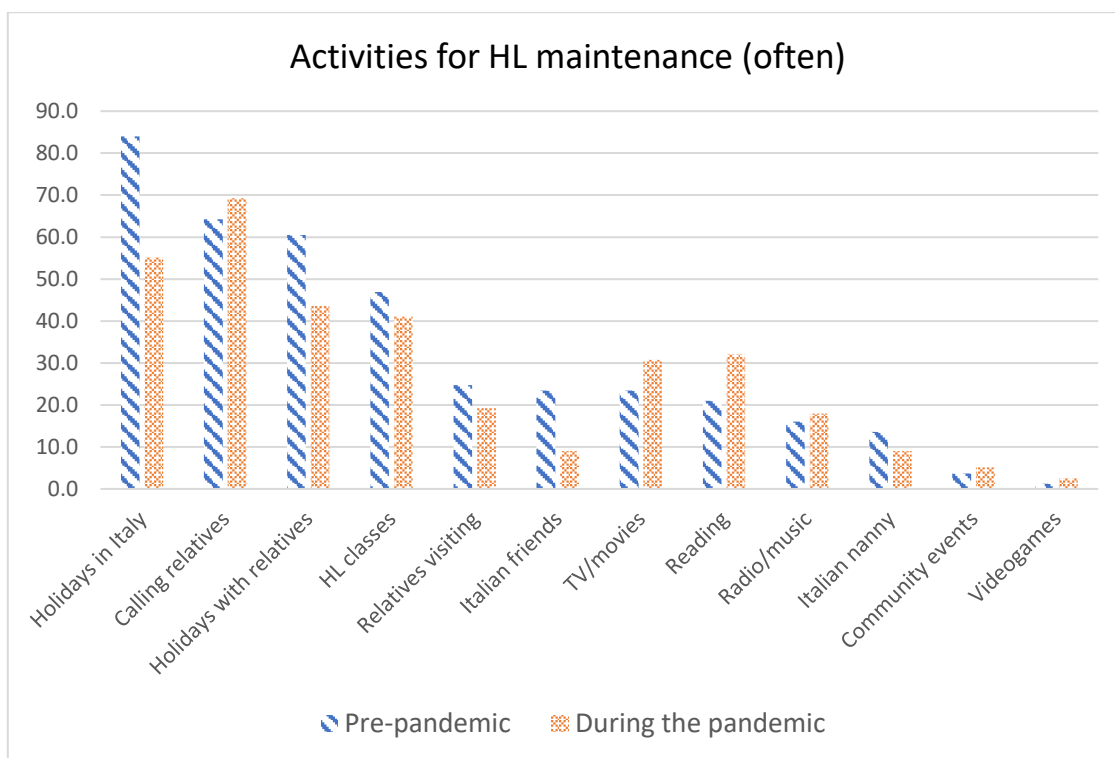
#### 5.4.2. Promoting the HL at home and at school

In the face of the challenges listed above, families resorted to strategies for the maintenance of the HL and promoted some activities at home that could provide their children with more opportunities to be exposed to and/or to use the HL. In the questionnaires, I asked about the frequency with which families did certain activities. Whilst most activities may be simply part of what families that hold ties with people and places in other countries do, some activities may be also part of a language management strategy. For language management here I intend, in line with Curdt-Christiansen (2012, p.57, cited by Curdt-Christiansen and La Morgia 2018, p.179) “the implicit/explicit and subconscious/deliberate parental involvement and investment in providing linguistic conditions and context for language learning and literacy development”. The involvement of parents in creating such linguistic conditions may involve culturally related practices, and introducing literacy related activities as well as keeping contact with Italian speaking relatives and friends (Curdt-Christiansen and La Morgia 2018; Schwartz, 2008).

Since the questionnaires were distributed in 2021, when the Covid-19 pandemic was still forcing us to live under some restrictions, the question about activities (Q35-Q36,

Appendix D) included what families used to do before and during the pandemic with options of frequency on a three-point scale, going from often to rarely or never.

Holidays and travelling to Italy was the most common response about what families did before the pandemic, with 84% of respondents choosing the option 'often'. Travelling during the pandemic inevitably reduced but it remained one of the most frequent activities, followed by spending time with the family (including calling relatives, visiting relatives in Italy, or receiving visits from the Italian relatives). Straight after travelling and maintaining contact with the extended family, the activity that was reported to be adopted more often by parents is the enrolment in HL classes, with a minor decrease for the pandemic period in which courses moved online. The graph below (5.6) shows the percentage of families that engaged often in the different activities before and during the pandemic.



**FIGURE 5.6 FAMILIES' ACTIVITIES FOR HL MAINTENANCE**

Another way to ensure that children were exposed to Italian was promoting the use of entertainment tools in Italian (TV, movies, books, music), which are all activities that parents said to do more often during the period of the restrictions as it can be seen in the graph (5.7). Watching TV, for example, could be seen as a practical way to expand the opportunities of much needed linguistic input in the HL (Kang 2015). In investigating differences between families and between different communities in the UK, Curdt-Christiansen and La Morgia (2018) found out that more Italian families (compared to families of Chinese and Pakistani origins) considered the television to be a useful tool for improving vocabulary and declared to allow children to watch some Italian TV shows as part of their language management. In the same study, Italian families appeared also to be the most active of the three groups in regard to reading in the HL. However, during the interviews parents shared that, compared to the number of books in English that they own, the number of books in Italian was much smaller (*ibid.*, p.189). In this survey, and also in the interviews that I conducted with key participants in the school, the discussion on books revolved around the challenge of finding stories that could be engaging for the children's age but simpler in linguistic terms as books for Italian as a first language are not necessarily suitable for HL speakers.

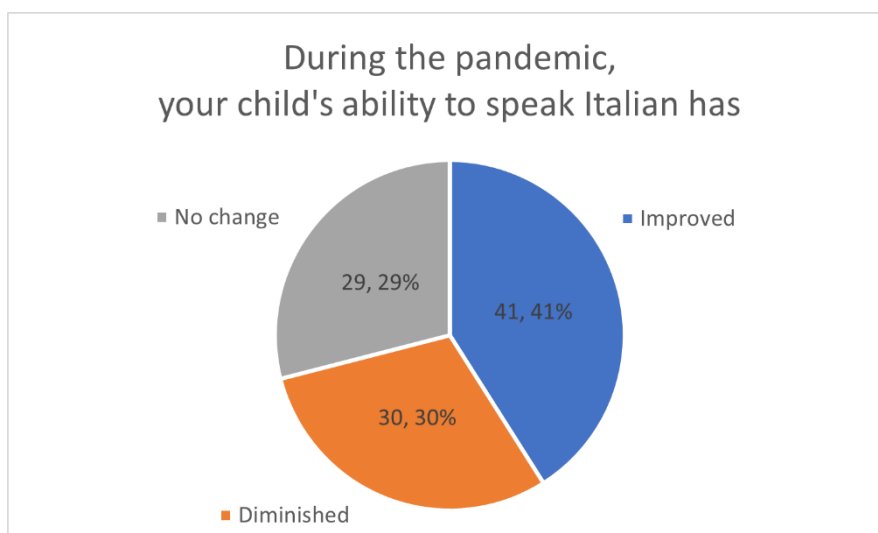
The least common activities for children and their families before and during the pandemic appear to be playing videogames and participating in community events (Figure 5.6). Despite game-based technology can be a useful tools to engage playfully with the HL, and as noted by Little (2019) a way "to advance along the continuum of language ability" in combining the 'player' identity with that of 'language learner', the use of videogames among children of primary school age in this community resulted to be on the very low end, with only 13% to 15% of respondents (respectively, before

and during the pandemic) who declared to make use of this technology for HL development.

As described above, families may feel the hardship and responsibility of HL maintenance and may try to expand opportunities and contexts for using the HL and encourage their children in different ways. They may not expect other institutions other than the Italian ones to support them in this process and when asked about how the mainstream school attended by their children promoted multilingualism, only 34 out of the 85 families said that their schools run activities to promote multilingualism. The answers were mostly related to curricular or extra-curricular language courses in French or Spanish or other foreign languages (24 out of the 34 answers received to the open question) and some HL classes (4 answers). However, whilst foreign language classes are offered by the schools, the HL courses that they were referring to are organised by Italian complementary schools that rent a space within the premises of the mainstream school- and are not promoted by the school itself (More in Chapter 1). Some parents said that their children's school has a multilingual library and that children are encouraged to read in their HLs (3 answers) and in a couple of cases, teachers were said to be celebrating the children's background with events like the language day and with discussions in class (2.3% of the total responses). From the families' answers to this questionnaire, support for the maintenance of the children's HL seems particularly limited and neglected in favour of the learning of foreign languages, mainly French and Spanish.

This survey portrays, once again, how the maintenance of a minority language remains responsibility of families. But what happens if there are restrictions in place and people have limited social contact like it happened during the Covid-19 pandemic? Since the study started during the pandemic, I asked parents to reflect on their

children's language development during periods of lockdowns and restrictions. Whilst in many cases children were reported to have improved their speaking competence in Italian because they were exposed to the language for more hours per day, 30% of families said that, instead, they witnessed a decline in the use of and the proficiency in the HL during the pandemic (Figure 5.7).



**FIGURE 5.7 CHANGES IN THE CHILDREN'S ABILITY TO SPEAK THE HL**

Some of the explanations provided by the parents were related to the negotiations between children and parents as seen in Section 5.3 and 5.4.1, and some added that English became predominant because the children started school specifying that they think the child's ability to speak Italian was hindered because of schooling rather than the pandemic. Overall, despite the fact that more children improved their Italian by staying at home during the pandemic, 30% of families struggled to maintain active the use of the HL, confirming that the maintenance of minority languages is not a family-only matter.

### 5.4.3. Joining a complementary school

Since the questionnaires were primarily distributed through some Italian CSs' mailing lists, 51 of the 85 families said that their children were attending or attended HL classes. The survey asked about the reasons for enrolling children in a CS and whether parents found that this activity supported their children in their language and identity development (Q39-42, Appendix D).

Parents expressed great desire for their children to speak Italian. Although the answers were short, it was evident that children attended an Italian CS because their parents strongly cared about them being able to speak Italian. This can be seen in the ways they started the answers which often opened with "I/we want them to...". The reason for this desire and the parents' objectives were organised in two main themes: CS for support to language and literacy (mentioned 34 times) and CS for social interaction: culture and community (21 mentions).

The first theme comprised brief answers which explained that the reason for enrolling children to HL classes was "to improve Italian" and "to learn how to read and write in Italian". The answers revealed that the parents' desire to help their children retaining and improving their Italian language skills, but also the need for this improvement to be linked to literacy skills as well as grammar knowledge (mentioned 12 times). A third sub-theme was that of "language as a commodity", for which the wish of parents for children to improve their Italian was specifically anchored on pragmatic reasons (e.g., to be able to live in Italy in the future) but also on an ideology of bilingualism as strictly linked to proficiency, holding the perception of an 'ideal native speaker' as the benchmark for their children success:



“To make sure my child is truly bilingual and can write and read Italian as an Italian child living in Italy” (F05)

“To be as bilingual as possible” (F34)

Another frequent answer was that the CS would give the children the opportunity to meet other Italian/Italian-speaking children, to make new friends and learn together (e.g., “To keep contact with children from similar background”, F08). Some parents mentioned wanting to connect more with the Italian community in general and referred to the benefit of joining activities for families, seeing in the CS a space for the children to learn and for families to find a shared social space to meet their community. At the time of the survey, community activities were particularly limited but some parents made explicit the link between the school and a possible community of families, like in the following example where the themes converge:

“So they can keep on practicing Italian, learn to read and write and make Italian friends. I was also hoping in Italian parent-kids activities outside the Italian school (picnics, events etc) but COVID did not really enable these” (F38)

Some parents also mentioned that supporting children with their Italian was mainly due to family reasons and they wanted to support the relationship of their children with their extended family, but also varying the contexts of language use and discover and strengthen the relationship with their cultural roots:

“We wanted them to keep their roots, to be able to communicate with the rest of the family and provide them with additional language skills” (F14)

Among the answers that stood out there are the one of a mother who admits not having used Italian at home for many years and looked at the HL course as an opportunity to

'recover her mistake', and also one that discussed the learning of Italian as it was a foreign language:

"I want the children to be able to communicate with their relatives in Italy. I also believe it is important to appreciate/respect other cultures and languages -- I think you also learn more about your own culture and language when you are exposed to another language and culture. I think the English school system does not do a good job of teaching a foreign language in primary school and I think it is important to start learning a foreign language early." (F76)

Yet, to the last questions of the questionnaire (Q41-42) in which parents reflect on how HL classes support or supported the children in their language and identity growth, one of the answers reads:

"very little, they speak about very generic stuffs, and the program is more tilted to learn Italian as a second language rather than your mother language" (F03)

This contrast reminds us of an important aspect of the challenge that communities have to face in maintaining the HL when that is 'on menu' (Valdes, 2017) because if it is one of the European languages commonly taught as a foreign language (hence, on menu) it risks to be taught as such, and to be perceived almost as such ("to start learning a foreign language early"). If on one hand, some parents seemed to ignore the differences between foreign and heritage language learning, on the other hand some parents complained about the courses attended by their children because they were designed more for Italian as FL than HL, therefore restrictive in terms of identity development for children of Italian origins. On this incongruence (Italian as a FL vs Italian as a HL), I will expand in Chapter 7.

## 5.5. Summary and discussion

This chapter provided a window into the linguistic repertoires and multilingual practices of 85 families of Italian origins in London. The quantitative analysis of their reported practices shows the different patterns of communication amongst parents, amongst children and between parents and children, where the use of each family member's repertoire is diverse. The results show that multilingualism in the family has many different forms and that children with their language practices actively contribute to shaping policies and practices.

By mean of correlation tests, I investigated the role of parental input to understand how heritage speakers' language proficiency relates to parents' language use with them. Though this interconnection is confirmed by this and a number of other studies (for example, De Houwer, 2007; Curdt-Christiansen and La Morgia, 2018; Makarova et al., 2017), the influence of parental input on children's language practices and proficiency is nuanced and it is not a direct correlation and causation factor. Among the potential indicators of the children's use of the HL, it has been noted that communication between parents can influence the type of parental input (whether the two parents include Italian in the way they speak to each other or not), and that the relationship of the Italian parent with the majority language (if it is considered or not their 'main language') can have an impact on the type of parental input.

I then examined the patterns identified in the analysis of the language practices between parents and children and drew attention to the children's language choices, highlighting the discrepancies between the strategies suggested by parents and how children responded. A representative example of this was the most frequent pattern combination OPOL-MaL, where parents applied a one parent one language strategy, but their children contested it by using mostly or only English with both their parents.

Children play a critical role in FLP and with other studies (for example, Gafaranga, 2010; Fogle, 2012), this work joins the call for a close examination of how children influence their parents' practices and proposed policies arguing that FLP emerges from the interaction between parents and children, and it is not just a matter of parents' attitudes, planning and practices.

Gafaranga (2010), for instance, examined children socialisation and negotiation processes at home to find that internalisation of dominant ideologies about languages can lead children to contesting parents' suggestions of language planning and practice, which confirms the important role of children's agency in determining the family language ecology. Exploring children's agency means interpreting language socialisation as a dynamic of "mutual family influences" (Luykx, 2003, p.40) where the language ecology is influenced and shaped by all members of the family. The quantitative analysis of this questionnaire already suggests that children take an agentive role in terms of language practices and not only they contest the parents' proposed practices, but they may also socialise their parents into English. If we consider the agentive power that children have in shaping language use among family members, ideologies and attitudes influencing the family language ecologies are not only those of the parents but crucially so, also those of the children who will bring discourses and cultural systems of ideas about language in the home (Canagarajah 2008; Fogle and King 2011). Some of these ideologies will be explored in Chapter 7.

This data set did not show the process of negotiation of language practices at home but revealed a tendency that some immigrant families may have in shifting towards the language of society in what Fishman called the three-generation language loss model (1991). Here we saw in fact how children may contest their parents' strategies such as an OPOL approach, and decide to speak the language of society with both

parents (Revis 2019; Fogle and King 2013) leading at times to what Gafaranga (2010) defined 'medium request', for which the child's resistance to a minority language makes the minority speaking parent switch to the majority language as forced by the overt 'request' in the child's refusal and is eventually socialised into using English.

Children's decisions of language use can be the result of a complex mixture of social factors (Roberts, 2021). Their understanding of societal structures and the discourses of the school, for example, may lead to contesting the use of a 'non-legitimised' language in the hosting society (Bourdieu 1977) also in the home setting. As Revis (2019) work on refugee families in New Zealand confirms, "children in these situations tend to be faster at acquiring the cultural capital (Bourdieu 1977) of the majority and have the potential to actively socialise their parents into the dominant language and culture (Luykx 2005)" (p.177). Similarly, Schwarts (2008, p.414), who included in her study a survey to be completed by the children, found that whilst parents' positive attitude towards the HL did not necessarily translate into language retention, the children's attitudes did. The children's experiences of language use and language policies in different contexts may influence the ways in which they exercise agency in the family, transposing beliefs and practices from the societal field to the family context.

A positive attitude towards the HL may help increasing the children's use of and proficiency in the HL. Nonetheless, the responsibility and hardship of HL maintenance continues to fall primarily on parents (Guardado, 2002; Romanowski 2021), constituting a challenge for minority communities. As explained in Section 3.2, the family is not a "self-contained institution" (Canagarajah, 2008, p.171) but it is one unit in a socially interconnected network of contexts in which children and parents live and learn. Consequently, family language practices and policies are inevitably subject to

the influence of macro-social institutions (Canagarajah 2008; Curdt Christiansen 2009) and as children begin to create their social lives separately from their family context, ideas about language start and continue to form in relations to their perceived sense of power and legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1977).

Parents in this survey widely pointed at the challenge constituted by the dominance of the English language in their children's lives. The role of school appeared to be crucial. It resonates with other studies in anglophone countries for which English becomes dominant as soon as children start formal schooling (Romanowski 2021) and language negotiations become more problematic. Although none of the respondents referred explicitly to the schools' monolingual approach and practices as a potential limitation to the development of a multilingual repertoire, the need for the children to communicate in English most of the day resulted in less opportunities to use the HL and to time pressure (Schwartz 2008) and parents stated that speaking Italian turned to be more difficult after the children started going to school.

An interesting scenario was that of the pandemic when parents were forced to support their little ones in their schooling journey from home. Some previous studies suggest that parents' involvement in homework and homeschooling may be problematic. Helping children with schoolwork was sometimes seen as an additional obstacle to the use of the HL as it forced the use of English (like seen in Romanowski 2021) or the activity with the minority language speaking parents could be halted due to limited language expertise (Roberts, 2023). This study reveals that helping children with English homework using their HL could also represent an opportunity to explore literacy multilingually.

In exploring the effects of the pandemic on the families' activities and on the children's language skills development, the responses to this questionnaire shed light on the hardship of HL maintenance for families who already bear the challenge of living often far from their families (being further penalised by the pandemic) and who cannot always ensure language transmission within the four walls of the family house. Whilst 40% of the children appeared to have improved their abilities in speaking the HL because they were more exposed to the language at home, there was a 30% of people who reported a diminished level of proficiency. This decrease was said to be due to less contact with family and friends who speak Italian and less time spent in Italy where the use of Italian is more needed. Such results suggest that families alone may struggle to maintain the HL and that social connection, with the extended family and the community, is crucial for HL retention.

Among the challenges shared by families there was also the fear that a low proficiency in the HL could lead to the loss of a cultural belonging with implications for identity. As it will be explored in the next chapter, the transmission of the language goes along with that of cultural values and traditions which are deemed important for families who have ties with Italy and the Italian people. Another aspect that surfaced was that of the land that featured in some responses in which parents expressed a sort of disillusion at the idea of learning Italian far from Italy. Whilst many blamed the fact that they were not part of an Italian speaking community in London and that activities for the children were not always affordable or accessible, some other parents offered a prescriptive discourse of a 'correct' Italian language that cannot be learned 'properly' outside the Italian state. Despite this being a minority, the national construct of pure and standard languages as belonging to politically delimited territories surfaced in the discourses of some Italian parents in London.

In conclusion, managing multilingualism in the family is a complex matter. The findings point at the fact that parents cannot be held the sole responsible of language transmission and indicate the crucial role of a community-based system, including complementary schooling, in supporting the children in developing their language skills (Romanowski 202) but also in representing “an important link in the practical realisation of the language ideology of the family” (Schwartz, 2008, p.414).



## Chapter Six. Attending an Italian complementary school: why and where

### 6.1. Chapter Outline

In this second chapter of analysis, I present an Italian complementary school in London where children of primary school age learn about some of their cultural and linguistic heritage. Building on the challenges of HL maintenance and the reasons for joining a CS as discussed in Chapter 5, in the first part of this chapter (6.2) I explore more in depth the reasons for complementary schooling based on the interviews conducted with some key participants. I share some of the children's ways to describe their CS and the reasons they report for attending it, and I compare and analyse their parent's reasons where the themes of education, traditions and language ownership are discussed. Children's and parents' reasons for complementary schooling are examined drawing on Norton's theory of investment (Darvin and Norton, 2015; Norton Pierce, 1995) which builds on the concepts of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984) and imagined identities based on Anderson's idea of imagined communities (1991).

In the second part of the chapter (6.3), I present the space of the CS classroom and I reflect on the role of the material world in the learning experience of the children at the school. I describe the layout of the school room and the activities run in that space, and particularly around the whiteboard, to exemplify how the materiality of the classroom and its social dimension intertwine in *assemblages* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Mulcahy, 2012). I consider *assemblages* as fluid socio-material networks in which the multiplicity of elements in any given situation forms unique wholes where agency is reconfigured. I show how the material dimension of the classroom can affect

behaviour and interaction as well as how objects such as the whiteboard come to acquire and change semiotic value in relationships of power (Bourdieu, 1984). Finally, I explore how specific activities in the classroom may help children building confidence and supporting a sense of agency in their HL learning environment.

## **6.2. Children's and parents' perception of complementary schooling**

In this section, I present the children's and parents' narratives on complementary schooling as collected during the interviews. As explained in Chapter 4, interviews were conducted during the last school term and they run multilingually, in Italian and English, and also some Spanish. The flexibility of language use with the children was determined by my own language practices. The children had known me in the classroom as a mainly Italian speaker who also speaks English. During the interviews, I moved between the two languages in a natural way, matching my day-to-day use of Italian and English within what I consider my social network. However, I tended to include more English compared to my day-to-day language practices in the school, with the aim to make children more focused on the content of their answers and, in consideration of my role and of the place of the interviews (the CS), to potentially decrease the pressure of having to speak Italian for learning purposes. Some children mirrored my practice, some others engaged in conversation mainly in English while others decided to stick to mainly Italian, in line with the interaction we had throughout the year. My already established relationship with most of parents shaped the language practices during the interviews with them and whilst in two cases the Italian parent decided to speak mainly or only English to make sure that the non-Italian

speaking parent could fully join the conversation, other parents addressed me in Italian also when the partner was not fluent in it, although able to understand sufficiently. Still, it is important to specify that when referring to the named language Italian, I imply the Italian language in its London variety, and with several translanguaging moments.

### 6.2.1. Children's construction of teaching and learning in the CS

During the interviews, at the end of the school year, I asked the children to describe their Italian school, the CS, and what they do there. I asked them to pretend that I had never been there and to imagine that they would have to explain what it is to a friend in their English school. To different extents, they all answered that it is a place where people speak and learn Italian, and they play games in Italian. On some occasions, they made immediate reference to the use of language in this context (see Section 7.3.1). Most children focused on the learning aspects and the teaching design (game-based approach), while some others opened their answers with the social aspects and first talked about their friends at the CS. Below, I bring some examples of conversations with the children to shed light on their discursive construction of the Italian complementary school experience, starting from the youngest participant, Chiara.

Chiara        I think we learn Italian and learn things in Italian

Carmen       Mmm, per esempio che cose? <mh, for example what things?>

Chiara        I think we are there to learn things in Italian like, learning things in English and learning things in Scottish and things-

Here Chiara says that in this school, children learn Italian and learn 'things in Italian'. In fact, although language learning is central, in the complementary school children learn about various things using Italian, and this aspect of the learning experience is evident to children as young as Chiara, who is in her first year of primary school (age 6) at the time of this study. She carries on normalising the activity of learning through

her heritage language by drawing a parallel to learning ‘in English or in Scottish’ and moving from the idea of a language (other than English) being the subject of learning, to any language being the tool through which they can learn other things.

Almost half of the children (40%) referred first to the learning design as exemplified in the following extract.

Ludovico      Allora è un posto che vai a fare e devi fare que- come giochi che son- che sono that help you imparare l'italiano più bene <So it is a place that you go and you have to do thi- like games that ar- that are that help you learning Italian better>

Carmen        Ok, quindi è un posto dove vai a giocare per imparare meglio l'italiano <Ok, so it is a place where you go to play and learn Italian better>

In this example of translanguaging practice, Ludovico states that the CS is a place where “you have to play games” that help you learn Italian better. His attention is on the approach and the first thing he is associating with the classes is the game-based design. He says that “devi fare”, *you have to* play games, and in doing so, he makes a distinction between an informal playing space and the CS. This modal verb in his answer may indicate his way of acknowledging the CS as an educational space since the games are not an end in itself but they are learning oriented and something that ‘must be done’. Alex as well stresses the role of games when he describes the school as a place where “you make work with Italian things the whole time” (literal translation), “there are games” and eventually, “learn Italian”.

Alex            Fai:: fai @ <You do:: do @>

Carmen        Che cosa:: <Wha::t>

Alex            Ehm fai lavori con cose italiane tutto il tempo? <Ehm you do work with Italian things all the time?>

Carmen        Ok

Alex            E ehm ci sono i giochi <And ehm there are games>

Carmen        Ci sono giochi <There are games>

- Alex E @impara italiano? <And @learn Italian?>  
[...]
- Carmen What would you say is the thing you like the most here? At the Italian school
- Alex Lupo mangiagrammatica? <The grammar-eating wolf?>
- Carmen Ok
- Alex E quello di- come giochi che <and that of- like games that>
- Carmen I giochi della- <The games of->
- Alex Un po' di giochi (.) cinque- cinquanta per cento di giochi <A bit of games (.) five- fifty percent of games>
- Carmen Ok la metà dei giochi che ti propongono ti piacciono e:: c'è qualcos'altro a parte i giochi? <Ok you like the half of the game proposed a::nd is there something else apart from the games?>
- Alex E::h perchè quella è praticamente tutto <E::h because that is basically everything>

Later, I asked Alex what he liked most about the CS. He replied that the game he enjoyed the most was *lupo mangiagrammatica* (the grammar-eating wolf) and he said that he enjoyed fifty percent of the games. When I tried to move away from the topic of games by asking if there was anything else that he liked, he replied that games “is basically everything”. Based on these conversations, Ludovico’s and Alex’s perception of the CS, like other children, is closely linked to the learning design.

### 6.2.2. Children’s reasons for complementary schooling

In most cases, the decision to join a complementary school resides in parents’ motivation as seen in Chapter 5 (Section 5.4.3), and, like explored in other studies in complementary school settings (for example, Francis et al., 2009), children attend the CS because their parents decided so. In some cases, children decided to attend it but it was originally their parents’ suggestion. Here I illustrate some of the motivations that children brought about during the interviews for attending Italian HL classes.

The thematic analysis revealed that the motivations to learning Italian were related to

the desire for social interaction and connection and sometimes, for balancing power dynamics like in the case of Rosa (Year 2, age 7).

- Carmen      And why do you go there?
- Rosa          Eh io vado lì perchè i miei genitori vogliono che parlo più italiano (.) vuol dire che le mie professores- eh voglio dire che i miei genitori vogliono che imparo meglio per quando vado alla spiaggia con la mia cugina e non mi prendono in giro visto che non so così di tanto <*Eh I go there because my parents want that I speak Italian more since I am not so good at speaking Italian (.) it means that my teache- eh I mean that my parents want that I learn more for when I go to the beach with my cousin and they don't mock me because I don't know that much*>
- Carmen      Ti prendono in gi::ro? chi ti prende in giro sulla spiaggia? <*They mo::ck you? Who mocks you?*>
- Rosa          Cugina <*Cousin*>
- Carmen      E cosa ti dice? <*And what does she tell you?*>
- Rosa          Dice 'dai Rosa, puoi almeno provare di parlare bene in italiano?' <*She says 'come on Rosa, you can at least try to speak well in Italian?'*>
- Carmen      [Davvero? <*really?*>
- Rosa          [E cose così, sì (.) e mi corregge tutte le vo::lte <*and stuff like that yes (.) and she corrects me all the time*>
- Carmen      Non ti piace questa cosa <*You don't like this*>
- Rosa          No!

Rosa declares that her parents want her to attend the CS to be able to 'speak better' with her cousin. The interaction with her young relative appears to be perceived by the child as a case of imbalance in terms of power dynamics when she refers to her cousin correcting her and "prendere in giro" (mocking). Rosa expresses discomfort about her cousin's reaction to her unusual use of standard Italian, but she does not problematise the lack of English competency of her relative in Italy. Like Francis et al. (2009) assert, children tend to "produce themselves as dutiful in meeting the needs of the elder generation, rather than criticising their elders' lack of English" (p.525), and in this case, the lack of English of a relative of a similar age as well. Interestingly, this example

brings to light the power of same-generation family connections against the most common reasoning based on the need to ensure an intergenerational connection, where families' primary desire for their children is to be able to communicate with their grandparents. The desire of the child, in this case, is to speak with her peers like her cousins. Arianna and Guido too, respectively in Year 2 and Year 4, talked about learning Italian for family reasons. They are siblings and they decided to be interviewed together.

- Carmen Perchè andate alla scuola di italiano? <Why do you go to the Italian school?>
- Guido Ehm perchè voglio studiare più italiano? <Ehm because I want to study Italian more>
- Arianna Cosa lui ha detto <What he said>
- Carmen But is there a specific reason why you're [here? who decided-
- Guido [It's because my daddy is Italian like I learn his language?
- Arianna A bit more
- Guido So I can understand what he says [without
- Arianna [Ye::s
- Guido Repeat asking and we could say more [often
- Arianna [Ye:: instead of continuing saying the words that you don't know because you'll know them
- Carmen °°So you can speak only Italian at some point
- Arianna Sì!

Here the focus is again on language competence but Arianna and Guido's catalyst for their investment appears slightly different from the one of Rosa. As I observed in the classroom, they both performed a 'good learner' identity (Creese & Martin, 2006; Souza, 2010) and showed a great deal of investment in learning Italian. Their reasons, in fact, lay in the desire for connection and social interaction. Guido and Arianna said that they attended the CS to improve their Italian in order to understand what their





- Carmen E perchè pensi che la mamma ti abbia ti ha iscritto alla scuola di italiano? <And why do you think you mum enrolled you in the Italian school?>
- Annabel Boh@@ <I don't know@@>
- Carmen Non c'hai mai pensato? <You never thought about it?>
- Annabel Mai <Never>
- [...]
- Carmen Perchè vieni alla scuola di italiano visto che già lo parli l'italiano?<Why do you come to the Italian school if you already speak Italian?>
- Giuliano Boh? <I don't know?>
- Carmen Boh@ secondo te perchè ti hanno- ti mandano alla scuola di Italiano <I don't know@ in your opinion, why do they send you to the Italian school
- Giuliano Così che:: sono un esperto di italiano? <So tha::t I am an expert of Italian?>

They instead realised during the interview that they never questioned why they attended the CS. Both Annabel and Giuliano started at the CS school in reception class, at the same time as they started going to mainstream school. Giuliano also attended a Polish complementary school on Saturdays. They were both fluent in spoken Italian and they always took active part in the lessons. However, they showed investment to a different degree compared to Guido, Arianna or Rosa, and this could be rooted in a lower awareness of the social dimension of their reasons. Still, there is a sense that attending the school corresponds to the chance of gaining cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) in what Giuliano describes as “un esperto di italiano” (to be an expert of Italian).

### 6.2.3. The parents' perspective

Alongside the interviews with the children, I also listened to some of the parents of key

participants to gain a better understanding of their own experience of HL maintenance at home and in the community and the reasons for enrolling their children in HL courses, expanding on the results of the questionnaires (Section 5.4.3). Common reasons revolved around the themes of traditions and education, with some standing out points related to language ownership.

#### 6.2.3.1. Customs and traditions

I was talking with Carola's parents. Her mother, Paola, is from Italy and her father, Ben, from the United States. While discussing the difficulties in raising their children multilingually and multiculturally, Paola brought up an example of a challenging situation as it was something with which she had to deal a few days before the interview. She shared with me the struggle of having to explain to her daughters that on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2022, in the UK people were celebrating the Queen's Jubilee and, at the same time, Italians were celebrating the end of the monarchy after the 1946 Referendum (2<sup>nd</sup> of June in Italy is *Festa della Repubblica* and a national bank holiday). Because it was bank holiday and the school's break for half-term, she decided to go to Italy with her children to visit the family, but also to avoid explaining that they were not up for joining the celebrations for the Jubilee. Yet, she also said that on the weeks leading to the event, children were crafting paper crowns and engaging with other elements characteristic of the royal family culture at school and that this put her in an uncomfortable position. This example of conflicting traditions sheds light on the meaning of core elements of one's own cultural customs and values. In fact, the tradition of celebrating the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June is inextricably linked to republican values for Italians. Later in the interview, Paola as well as Ben referred to the CS as a place where their children can learn about other traditions and values and balance out the input received in the mainstream school. In this case, the discursive construction of

reasons for joining the CS went beyond language to encompass culture and tradition. Likewise, parents like Luciano and Serena, both born and raised in Italy, immediately referred to the complementary school as a place where their child could acquire linguistic as well as cultural knowledge -even though they never explicitly use the word culture- when they stated that they would aspire for their daughter to acquire “*le basi della grammatica poi un po' di geografia, storia...*” (<the basis of grammar, a bit of history and geography>) but also that “*che tipo si festeggia il Carnevale in Italia [...] Quella è una cosa piacevole, perché invece, sennò sono delle tradizioni che si rischia di perdere.*” (<that like one celebrates Carnival in Italy [...] that is a pleasant thing, otherwise they are traditions that one risks losing>), highlighting the importance of exploring such topics in the CS with the worry that otherwise one would be losing some traditions. The continuum and preservation of a community's cultural tradition seems to play a major role for them, as highlighted by the use of the impersonal form ‘*si*’. I read in their words the need for their child to share a social identity but also the desire for members of a cultural cluster to preserve a collective capital. Later, Serena added that if she pictured her daughter when older, she imagined that she would speak Italian but may not be able to write it well. The priority given to oral skills emerged in other research in which “the Italian parents, on the other hand, emphasised communication skills rather than writing ability” (Curdt-Christiansen and La Morgia, 2018, p.194). Like other parents, Luciano and Serena did not express the need for their children to reach a particularly high literacy skills in the HL but it was important to maintain oral skills and an understanding of values and traditions of the Italian people. Indeed, their focus on traditions and knowledge of Italian culture permeated their reasons for complementary schooling.

On the other hand, not everyone was able to define what traditions were belonging to

what culture and place. When Martina said “*but everyone eats pasta*” she was trying to express the difficulties she had in attributing traditions to bounded cultures. She continued explaining that she had always struggled to pinpoint aspects of her own identity that could be labelled as Italian and that she may be transmitting to her daughter in the day-to-day life. Martina continued saying that she grew up in an unconventional family where they would eat soy sauce and brown sugar, which was fairly uncommon for Italians in Italy at the time. She questioned during the interview to what extent traditions, like languages and cultures, can be treated as bounded systems tied to geographical areas (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007).

Erica as well reflected on what it meant to her to be Italian. She talked about her own background as she moved often from country to country while growing up and she was not sure about what would be Italian of her. When she said, “*when we are all in Italy and I'm with my family and we're all talking, than you know, I'm definitely the one that stands out as the less Italian of the lot*” adding that she is quiet and reserved and stating “*but maybe that's my personality anyway*”. Whilst some elements of people’s doing may be shared among people who grew up in Italy and/or with Italian parents, some of the participants in this study questioned whether something about what they do and how they do it is Italian or not, unravelling the complexity of defining cultures in global times and complicating further the idea of cultural transmission through the family and through school.

In summary, culture and traditions were central in parents’ reasoning for complementary schooling, similarly to other studies on parents’ motivations for CSs (Francis et al., 2009 on Chinese community in the UK) and conversely to others (Nordstrom, 2016 on Swedish community in Australia). Nordstrom, however, concluded that “while teaching of ‘culture’, society and tradition was not a goal of



of Spanish" would be a little bit mh so there's that looking down your nose. Very different in the UK in terms of class, because they would have better languages because the schooling would have been better and the language taught at the school would be better than the equivalent of a comprehensive school in the UK [...]

Erica            So you are talking about ehm British people, right? British-born people and their class system. Because you're talking about migrants coming and- but in a private school you would have Latin or one or two languages while in a state school you would have less

Steve            Obviously the migrant would have their natural language plus the languages that they are trying to learn

This point led to a discussion on language learning and social class. Steve stated that competence in a foreign language would be associated to better schooling (because, as Erica said, a private school may offer Latin and more foreign languages compared to state schools) and that this difference would position someone in a higher social class. However, all the examples we discussed through this conversation were related to commonly taught languages such as French, German or Spanish, bringing to light the difference between Italian (or French, etc.) as a heritage language and some other heritage languages which may be 'only' the result of a migratory background and which competence would not be sufficient for being associated to a higher class because of the value associated to such languages. Although not the most popular of the taught languages in mainstream schools in England, Italian is still present in the MFL provision of many educational institutions, and on the linguistic market (Bourdieu, 1977) of English education, languages taught as MFL carry higher (class) currency. Learning Italian if one is British born is then seen by parents as a great advantage to access better employment opportunities. This may offer a different perspective on complementary schooling for languages that are also part of the MFL offer in many schools. Nevertheless, the importance of building a cultural capital remains central, and as Nordstrom (2016) highlights, language is capital that "could be converted to

other forms of capital: embodied cultural capital (proficiency), social capital (through travels and communication) or institutionalised cultural capital (education qualifications)” (p.530).

In the following extract, instead, Alessandro’s father focuses on the need for grammar to develop a “perfect” capital in form of language competence. Gaia, his partner, also acknowledges the importance of schooling for the development of a linguistic capital, and touches on the idea of curriculum.

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| Carmen | I was just wondering why you signed them up to the Italian and the German complementary schools and why that would be important for you  |
| Markus | I think is- for me it’s mainly bringing in some structure to- I mean one thing is certainly learning to speak the language based on how just you grow up, apart from here, from your parents, from your environment (.) but I think it’s also important to have a little bit of grammar I mean, I am especially a person that I need grammar to learn the language so I thought maybe this helps- maybe more Ale than Jacopo I could imagine to- to perfect it a little bit more   |
| Gaia   | And for me- for me it was a no-brainer. I wanted them to understand that Italian is a part of their curriculum (.) it’s a part of their education (.) so I don’t want to see- and that’s why I’ve also pushed to start with both of them very early as you know @ last year (.) because I have always wanted to give them the idea that school starts and that language is part of a- it’s part of their education you know (.) as- and thankfully a lot of their friends have got the same, you know, Ale’s friend for example is Polish, he goes to the Polish school so I think he’s familiar with the concept that, you know, it’s just part of what we do and it’s what we do (.) because I was talking to a friend who is Italian and she was like ‘I hated it when I was a kid- I would- I would never put my kids through it’ (.) fair enough but I honestly think that it’s kind of a good way of giving them that idea that, you know, we start from- from scratch (.) and this comes along with your- with your education, so that’s how I see it, yeh (.) but also with German, in my opinion, because it’s a very important business language and hence as well, you know, for the future I think it needs a good base as well you know, you can’t just go and talk |

Whilst Markus focused on the language structure and the need to mastering grammar and literacy in German, Gaia stressed the importance of studying one’s own heritage

language. She talked about Italian as being “part of their curriculum” and part of the children’s education overall, emphasizing the importance of starting the CS alongside the mainstream school to ensure that children embraced the study of the HL from the very beginning of their schooling experience, because that “it's just part of what we do and it's what we do”. Gaia also added that it is common practice among migrant families to send children to complementary schools. She drew a connection to Alessandro’s school friends and normalised the presence of an educational space for the children’s HLs learning, and that this “comes along with your education”.

#### 6.2.3.3. Language ownership

Whilst maintaining the language and traditions of the Italian imagined community (Anderson, 1991) and acquiring cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) were central themes across all the interviews, something that stood out was a discussion I had with some parents about language ownership, in the sense that sending children to CS was also perceived as an occasion to give children space to develop their own relationship with the Italian language and culture.

The results of questionnaires and interviews combined showed that children attended the CS because it was their parents’ decision. In some instances, the children made their parents’ motivation their own. Alex (Yr3), for example, said that he attended a class, he enjoyed it and so he decided to continue attending the CS. Rosa (Yr2) explained that her parents decided to send her to the CS but that the main reason for her to attend the school is because she wants to speak with her cousin in Italy and she wants to speak ‘properly’ to avoid mocking. Guido (Yr4) and Arianna (Yr2) specified that they wanted to learn Italian better to speak with their father and ‘make him happy’ because Italian is his language. They made their parents’ choice of joining the CS their own in a way but, they used often a third-person possessive adjective



before the word Italian (his/her language).

When I asked Martina and Demir why they decided to send Chiara to the Italian school, Martina started by saying that she found essential for Chiara to be exposed to more people who speak Italian because the Italian they use at home it is “always the same”. Assuming that my question, general in its intention, was also specific to why choosing a complementary school instead of a foreign language school, Martina introduced her idea of ownership.

Ehm so, the other question I think is inside your question is why choose a heritage language school rather than a traditional eh language school. That fundamentally for me is because I want her to absorb Italianness and cultural Italian heritage independently from me. It's very very important, because that would allow her to have her own identity and her own relationship with Italy independently of me even if we don't live there. Because at the moment everything is in relation to me, we are going to the place *I* was born, we go to the house *I* grew up, we visit *my* dad [...] It's always about my life and my Italianness and my Italy and I want her to have her own. [...] I think is about her confidence to own the language. (Martina)

Martina stressed the point of being “the only funnel to Italianess” (as seen in Section 5.4.1) and that a heritage language school, compared to a foreign language school, could provide her daughter with a sense of belonging and ownership of this cultural-linguistic system by being part of an activity that is not related to or necessarily shared with her Italian mother and sharing it with her peers. The role of social relationships in the CS appeared to play a key role in the perception of HL learning.

#### 6.2.4. Complementary schooling now and then

Finally, one more thing that stood out was the difference between the parents' experience of complementary school when they were children and the children's construction in these interviews. When Gaia talked about her Italian friend who used to attend HL classes as a child, she seemed to portray an overall negative experience of complementary schooling to the extent that she reports her saying “I would never

put my kids through it". The memory of participating in these community activities emerged again in conversation with Chiara's parents. Demir, her father, grew up in London and has Turkish Cypriot origins. When I asked about the reasons for enrolling Chiara in the CS, he is immediately recalled of his own experience.

- Demir            I went to Turkish school
- Martina        You did
- Demir            And it was awful
- Martina        Yeh
- Demir            It was SO boring (.) it was so boring and it was all about learning like- and there was no-
- Carmen         But school is about learning @
- Demir            No no, but school isn't, is it? school isn't all about learning (.) you go learn- it's where you learn social skills, it's where you learn a lot of stuff but it's not just-
- Martina        But basically school is- is all about learning it's just that you have to-
- Demir            Yeh yeh
- Martina        Learn a lot of things, not just one thing
- Demir            But, but Turkish school, there was no interaction (.) as in like- I was in a room, full of other Turkish children, Turkish Cypriot children around the same age as me, and I cannot remember a single conversation that I had with any single one of them 'cause we all sat down at tables, with pens and paper on the desk, looking at the teacher, doing what we were told by the teacher, and I learnt way little, less doing that than if we would have had time to socialise with each other
- Martina        Mmh so, so for me what you asked is two questions: first why sending our child to a school where they learn the language, and ehm the answer to that is definitely to supplement what was happening at home, because I realised that obviously the conversations we have at home quite often are always the same you know, and there are a lot of other words that you learn through doing other types of exercises or encountering other types of situations, and- a lot of them have to do with the interactions that children have with each other

Demir talked about the Turkish CS he attended as a child defining it "so boring", specifying that there was no space for interaction among peers. He described a

traditional teaching method, consisting in the teacher providing worksheets and children uncritically following the teacher's instructions while "sitting down at tables, with pens and paper on the desk". He reinforced the idea of social interaction as potentially being the core of HL education when he said that he "learnt way little" compared to what could have learnt if he had more opportunities of socialising with his peers. Martina also supported his stance by adding that the reason for joining the CS was for her daughter to be exposed to a variety of situations and that a lot of words one learns "have to do with the interactions that children have with each other". This narrative of complementary schooling from Demir, as well as Gaia's friend and Theo (one of the other parents interviewed who attended Czech HL classes in Australia), appear in net contrast with some of the answers received from the children. As mentioned in Section 6.2.1, the pedagogical approach adopted by the teacher in this study provided children with many opportunities of interaction through a game-based design and most children talked about this CS as a place of playfulness and fun, like in the extract below from Carola (Year 2, age 7).

- |        |   |
|--------|---|
| Carmen | You say 'now I'm going to the Italian school' and I'm like (.) what's that?                             |
| Carola | Well it's basically where you learn Italian and you have fun with it                                    |
| Carmen | Oh that's a nice way to say it, short and precise@@ (.) and what do you do there? You have fun, how?    |
| Carola | well we do like- we learn but also at the same time, you know, have fun at the same time, you know that |

Demir's and Carola's represent very different experiences at different times, and whilst Demir defines the CS he attended as "so boring", Carola described her CS as a place where "you have fun". The negative experience portrayed by Demir is associated with having to "sit down at the tables" and having little opportunities to interact with peers. In the next section, I examine the space of the CS and the ways in which participants

moved in it to start understanding how social connection and interaction with peers occurred in the community space of the CS, and what potentially made children like Carola perceive their learning experience as 'fun'. Through the analysis of space and materiality, I will illustrate some of the activities observed during the Italian classes, introducing some key elements of the pedagogical approach adopted in this school.

### **6.3. Community space and the classroom**

The contribution of the material world to the learning experience of students and teachers is often downplayed in classroom research where the emphasis is more often on teachers' and students' practices (Roehl, 2012). Yet, the social dimension of education is never independent from the space in which it develops. In this section, I present the physical space of the complementary school's classroom and how participants relate with it and discuss the role of materiality in the development of a community space.

I start from the premise that material objects, including and not limited to whiteboards, desks, and books, are essential components of the learning experience for children in the CS classroom, and I examine how these artifacts can potentially influence classroom discourse (e.g., Mathieu et al., 2021). With an interest in the role that the material and the classroom configuration play in the children's experience of learning and using their HL, I reflect on the active construction of the social space where the materiality of the classroom intertwines with its social dimension. In other words, I explore how the objects in the classroom may influence the social dynamics in the class, and how, in return, the social practices of participants may reshape the semiotic value of these objects. In doing so, I reject the idea of a neutral physical place and

embrace the notion of space as socially emergent and characterised by power dynamics (Bourdieu, 1989; McGregor, 2004). In fact, against a view of space as fixed and “unproblematic in its identity” (Massey, 1994, p.5 cited by McGregor, 2004, p.352), here I explore the role of space in social interactions among children and children and teachers to show how social actors move in and relate to the CS classroom which is, I posit, a dynamic and socially configured space.

I present the classroom area and its layout and delve into detail in the role of the whiteboard. Building on the observed use of it and of the space around it, I suggest the analogy of the whiteboard as a Piazza. Through the analysis of how children moved in and around the classroom, I introduce the pedagogical approach and game-based design of the classes at the CS. Finally, I explore how certain activities may help children building confidence and supporting a sense of agency in their classroom space.

### 6.3.1. The space and the material of the CS classroom

#### 6.3.1.1. Investigating the space

Learning occurs in material sites, where human beings and the material world engage in mutually configuring processes of meaning and power (Bourdieu, 1989; Mathieu et al., 2021; McGregor, 2004). Researchers, however, are still debating the nature of the material and what would form part of this materiality. Textbooks and objects are ‘material’ in the way that are tangible objects, but it is suggested to expand the notion of materiality to include people, discourses and all entities at play (e.g., Toohey, 2019). This recalls the perspective of the Actor Network Theory (ANT) where “networks are characterised as materially heterogeneous, a constellation of actors which may be artefacts, creatures, structures, and a set of socially constructed technologies,

principles and processes” (McGregor, 2004, p.353).

While my perspective on materiality is one of mutual configuration between people and the material world, I do not aim to adhere to one specific framework for this analysis because beyond the scope of this work. What I intend to do in this section, instead, is to continue to offer an overview of the children’s experience of complementary schooling by interpreting how the material and the social interrelate. To do so, I make use of some of the theoretical concepts from the fields of cultural studies and sociology and employ them as analytical tools, without necessarily aligning to specific ontologies of the material.

A conceptualisation that I found of help, for example, is Guerrettaz and Johnston’s (2013) suggestion of classroom ecology as formed by four elements: participants, processes, structures, and artifacts. *Participants* are the people in the physical space; *process* is the series of acts and actions produced by the participants; *structures* can be organisation schemes; finally, they refer to the material objects as *artifacts*. This conception of space does not privilege animate or inanimate objects or subjects and it explores the relation between all entities in ‘assemblages’.

The word assemblage is commonly referring to the process of assembling, bringing together. Its use in research stems from the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) on capitalism and schizophrenia. The authors worked on the principles of heterogeneity, multiplicity, and connection in what has been translated with ‘assemblage’, from the original *agencement* in French. The concept has been developed by scholars from different disciplines, but since Deleuze and Guattari did not provide a clear-cut definition for the term, interpretations varied. Research in cultural studies and education (Mulcahy, 2012; Guerrettaz and Johnston, 2013; Guerrettaz, 2021; Roehl,

2012, for example) appear to use the concept as the exploration of the heterogeneity of a whole, which emerges in its assemblage. Similarly, the way I make use of this idea is that the social experience of learning must be understood in conjunction with the dynamics at play in and with the material dimension in which this experience occurs, assembling words, gestures, physical objects and exploring the ways in which all the elements come together to form one whole (ergo, the experience). Finally, I explore the materiality in relation to *affective assemblages* (Mulcahy, 2012) focusing on the role of affect (emotions or bodily matter) in shaping the learning as well as the self-perception of the children in the CS.

#### 6.3.1.2. The classroom

Complementary schools usually run their classes in church or community halls or mainstream school buildings, where they rent a classroom on an hourly basis. HL teachers are often moving around different venues, teaching in different places. This means that the CS is in constant flux with teachers carrying with them boxes or bags of learning material. It could be said that CSs run their classes in “borrowed spaces” (Tsolidis, 2008; Nordstrom and Jung, 2022). Indeed, it is common for CSs to operate in mainstream school buildings (e.g., Barradas, 2010) always in after-school hours and this means that access to the classroom is given “after the ‘legitimate’ occupants have left” (Tsolidis, 2008, p.276). I would argue that this is already emblematic of the peripheral role that heritage languages have in the education system.

In a comparative analysis of two ethnographic projects, Tsolidis (2008) reflects on the meaning of spatial context in researching a mainstream school and a complementary school. The heritage language classes run in the premises of the mainstream school in after-school hours, and the researcher illustrates the challenges of running an ethnographic study in and with a CS. Tsolidis symbolically labels the mainstream as

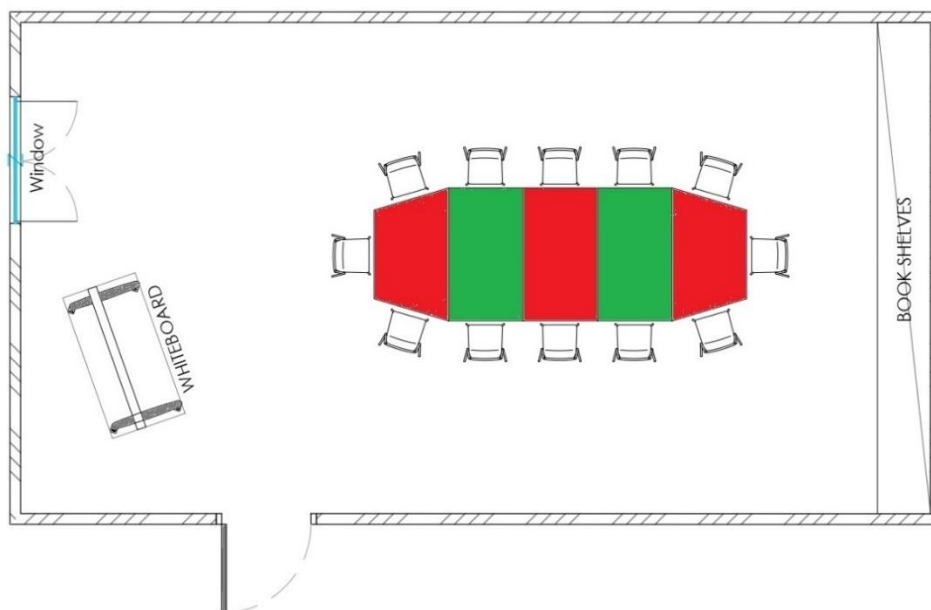
'real' and the CS as 'unreal' to highlight the differences she found in conducting ethnographic research in the two educational realities.

Tsolidis' analysis sheds light on how operating in 'borrowed spaces' can embody and shape perceptions of legitimacy and entitlement. After having worked in the two settings, the author ponders on how the space is determining and determined by power relations and concludes that "space is not neutral, nor container, but instead prescribed by and in turn producing of, a range of unequal power relations that respond to social and material conditions nuanced through time." (Tsolidis, 2008, p.274). The CS in this study, however, has a sign of distinction compared to many researched CSs. Although the classroom is situated in the building of a community centre where several different groups operate, the room in which the children have their HL classes is mainly used by the Italian CS.

The first aspect that I noticed is that the room was adequate for the number of children in the class. In the case of CSs using mainstream classrooms or other community spaces, the rooms are often too big for small groups of students. The researched CS, instead, was designed to welcome groups of about 12 people. The walls were decorated with coloured dots that the children use for games around grammar colour-coding tasks (more in Chapter 7), there was a pin board for the children's work and in the cupboards were stored the CS's books, games, stationary and archived children's work. The cupboards also included a shelves section with kids' fiction books in Italian for the children to read and take home for the week. In summary, the place was borrowed since located in a community centre and the CS paid a rent per hour, but the presence of the Italian group was marked in its materiality. I suppose that this arrangement could make teachers and children perceive continuity and stability and provided more chances to develop a sense of agency and legitimacy in and of the



classroom space. Figure 6.1 is a graphic representation of the classroom layout.



**FIGURE 6.1 CLASSROOM LAYOUT**

The material objects in the classroom were five desks (placed together to create a big table where children are sitting in circle), twelve children-size chairs, a double-face whiteboard with wheels, and three cupboards that take the full space of the right-side wall. As mentioned above, in the cupboard could be found stationery and games as well as books for the children. There was one window facing an internal courtyard and the walls were decorated with colourful dots and occasionally, with children's work on a wide pin board.

The objects in the room were not many and the 'big desk' represented the centre of the classroom, and the centre of interaction at the beginning of each lesson, when the teacher and the children greet each other, share what they did during the week and then negotiate the games to play for that class (on lesson planning I expand in Section 7.2.2). Towards the end of the spring term, I noticed that the space configuration (the big desk with all the children sitting in circle) was favouring non-verbal communication

as it reads in the following vignette:

Original	Proposed translation
<p>[...] exploring expression through movement and sounds e nonverbal communication. <i>Molti sguardi. I bambini, infatti, sono sempre in cerchio o in gruppi e non in posizione frontale verso l'insegnante o la lavagna. Anzi, la lavagna è un luogo d'interazione e collaborazione, and empowerment?</i></p>	<p>exploring expression through movement and sounds e nonverbal communication. Many gazes. Indeed the children are always in circles or in groups and not in a frontal position towards the teacher or the whiteboard. Instead, the whiteboard is a place for interaction and collaboration, and empowerment?</p>

**FIELDNOTES 6.1 29TH MARCH 2022**

Peer relationships are known to be influenced by the arrangement of seating positions, however, research focused more on the role of the teacher in organising the sitting and less on the effects on relationships among classmates (van den Berg & Cillessen, 2015). In this extract, I jotted down 'molti sguardi' (many gazes) as I was noticing how participants employed verbal and non-verbal interactional resources to communicate across the room. I connected this aspect of the interaction to the desks' arrangement which always allows for communication among children because they are always sitting in circle - and not in a frontal position towards the teacher and/or the whiteboard. Clearly, desks organised per group are nothing new but a mainstream classroom with 20 to 30 children would not give the possibility of setting up a whole-class desk. The small group class, instead, allowed for children to be sitting in circle and this was observed to create more opportunities for non-verbal communication and notably, peer-to-peer communication. Such interaction was valued by the children as they mentioned this aspect in more than one instance during the interviews, saying that

working in a small group favoured friendships. For example, Ludovico shared that learning in a small group was more fun because of friendship: *“E’ più divertente imparare il italiano in un gruppo [...] I mean in questa scuola di italiano non ci sono tanti persone allora sei sei molto- sei molto amici con tutte le persone”* (Proposed translation: “It is more fun to learn Italian in a group [...] I mean in this Italian school there aren’t many people and so you are very much friend with everyone”).

In terms of how children were sitting at this whole-class desk, I observed that, at the beginning of the school year, all the children had the chance to choose a place autonomously, and most of them kept sitting at the same chair. However, they would change place sometimes for various reasons and they did not need to ask the teacher. Although there was a level of consistency in the way children were sitting at the ‘big desk’, there was sufficient flexibility and the children had full autonomy in choosing where to sit. On some rare occasions, the teacher asked the children to change place because of challenging behaviours and/or to bring closer children that could benefit from working together on one specific activity.

### 6.3.2. The whiteboard as Piazza

In investigating how the configuration of space in this classroom influenced the interaction among participants, my attention was captured by the activities around the whiteboard. I explored how children claimed ownership of the classroom with their bodies and noticed how learning activities that made use of the whiteboard, combined with the overall participatory approach promoted by the teacher, encouraged the children to participate and act in the space around it.

Since the physical space around the whiteboard brought together the children to a specific area where they could share a delimited but open space, walking around and

talking to each other, it felt like it was serving the same function of an Italian piazza. Cognate of the English word 'place', piazza is the word used for Italian square. It denotes an open and public place where people converge and walk, talk and share the space as part of a community. Indeed, it is the heart of Italian cities and represents a place of encounter and communication for the citizens of a city or town. For this reason, I analysed this specific space through the lens of the analogy of the whiteboard as a piazza.

#### 6.3.2.1. Playing in the Piazza

The lessons at the CS started around the table, where children and the teacher would sit all together (Figure 6.2) and share what happened during the week to then decide how to learn new things or practice some grammar rules. The teacher used to propose one or two activities and the children would choose one or two games (more about the lesson planning and the game design in Section 7.2.1).



FIGURE 6.2 CHILDREN AT THE DESK

Sometimes activities required all the children to write and so they would remain at the desk but at least once per class, games were based on movement and would be developed with the use of the whiteboard. An example of this was the battleship game in which two teams would stand on the two sides of the whiteboard and try to find the other team's boats on the grid by asking questions which would be formulated based on the grammar topic of the lesson.

The grid was designed to practice verb tenses, gender and number agreement and other grammar topics. The whiteboard in the battleship game configured knowledge and interaction by separating the children in teams creating a material and tangible division (Figure 6.3). However, the children were all using the same object to complete their task by writing on the two sides of the same board. Most importantly, this activity brought together all the students to a different part of the room and created the opportunity for much more physical closeness compared to when they do activities at their desks, as being closer to more people simultaneously (Figure 6.3). In fact, physical proximity constitutes to be a powerful force in making people feel connected to one another (Stopczynski et al., 2018; van den Berg & Cillessen, 2015).



**FIGURE 6.3 CHILDREN AT THE WHITEBOARD**

In small teams of 4 or 5 they needed to make collective decisions and together formulate questions and answers. The board became a crucial component of this interaction since it was where the children's ideas converged based on the collective decisions they needed to make before using the marker to 'materialise' their ideas and strategy on the surface of the board. The children were invited to talk to each other to generate a question that would be used to 'hit' the opponents' boats. If they hit the boat, they put a tick on the corresponding square on the grid and if not, they drew a cross on that square. A mix of grammar and lexical competence and game-strategy abilities were needed to win the game. The written symbols on the board were transformed into a graphical representation of the shared experience of playing and of the metalinguistic reflections that the children elaborated collectively in the defined space of their side of the board.

What is noteworthy is that interaction in this space was often non-verbal. The children used plenty of gestures and could also write and draw on the board before deciding on a formulation for the question. While grammar and vocabulary could be shared through writing on the board or by whispering suggestions to the team, the game strategy skills would easily emerge from simply pointing at the different squares on the grid. This means that all children were potentially able to participate in the game regardless of language proficiency levels. In the case of Leo, whose language proficiency in Italian was generally limited compared to his peers, this activity revealed to be crucial for his participation. The battleship allowed him to join the discussion on where to place a boat or where to hit and find the opponent's boat regardless of his ability in elaborating the questions for the exercise. Although reluctant to attend many activities, with time, his strategies skills, and the possibility of using gestures allowed him to join more often the conversation when around the space of the whiteboard.



In fact, the materiality of the board, if compared to a worksheet for children to work on individually, expanded the possibilities to communicate in the game. The double-face feature of the board made possible for the children to express themselves more freely with their body since the board was covering the teams from their opponents' sight and so they could point at a square on the grid or hold the marker and making gestures. I would argue that this configuration gave children, regardless of their language competence, the chance to participate in learning collectively. However, the ways in which children contributed to the formulation of the questions or to the game strategy varied and changed across time. Whilst the whiteboard was like the shared space of the piazza where children would converge and play harmoniously, it also represented a high stakes place where children could be judged and positioned.

As recalled in some fieldnotes extracts, at the beginning of the school year, the children who were new to the KS2 group (Amelia, Maria, Leo) were observing and taking little active part in the team's decisions, unless encouraged by the teacher. More extroverted children who attended the school for a few years (for example, Valentina, Ludovico, Annabel) were more likely to take the lead and take the initiative to go to the whiteboard. They were the first raising their hands when the teacher asked if someone could write something on the board, and they also approached the board spontaneously. Children like Amelia or Maria, instead, were getting close to the whiteboard only when the teacher was leading, and they were encouraged to go there.

For good part of the school year, children were holding different positions of power in the way that students like Annabel, for example, exercised more agency and were directing the activities more often compared to students like Amelia and Maria who had not yet developed confidence in the space and self-confidence in the group, and so had less opportunities to share and show their strengths. The change that I noticed

during the spring term is that, by regularly using the whiteboard, Amelia and Maria were increasingly self-directing and taking initiative:

Original	Proposed translation
<p>Ludovico is saying the questions and Annabel is writing them on the board. They do not need prompting to be called, there is a good level of autonomy. [...] Qualcuno menziona gli sci e Amelia va a scrivere 'sciare' alla lavagna e lo scrive correttamente with <i>confidence</i>.</p>	<p>Ludovico is saying the questions and Annabel is writing them on the board. They do not need prompting to be called, there is a good level of autonomy. [...] Someone mentions skiing and Amelia goes to the whiteboard to write 'to ski', and she writes it correctly with confidence.</p>

**FIELDNOTES 6.2 22ND FEBRUARY 2022**

In this instance, Amelia took the initiative and went to the whiteboard to share her spelling knowledge. As Matsumoto (2019) suggests, “if instructors establish a manner of using materials in the classroom ecology throughout the semester, students might gradually develop interactional competence (Walsh, 2006) in integrating and adapting such interactional resources for their own purposes” (p.200). Indeed, by using the board for games and by being encouraged to write on it, most children eventually gained confidence and started going to the board spontaneously, without being prompted or asking permission to the teacher, like seen here with Amelia.

For her, the board here served as a loudspeaker. Through it, she was able to share her spelling knowledge and consequently, she was able to increase her chances to be positioned by the others in the ‘proficient learner’ group. Being positioned favourably by the others meant more opportunities to be chosen when the children organised the teams for the games, which consequently, translated in feeling accepted and reaching

more powerful positions in the group. Using the whiteboard as an amplifier of her voice, Amelia asserted her power in the way that by showing her competence she could be perceived by other children as an asset for the group in team games. In fact, children usually formed the groups for the games by themselves and in these moments, positioning was becoming explicit. For example, after Maria had proved to have a strong grammar competence (see Section 7.2.3), Valentina, who was organising the teams, called Maria as it reads in the following notes: “*Valentina immediately looks at Maria and says “tu qui” [you, here]*” (7th December 2021), positioning her in a favourable position, one in which her skills are valued and can confer social power.

#### 6.3.2.2. Affective assemblages

Children developed positive and/or negative sensations around the board, forming *affective assemblages*, where the whole of the experience was shaped by the processes and structures at play through bodily reactions and spatial relations. In this relationship with the space lies “the political potential of bodily affectivity and other bodily matter” (Mulcahy, 2012, p.23). The value of the whiteboard, and the relationship that the children could develop with that space, provided avenue for shifting positions. As mentioned above, children were observed to gradually learn how to move freely in the classroom. Both verbally and physically, they engaged in communicative practices (such as writing the spelling of a word on the whiteboard) that were situated in an emerging flux of relationships between the material and the non-material. While discovering new ways to engage in these practices they articulated and reshaped the value of the environment in which these practices occurred while developing a sense of agency. The increased sense of agency and the spontaneity of mobility within the physical space of the classroom was perceived by the children themselves as it can be seen in the following vignettes.

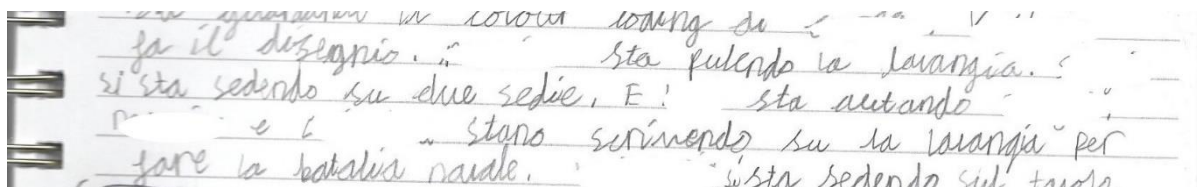


FIGURE 6.4 AMELIA'S FIELDNOTES

Original transcription	Proposed translation
Maria sta pulendo la lavangia. Leo si sta sedendo su due sedie. Emma sta aiutando Leo. Maria e Ludovico stano scrivendo su la lavangia per fare la batalia navale. Valentina sta sedendo sul tavolo.	Maria is cleaning the whiteboard. Leo is sitting on two chairs. Emma is helping Leo. Maria e Ludovico are writing on the whiteboard to do the battleship. Valentina is sitting on the table.

FIELDNOTES 6.3 14TH JUNE 2022

In the fieldnotes written by Amelia (Yr3) towards the end of the school year, there is great attention to where the children are in the classroom. Amelia describes Leo's and Valentina's way of sitting (on two chairs, on the table) but does not add adjectives to comment on that. She writes that while Emma, the teacher, is next to Leo to help him with an activity, Maria and Ludovico are preparing the whiteboard for the game. Maria is cleaning the board, then starts preparing it for the battleship game together with Ludovico. This is all seen as natural and unproblematic. Amelia's attention is captured by what other children are doing individually, without clear-cut role differences between students and teacher and the fact that Maria and Ludovico are leading at the whiteboard, and not the teacher, does not appear to be significant. As Bourdieu (1991) suggests, "socially known and recognized differences exist only for a subject capable not only of perceiving the differences, but of recognizing them as significant and interesting" (p.237). She portrays in this note a classroom space in which the teacher is not directly leading the activities and holding a more powerful position than the

students, reflecting the nature of the participatory pedagogical approach (Freire, 1970) established throughout the year, and what I interpret as the democratic quality of this learning environment. The same impression was given by Valentina's notes (Figure 6.5). In Vignette 6.4, she describes the end of a game at the whiteboard. Her focus is on the team of the girls, and briefly on me since I leave the room.

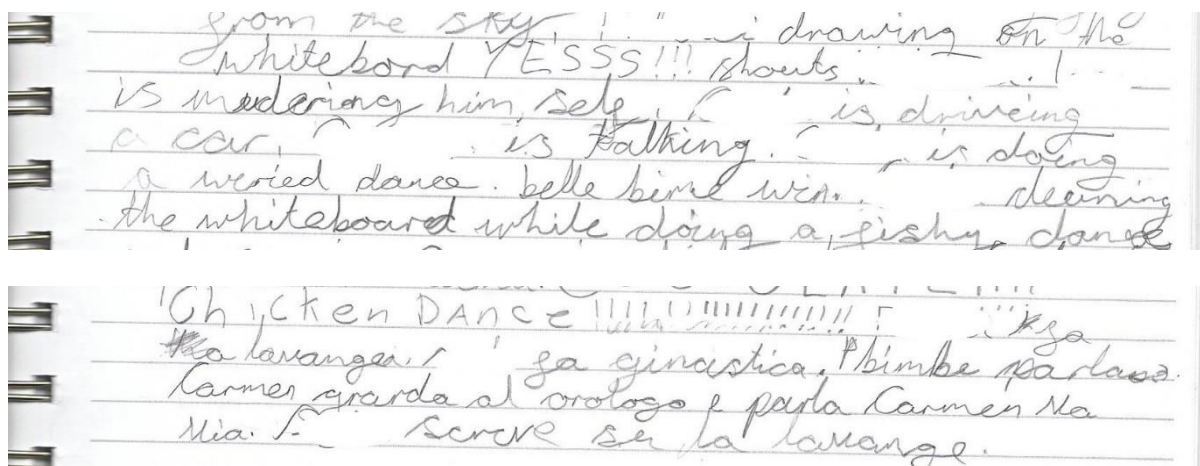


FIGURE 6.5 VALENTINA'S FIELDNOTES

Original transcription	Proposed translation
Annabel fa la lavanga. Carla fa ginastica. Bimbe parlano. Carmen guarda al orologio e parla. Carmen va via. Amelia scrive su la lavanga. [...]. Violetta is doing a wiered dance. Belle bimbe win. Violetta cleaning the whiteboard while doing a fishy dance.	Annabel is doing the whiteboard. Violetta is doing gymnastics. The girls are talking. Carmen looks at the clock and talks. Carmen leaves. Amelia writes on the whiteboard. [...] Violetta is doing a weird dance. Belle bimbe win. Violetta is cleaning the whiteboard while doing a fishy dance.

FIELDNOTES 6.4 24TH MAY 2022

The actions on and with the whiteboard are markedly present in this extract: Annabel “is doing” the whiteboard (which I decipher like she is drawing the grid, preparing for

the game); Amelia writes; Violetta is cleaning. Valentina's consistent interest in who is interacting with the materiality of the whiteboard provides an example of how this tool is used democratically within the team that at the time of this observation was indeed formed by Amelia, Annabel, and Violetta. The dynamics of power among the team members passed through the materiality of the whiteboard in the way that Valentina noted how each member related to that object, transforming it in a tool through which agency and power are displayed.

The position that the children took in the space surrounding the board was observed to also shape the sense of affiliation to different teams like in the following example. In this battleship, Valentina and Guido were invited to play the role of the referees and were standing on the side of the whiteboard that belonged to the opposite team (in this example, boys vs girls) to ensure that they were playing fairly and collaboratively. Although Valentina and Guido were supposed to support the team standing on the opposite side of the board, they were sometimes exulting for the success of the team that they shared the space with at that time but that were not technically part of.

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Valentina | Posso andare al bagno? <Can I go to the toilet?>  |
| Teacher   | L'ultimo turno e poi vai ok? Vai ragazzi un'ultima domanda sennò vincono i maschi <The last round and you go ok? Come on guys one last question otherwise the boys win>   |
| Guido     | No qua qua io penso qua <No here here I think here>   |
| Teacher   | @Guido ma tu giochi per il nemico però @ dai fate una domanda così Valentina può andare al bagno ((ind chattering)) Annabel fai la domanda se ce l'hai <@Guido but you play for the enemy @ come on ask a question so Valentina can go to the toilet ((ind chattering)) Annabel, ask the question if you have it> |
| Annabel   | La gallin- il gatto vecchia <The chick- the old cat>  |
| Guido     | Il gatto vecchia sta pe- <The old cat is pe->   |
| Teacher   | Il gatto Vecchio <The old cat>  |
| Guido     | Sta facendo cosa? <Is doing what?>  |

- Annabel Il gatto vecchio (.) sta facendo la @@@ <*The old cat (.) is doing the @@@*>
- Teacher Ormai lo potete dire @l'avete detto (.) finiamolo di dire <*At this point you can say it @you said it (.) let's finish saying it*>
- Lx #cacca <*#poo*>
- Teacher La cacca <*The poo*>

Original	Proposed translation
I maschi colpiscono una barca e Valentina inizia a saltare ma poi sente Guido che intona l'inno "funghi funghi" che dall'anno scorso era il modo di Ludovico, Guido e Alex di esultare. Allora Valentina si accorge dell'errore e si tappa le orecchie. La sua posizione nello spazio suggeriva essere nella squadra dei maschi ma poi si rende conto che lei è per la squadra avversaria e quasi si vergogna di aver esultato.	The boys hit a boat and Valentina starts jumping but then she hears Guido tuning the anthem "funghi funghi" that since the previous year was the way Ludovico, Guido and Alex exulted. So Valentina realises the mistake and she covers her ears. Her position in the space suggested that she was in the team of the boys but then realises that she is in the other team and almost feels ashamed for having exulted

#### FIELDNOTES 6.5 5TH OCTOBER 2021

The physical sensation of the emotions that occurred in the area of the piazza was that of bodily proximity to one another, which is a fundamental way for people to connect (Stopczynski et al., 2018). In a metaphoric interpretation of distance and proximity in the social space, the board corner became the physical space in which children could come closer and strengthen their sense of belonging to the group, where they could celebrate by dancing ("the fishy dance") and singing ("funghi funghi") close to each other in a joint embodied action. The children celebrated in ways that they developed with time and the 'funghi hymn' was what the boys sung whenever

they scored a point. The song was then part of the materiality of learning, and it shaped a sense of belonging to a group of learners. Building on Guerrettaz and Johnston's (2013) idea of assemblage, I suggest that the regular and consistent use of the whiteboard (artifact), and the regularity of the battleship game (structure), became a consistent and significant element of the classroom culture where singing 'funghi' (processes) is configured by and characterising of this group of children (participants) as the result of the engagement with artifacts and structures and the assemblage of the four components. In sum, in the space around the whiteboard, the children may experience feelings and emotions in relation to the effects of their actions, as perceiving the affective energy that directs and redirects their actions, and the positions in the space are then constitutive of a sense of self (Mulcahy, 2012).

### 6.3.3. Building confidence, claiming space

The analysis identified two additional aspects that may contribute to the development of a sense of agency and ownership in and around the physical space of the classroom. The first is the design of the learning activities which make use of movement. Building on the example of the gamification of a literacy activity on syllables, below I show how children explored language through the body and how they emotionally engaged in this activity. Then, I examine how children participated in social practices aimed at the care of the classroom environment by describing the routine of cleaning and tidying up the room at the end of each session.

#### 6.3.3.1. Learning with the body

Here I bring an example of how the teacher combined literacy work with movement and turned individual activities into group ones, which is common in her practice with the group of younger children. Vignette 6.6 presents a the game proposed by the



teacher to the KS1 group.

The game builds on the worksheet on syllables (Figure 6.6). The children received a sticker with one syllable, and they had to find the children who had the other syllables they needed to form a word (each of them could be part of two words). The children walked around the room, they all got close to each other, checked each other's sticker and together tried to compose the word of a fruit or vegetable. In the notes, I recorded the reaction they manifested whenever they managed to form a word.



FIGURE 6.6 SYLLABLES WORKSHEET

Original	Proposed translation
<p>Continuano a giocare. E' bello vedere come i bambini si raggruppano in base alle sillabe a cui corrispondono per formare due parole e una volta</p>	<p>They continue to play. It is nice to see how the children group up based on the corresponding syllables to form two words and once recognised the</p>

<p>riconosciuti i membri del proprio gruppo ergo le altre sillabe della parola di cui fanno parte, saltano dall'entusiasmo.</p>	<p>members of their group, that are the other syllables of the word they are part of, they jump enthusiastically.</p>
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**FIELDNOTES 6.6 18TH OCTOBER 2021**

Similar to the dynamics observed around the whiteboard, in their bodily experience of enthusiasm, the children continued to build positive affective assemblages (Mulcahy, 2012) within the space of the classroom and increased their chances of strengthening a sense of connection through physical proximity (Stopczynski et al., 2018). Research about children's socialisation conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic confirmed that physical proximity is a major component of friendship, and physical closeness emerged as a main theme in the interviews with children and adolescents (Lariviere-Bastien et al., 2022). The children's enthusiasm in coming closer suggests that opportunities for physical proximity, especially during pandemic times, provided children with a sense of well-being and connection, which can be favourable for learning.

Several studies also remind us that gestures and embodied actions can support learning (for example, Goldin-Meadow & Alibali, 2013). They can be effective ways of making some abstract concepts, such as the idea of syllables, easier to elaborate for the children. This embodied act can take the reflection on the topic of syllables (which is a metalinguistic concept) to a more meaningful and tangible level by shifting the attention from the paper to a more socially meaningful dimension: that of 'being a syllable'. By acting the role of the syllable and having to find the other syllables of a word to complete the task, the children were able to confer to the notion of syllable a more tangible meaning as they were playing and getting closer to one another, performing a form of friendship. The notion of syllable can be useful in terms of literacy

development but its function may not be of immediate understanding to young children. Through games and embodiment, the concept became useful for play.

Mulcahy (2012) emphasises that affect is as “a complex and uncertain gathering of energies, words, gestures, commitments, affections, artefacts, bodily feelings, routines and habits.” and adds that “[t]hinking pedagogy as an assemblage affords a sense of collective responsibility” (p.21). Although not all the students can be similarly affected by the same things, in this extract is evident the potential for fostering a positive connection between learning content and the space, and among children, by using the full physical space of the room. The teacher in this instance created meaning through gamification (Reinhardt, 2018) and made use of the classroom space by transposing a worksheet to a movement activity inviting the children to move around the classroom ground. In sum, the materiality of the body response to the social happening was vehicle for the learning of reading and writing the words as generated by the encounter of the ‘children-syllables’.

#### 6.3.3.2. Caring for the space

Finally, an important aspect of the relationship that children developed with the classroom space is the sense of care for it. Bourdieu’s work on mobility suggests that people have the desire for the feeling of belonging and “feeling at home” for the happiness that it entails (Reed-Danahay, 2020). Part of the community feeling built by the children and the teacher within this classroom space was fostered by the engagement in practices that are typical of the home environment. For example, the classroom had a soft carpet and children were permitted to leave their shoes in the corridor. They were allowed to walk in the classroom in their socks, potentially getting a physical sense of comfort and familiarity more typical of a house than a school. Furthermore, in the last five minutes of each session, the teacher encouraged all the

children to tidy-up and clean together. The teacher would not assign specific tasks to specific children and the invitation would be more generic and addressed to the whole group, like it can be noticed in the field notes taken by Annabel. In fieldnotes 6.7, Annabel writes that the teacher is setting a timer for two minutes and she uses a passive form for the second sentence as she writes “the room will have to be clean” without direct mention of who would need to clean but placing the room in the subject position.

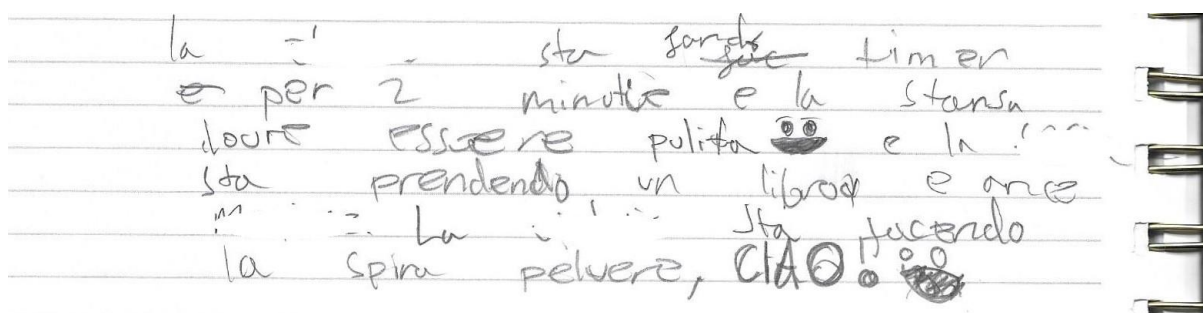


FIGURE 6.7 ANNABEL'S FIELDNOTES

Original transcript	Proposed translation
La Emma sta facendo timer per 2 minuti e la stanza dovrà essere pulita :) e la Amelia sta prendendo un libro e anche Maria. La Valentina sta facendo la spira polvere, CIAO :)	Emma is putting a timer for 2 minutes and the room will have to be clean :) and Amelia is taking a book and Maria as well. Valentina is hoovering, BYE :)

FIELDNOTES 6.7 10TH MAY 2022

Children could contribute to cleaning in different ways and may not engage in this activity every week. In this vignette (6.7), Valentina is observed to be hoovering (there was a small hand hoover in the classroom) while Amelia and Maria were choosing a book from the shelf. The most common task was cleaning the whiteboard, and the children often took the initiative without prompting as it was illustrated in the previous

section. Considering that observations took place in pandemic times, the venue had a conditional Covid policy for which everything would need to be sanitized after each group had used the room. Disposable wipes were used to clean desks and chairs, and although the teacher would proceed with sanitizing the room after the children had left, she would invite them to use the wipes to clean the desks (Figure 6.8) and then wash their hands on the way to the corridor. Although the emoji used by Annabel in her notes about the two-minute timer for cleaning can be interpreted in different ways, the analysis of the pictures taken during the observations suggest that the children engage in the cleaning activity and they are often captured in a smiley and relaxed mood.



FIGURE 6.8 CHILDREN CLEANING THEIR DESKS

#### 6.4. Summary and discussion

In this chapter, I introduced the reality of an Italian complementary school in London by illustrating what the school represented for the children, the children's and parents' reasons for attending it, and the role of the material in the development of a community space. The children talked about the CS as a place where “*you learn Italian and learn*

*things in Italian*", and a place where learning occurs through games. Their reasons for attending it were varied, from playing with their friends to generally learn Italian better, and for many participants could be anchored in an image of a future self that is fluent in speaking Italian for strengthening connections with their parents or rebalancing power dynamics with other family members, including intra-generational relations. On other occasions, the children did not reflect on the role of the CS prior the interview and supposed that they were there to build competence (capital). In these conversations, like many others that happened as part of this research project, participants had an occasion to reflect on their experiences of multilingualism and education and potentially gain more awareness of their paths.

As regards parents, the array of reasons for joining a CS was wide. The growing literature on complementary schools already brings to light a variety of purposes besides the primary objective of heritage language maintenance for second and third generations. CSs are seen by the community as educational spaces where children improve their languages abilities, build cultural capital and develop social identities shaped by the language and culture of origin (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Creese, 2009; Francis et al., 2009, 2010). Blackledge and Creese (2010), for example, found that the decision of families to join complementary schools was mainly rooted in the concept of belonging. Similarly, Francis et al. (2010) reported that in Chinese complementary schools in the UK, parents, teachers and students all connected the language competence in the HL with 'being Chinese'. The same emphasis on identity can be found in several studies investigating translanguaging practices and pedagogy in complementary schools (for example, Creese & Martin, 2006; Li Wei, 2011).

To this parents, key goals of complementary schooling were language proficiency as cultural capital, language development for identity and affiliation to traditions and

cultural values of the Italian people, and intergenerational and intra-generational connection. The CS was also perceived as an integrated (or to be integrated) part of their children's educational journey and formation, revealing the importance of making (educational) space for HLs, and a place for the children to play with other children who have a similar background, expanding their opportunities to use the language in different contexts and to develop a sense of ownership of their HL.

Other reasons that emerged related to future employability or potential social mobility that is to say that "the construct of language was linked to an idea of belonging and identity, but also pragmatic, borderless and linked to future opportunities" (Nordstrom, 2016, p.529).). Finally, as Nordstrom (2016) noted, many of the studies on the reasons for complementary schooling focused on Asian and Eastern-European communities in English-speaking countries and findings may not be fully transferable to other communities. In this study, the participants were families that have Italian and, in most cases, other Western backgrounds, that reside in a cosmopolitan and multicultural city such as London and that can be described as middle and upper-middle class. Although I do not explore the links between socio-economic background and reasons for community language schooling in this work, I find it essential to contextualise these results in the Western cosmopolitan and middle-class reality of the families participating in this study.

In the second part of the chapter, I illustrated how material objects in the classroom are not effective based on specific characteristics but rather based on the agentive employment of the people. The use that the children made of artifacts such as the whiteboard determined a relationship with a physical positioning in the classroom space as well as a position in the social space. The materiality of the classroom, formed by participants, processes, structures and artifacts, was manifested

contingently in the interaction among these elements and the focus of this section was indeed to identify the meaning-making potential of these assemblages in terms of affect and classroom discourse. It is important to remember, however, that the affective connections described do not develop in isolation, only in the CS classroom. Pedagogic practices are interlinked with “other practices and affects they form an assemblage with” (Mulcahy, 2012, p.22). Affect is contingent and related to existing memories of similar emotions in similar places or contexts. In other words, the continuity of practices may be stored in the memories in conjunction with what happened in the same place at other times, or even in other spaces at other times but in similar circumstances. For this reason, these interpretations should be treated as one part of the wider children’s experience of learning the HL and learning more broadly.

I also presented some examples of how the children moved around the classroom and how the children perceived their classmates’ movements in the space of the classroom. To do so, I used some instances in which the children wrote in their fieldnotes where people were in the space of the classroom. Not all the children appeared to give the same importance to where their classmates were and what they were doing with and around objects. In fieldnotes, I noticed that older children were paying more attention to the people’s placeness compared to the younger learners. In fact, all the extracts from the children’s fieldnotes presented in this chapter were written by pupils in the KS2 group. The vignettes (mine and of the children) provided evidence of some of the distinctive ways in which children claimed the space “with one’s body in physical space [...] and with one’s speech in time” (Bourdieu, 1984, p.474). Noticing how older children were often including sentences that would describe where a child was in the classroom (e.g., x is at the whiteboard, under the table), how



(e.g., he is sitting on two chairs) and what they were doing (e.g., she is Hoovering), I started wondering how pupils claimed ownership of the classroom space with their bodies, and if this sense of agency in and ownership of the space grew and influenced the way they communicated.

Through an exploration of activities around the whiteboard, and examples of other social activities in the classroom space, the finding suggested that a participatory pedagogical approach and a game-based design for the CS lessons supported the development of a sense of agency among the children. At the board, the children could use gestures to communicate with each other in different ways, they could rely on their strategy as they could find different ways to communicate and share their competence with their team. These acts allowed by the material presence and features of the whiteboard all contributed to increasing chances of participation and translated in the inclusion, as often observed, of all the students in the activity. The sense of self as a good learner and an active participant was no longer dependent on one type of proficiency, but it related to the ways in which each child took part in the game. This process of re-building confidence occurred mostly in and around the whiteboard, that was removed from the role of the neutral physical object, often used by a teacher to write content which the students are expected to learn and memorise. Instead, it turned into a symbolic community space (the piazza) where children were able to explore different ways of building relationships, learn from their peers and practice knowledge.

In conclusion, discourses are contingent to the part of the classroom in which interaction takes place. In the social process of identity negotiations through participatory and game-designed activities, the material constituted an integral and essential part of the construction of a community space. The contextual-contingent

connections between the children and the whiteboard proved emblematic of how learning occurs within dynamics of power and how these can change by enhancing the sense of agency, confidence and ownership of space. This enhancement of confidence and agency can be interpreted as an empowering aspect of the learning as well as the community experience in/of the CS. In the next chapter, I expand on the nature of the participatory pedagogical approach introduced here, exploring how children participate in learning and how they negotiate language practices and identities in their HL classroom.

## **Chapter Seven. An analysis of critical pedagogies and multilingual identities in the CS**

### **7.1. Chapter Outline**

This chapter explores how children negotiate language practices in their heritage language classroom and how they learn about and through their HL. In section 2, I illustrate the pedagogical approaches adopted by the teacher in this study as I analyse the game-based design employed for these classes (Reinhardt, 2018), and comment on the role of humour for social connection through some instances of game-informed activities. Starting from the activities' design and building on the spatial analysis of Chapter 6, I examine the multilingual and critical-participatory approach (Freire, 1970, 1998; García, 2009) of the teacher and show how the children participated in learning and how they used their voices for exploring their multilingual repertoires but also indexing positions in their social space.

Section 3 discusses more in detail the language practices. I evaluate interview extracts to examine how children perceived language policies and how they made sense of their practices in the HL classroom. Drawing on the concept of 'communicative repertoire' (Rymes, 2010), I illustrate how the children and the teacher moved beyond boundaries between languages, and beyond the idea of correctness, to achieve human connection and learning making use of their full repertoire.

Throughout the chapter, I seek to understand how children develop a sense of self as multilingual learners. Since people constantly organise a sense of who they are by means of language in interaction (Norton, 1997), I investigated the children's communicative practices to understand the development of educational and social

identities in the course of a school year. The analysis suggests that a critical-participatory multilingual approach to HL education can provide children with unique opportunities to explore their multilingual and multicultural selves through flexible use of language and moments of cultural sharing and connecting with peers for more harmonious identities in relation to language and culture in education.

## **7.2. A game-informed participatory approach**

### **7.2.1. Games and humour**

A primary aim in teaching classes which run in out-of-school hours is to create an enjoyable learning experience for the children who may be tired after a full day at school, while also meeting learning objectives and satisfying the needs of parents who financially sustain the school with their fees. The two aims can be in tension with each other, as noted by Tsolidis (2008), requiring teachers to be creative in developing activities that balance both. Furthermore, unlike in mainstream education, there is no official assessment or accreditation system for primary school children in the CS apart from the mid-year and end-of-the-year report that the teacher sends to parents. Consequently, children may perceive less of a need to commit to learning compared to their mainstream school experience. This is not to say that assessment is the only motivation but that children in the English system are often used to work towards examination and since the CS does not typically involve exams (unless the students registered for the community language GCSE in their schools), teachers need to encourage them even more to apply themselves to their studies despite the absence of formal testing- and the timing of the classes (after 4 pm). Game-informed activities appeared to be useful to engage the children.

As illustrated in section 6.3.2, a frequent activity was that of the battleship. The children worked in groups at the whiteboard and there was a wide range of grammar topics that were introduced or revised using this game. For example, the grid could be formed by nouns on the rows and adjectives on the column to practice gender and number agreements, or it could feature verbs and pronouns to practice modes and tenses, turning the game in a customizable learning tool. Whilst in Chapter 6 the focus was on space and materiality, here I draw the attention to the customising feature of such games and include an account of the role of humour in developing such games.

There were some core games that were proposed and repeated throughout the year to cover different grammar topics. Apart from the battleship, some activities were: “*tombola*” (equivalent of Bingo with some variants); “the grammar-eating wolf” in which children embodied a grammar category and escaped the wolf; “ask mask” for syntax in which children had to ask yes or no questions to guess the word written on the card placed on their forehead as based on the original game.

The teacher relied on both game-enhanced and game-informed activities (Reinhardt, 2018). Game-enhanced is considered “the intentional adaptation and use of vernacular games” which are not designed for language education and the practice involves a “pedagogical mediation [...] to enhance and focus learner attention on the language use in, through and around the game” (p.9). A game-informed design, instead, combines “L2 pedagogical practices with insights and understanding from theories of game and play” (ibid., p.9). This means that sometimes the teacher used existing games and adapted them to a language learning activity like in the case of “ask mask”, while sometimes the language content was elaborated from the start building on the principles of gameplay like in the case of the battleship.

Another playful activity that was periodically proposed to students and by students was “*la storia senza autore*” (the story with no author). In this game, children were writing a funny story with each child contributing a sentence after a prompt and then they were passing the folded paper to the child on their right. Each child wrote one or two sentences for one part of the story, answering questions like who, where, when, what, and why. The part of the paper with the written sentences was folded and hidden, the paper passed on the side and in this way each student wrote the following part of the story, for a number of stories like the number of people who started one. The result was a collection of stories that were often hilarious due to their nonsensical or accidentally sensible paragraphs.

Afterwards, the children engaged in activities like rewriting the story, correcting any spelling mistakes, checking gender and number or verb and pronoun agreements. They then analysed the grammar using the color-coding technique in which a specific colour was associated to a grammar category, and children highlighted the words in the story using the corresponding colours or used the colours to re-write the story. By collectively writing the story, literacy and creative skills were practiced in a joint activity. Also, at the end of the activity, the teacher often allowed time for drawing the story in the form of comics, creating space for informal interaction among children and communication for ‘phatic purposes’ (Toohey, 2000).

A peculiarity of this playful activity in the complementary school was about the languages and registers that children used to complete the stories. They received guidance in terms of prompts (e.g., who, when, where) but were also encouraged to use words belonging to a particular grammar category based on the focus of the lesson, regardless of the language. In the following example (Figure 7.1), they were asked to use adjectives, at least one for each sentence.

In la piscina a la new forest che e matto  
foresty.

Last week for 2 weeks

la [REDACTED] fantastica e bellissima con i capelli neri  
e lunghi e gli occhi verdi

Abiamo dato i ~~co~~ccodnili da mangiare il gatto  
picolo (monio).

perche il mas unico me a irotato

FIGURE 7.1 EXAMPLE OF 'STORY WITH NO AUTHOR'

Original transcription:

*In la piscina a la new forest che è molto foresty  
 Last week for 2 weeks  
 La Elsa fantastica e bellissima con i capelli neri e lunghi e gli occhi verdi  
 Abbiamo dato i coccodrili da mangiare il pollo piccolo (morto)  
 Perche il meo amico me a invatato*

This story, in the original version here (before editing), sees a beautiful girl who was in a swimming pool in New Forest and gave some chicken to the crocodiles because was invited by a friend. In the first entry, a child wrote most of the sentence in Italian and added the adjective (focus of the activity) in English: '*in la piscina a la new forest che è molto foresty*'. It followed an entry in English only and three more in Italian only. In the same story, came to coexist English and Italian, and both languages at once. All of this was unproblematic for the children, and for the teacher, and in this way, the children's shared repertoire and textual worlds converged in play.

The children also included elements of their own life experiences as the children were coming back from the holidays and a girl who visited New Forest, for example, shared through text that they found it 'foresty' and Alex, who went to South Africa, shared the fact that crocodiles can eat chicken as he learnt there. Multilingual literacy practices through games like the story with no author became foundational of the children's cultural practices, in which they could explore and share, and with time moving towards a more consistent use of Italian in text. In absence of a language policing, children had time to explore and gain confidence in writing in the HL by participating at any stage of their literacy competence in Italian and build on their pre-existing literacy skills in English. Within the structure of the game, humour was an important aspect, as exemplified in the following story (Figure 7.2).



una ~~principessa~~ parente de ~~due~~ fare il bagno  
suzalente

 un ~~red~~ grande.

~~1909~~

dentro il 1909

 ~~monstro~~ ha ~~la~~ peccato ~~accanto~~

Pete ~~per~~ ~~per~~ ~~per~~ voliva il ~~opt~~ ~~2A~~



FIGURE 7.2 EXAMPLE OF 'STORY WITH NO AUTHOR' (2)

Original transcription:

*Una principessa puzolente ce doveva fare il bagno  
In un lago grande  
Nel 1909  
Un mostro ha attaccato  
Perce voliva il pizza*

In Figure 7.2, the spelling check of one of the children and the colour coding grammar analysis had already started on the original text. The story counted five sentences, written by five different children who all attempted to write in Italian. As mentioned above, because stories were written in secret by several children, they turned out either total nonsensical, amusingly nonsensical or coincidentally sensical, hence funny in their coincidence. The story in this example could be defined ‘amusingly nonsensical’ where (1) a stinky princess that should have a bath (2) was in a big lake (3) in 1909 and (4) attacked a monster (5) because she wanted pizza.

In this space, children tried to negotiate their heritage (the Italian language) with the novelty of their generation and their locality (Lytra, 2011; Sneddon, 2010, 2014) and of their own experiences (Martin-Jones and Saxena, 2003) to make sense of the historical heritage of their culture of origin in the historical circumstances of their own childhood’s time and space. Such literacy opportunities enabled children not only to explore but also to experiment with their own repertoires. I interpret such practices as an expression of agency that contributed towards the children’s development of a self-concept as multilingual individuals by means of shared understanding and identification with other multilingual children. In doing so, they engaged in a “co-construction of desirable possible lives, worlds, and selves, through translingual consciousness, performance, and development” (Formosinho et al., 2019, p. 175).

Whilst difficulties in embracing humour in a foreign language may be linked to the cultural conventions of the community of speakers (Vaid, 2006), the cultural

conventions of this group of children were those of the Italian language as used in a specific time, space and generational context. Humour was not necessarily dependent on a language-bound culture system, and instead, it connected to a generational culture of Italian heritage children in the UK, where a stinky princess wants to eat pizza.

Humour strike one as a catalyst for such explorations, making the experience of learning enjoyable and ‘fun’ like Carola said (Section 6.2.1). Making jokes and creating funny sentences, for example, was highly praised in the point system for many games in teams as it can be seen in the following fieldnotes extract:

The team ‘*uova fritte*’ gains a *punto simpatia* for being funny with “*c’erano cigni ciccioni (che) saltavano con le ciambelle*” (there were chubby swans which jumped with sea donuts). [...] In the points system, [the teacher] is giving equal importance to grammar knowledge, spelling, team effort and being funny.

FIELDNOTES 7.1 7TH DECEMBER 2021

In this game, the children were creating sentences to practice *suoni duri* and *suoni dolci*. In Italian, the letters C and G can be read in different ways and in this exercise the children had to find as many words as they could containing the voiceless postalveolar affricate /tʃ/. The team, self-labelled *uova fritte* (fried eggs), created a funny nonsense sentence that made them win a point for humorous creativity (*punto simpatia*). What I noted down was the fact that practicing the spelling was the target of the exercise yet, the point system suggested by the teacher was giving equal importance to grammar and spelling as to teamwork and humorous creativity.

From a pedagogical perspective, I understand that the teacher used humour because it can expose children to constantly new stimuli and as it violates expectations: it can activate their curiosity and their attention. Humour brings about incongruities to “point up the ambiguities of language; to provoke, as repetition, the laughter of non-discursive dismissal” (Watson, 2015, p. 418). But it can also expose human frailties

and by walking in the area of vulnerability, emotional proximity may increase (Watson, 2015). In fact, laughing together and sharing vulnerability can help create and maintain group solidarity (Hay, 2001; Watson, 2015), bonding students and reducing cortisol levels that may impair the correct function of the amygdala and the hippocampus for the retention of information in the long-term memory (Schwabe et al., 2012). As a practitioner, I understand that if children laugh more often during a lesson, there is an advantage to learning as they may feel more relaxed, and connected to one another, and have more opportunities to acquire concepts in their long-term memory.

Humour can also mitigate the emotions of an unpleasant experience, making it a useful tool for managing one's own emotions and those of others. It is a way to cope with adversities (Vaid, 2006) as "[a] humorous mode of discourse portrays reality whimsically as having multiple versions" and against a single version of reality, it "can unsettle existing conceptions by playfully exposing the underlying beliefs and values that underlie dominant social constructions of reality" (p.153).

In a dominant social construction of reality which portrays languages as distinct and separate entities, and in which children need to play within the boundaries of the "formality of school", playing with multiple languages and varieties, and nonsense sentences becomes a subversion activity. And if performed by members of silenced groups, like multilingual children in mainstream schools, it may be viewed as a "powerful form of resistance to dominant discourses about ethnicity or about language itself" (ibid., p.160). Discourses about the separation of languages or the value of children's knowledge as experienced in mainstream schools are overturned by the unproblematic (and humorous) translanguaging practices of the HL class, in the children's interaction as well as in literacy practices (more in Section 7.3.3).

To conclude, the teacher in this school made ample use of games and was welcoming and encouraging humour to increase engagement as well as a sense of connection among learners and learners and educators. In fact, humour can represent a vehicle for fostering group rapport and re-negotiate dynamics of power and solidarity (J. Davidson, 2001; Hower et al., 2019). Building on the game-informed design of the classroom activities and the role of humour for social connection, in the next subsection, I delve into the participatory style of the pedagogical approach of this teacher, examining how children gained agency in their learning environment, and how they positioned themselves and negotiated positioning in the HL class.

### 7.2.2. Participating in learning

In developing an idea of education for emancipation, Freire (1970, 1998) placed participation at the heart of learning. Whilst a banking concept of education is compelled with rules of efficiency, critical pedagogy reflects on the value and the participation of all learners (students and teachers) through a problem-posing approach built on dialogue. In contrast with a transactional view of education, which is considered dehumanising, Freire calls for a move beyond the 'reading of the word' to reach the 'reading of context' and 'reading of the world' (1998, p.43). To attain this, pedagogy must be dialogical from the outset. In investigating the applicability of a critical pedagogy in the HL class, the question was: how do educators create space of and for dialogue? And how do they build a community space in which communicative resources are democratically accessed to join such dialogue? (RQ4).

As explored in Section 6.3, a certain use of the classroom space provided the foundation for democratic learning and connection. In these examples, I illustrated the use of full communicative repertoires, where children used different semiotic resources and participated verbally and non-verbally. Language, however, is a fundamental tool

for a consistent participation in social activities, and the appropriation of this tool directly depends on how social activities are presented and organized, who takes part in these activities and how (Rogoff et al., 2001; Toohey, 2000). In line with Vygotsky's concept of Zone of Proximal Development (1978), which highlights the sociality of learning, a participatory approach emphasizes the social construction of learning with respect to the social and physical context in which it takes place. Building on the analysis of Chapter 6, here I seek to understand how this community used language and how the teacher fostered the children's participation in learning and how children responded to such practices.

In the course of the year, I observed how the activities were planned by the teacher as well as the children as illustrated in the next analytic vignettes selection.

	Original	Proposed translation
2nd November 2021	I bambini suggeriscono idee per la terza attività del giorno dopo la proposta della battaglia. Sembrano sentirsi parte attiva della lezione da poter contribuire alla programmazione. [...] they are working in pairs or small groups even if not instructed by the teacher	The children suggest ideas for the third activity of the day after the suggestion of the battleship. They seem to feel actively part of the lesson that can contribute to the lesson planning [...] they are working in pairs or small groups even if not instructed by the teacher
14th December 2021	In this initial part of the session children are often invited to say what they would like to do (what game to play) and I noticed that children	

	are now more confident in sharing and have their say on what they would like to play	
28th March 2022	Negozano sulle attività per l'ultima lezione. Per scegliere fanno un sondaggio. Peter è alla lavagna e scrive le proposte e le crocette [...] I giochi scelti sono ask mask e battaglia navale.	They are negotiating on the activities for the last lesson. To choose they do a survey. Peter is at the whiteboard and writes down the suggestions and ticks the points [...] The games picked are ask mask and battleship.

#### FIELDNOTES 7.2 NOVEMBER TO MARCH

These notes reflect three different points in time, between the beginning of November and the end of March. What I observed was a gradual and organic progression of the children's participation. At the beginning of the school year, the children were choosing one of the activities that they wanted to do in that class, after the ones proposed by the teacher. In the last extract, instead, children were negotiating the activities for the class and one of the students was at the whiteboard to keep track of suggestions through a form of survey. In taking a critical stance, the educator here challenged educational practices that embody hierarchies and hierarchical power dynamics and ensured a space in the temporal organisation of the lesson for students to actively participate in lesson planning, as highlighted in the second extract, in which they are invited to say what games they would like to play.

At the beginning of each class, the teacher always allowed time for conversation and involved the children in taking decisions about the ways in which they wanted to revise grammar topics or being introduced to new things. The teacher established the content of the lesson but gave latitude for collective decisions on the modality of learning. By

relying on a game-based approach, she had the flexibility to cover the content of her teaching programme but also to give the children the opportunity to decide how they wanted to learn and revise certain topics. In other words, they negotiated the lesson planning. Children were also choosing the teams and were either taking turns or they would organically organise themselves in teams. It occurred that the teacher decided the teams and the following excerpt shows how a pupil engaged in dialogue to contest the teacher's decisional power.

- Teacher      vi ricordate quel gioco che abbiamo fatto con I suoni duri e I suoni dolci? <*do you remember that game we played with hard and soft sounds?*>  
 [...]
   
Teacher      però le squadre le faccio io oggi <*but today I will do the teams*>
   
Valentina    no::
   
Teacher      mh mh ((affirmative tone))  
 ((Valentina raises her hand))
   
Teacher      dimmi <*tell me*>
   
Valentina    due cose (.) ma l'ultima volta tu hai fatto le squadre:: <*two things (.) but last time you did the teams*>
   
Teacher      le ho fatte io:: <*I:: did them*>
   
Valentina    la seconda cosa è posso andare in bagno? <*the second thing is can I go to the toilet?*>
   
Teacher      ma la prima cosa perchè me la dici? Perchè vuoi fare tu le squadre? <*but the first thing why do you say it? Because you want to do the teams?*>
   
Valentina    sì! <*yes!*>

In this case, Emma decided to create the teams for time reasons. Immediately, Valentina contested her power by reminding her that she, the teacher, already had her turn in deciding the groups. She initially had a more spontaneous reaction in verbalising a long 'no::', she then raised her hand to take the floor and contest the teacher's decision to form the teams. This instance is emblematic of the agentive power that an approach orientated to participation can have. By providing the children with recurrent opportunities to decide their teams or where to sit and what game to play, the teacher created a routine for which taking unilateral decisions became odd



to the eyes of the children. Valentina does not directly say that she wants to form the teams but makes a comment on the fact that the teacher had already had her turn, hence she is not respecting the collaborative and democratic dynamics of their community.

School practices are crucial for the children's understanding of what they can do in a social space. In her work on learning English as an additional language, Toohey (2000) followed a group of children from kindergarten to grade 2 to investigate resource distribution, discourse practices and identity development in the course of the three years. She explored how children learn and how, as they access language, start joining classroom conversation. In analysing the children's construction of a voice in the classroom, she observed that children had opportunities for 'appropriating classroom language' when "they could speak from desirable and powerful identity positions, when they had access to the expertise of their peers, and when they could play in language" (p.125). In other words, the differential access to classroom language was strictly related to how children were able to position themselves and how they could share knowledge among themselves, playfully. Here Valentina was able to speak from a 'powerful identity position' because of some habitual school practices which promoted collaboration and collective decisions about the games.

Regarding peer-to-peer knowledge exchange, then, the teacher fostered a participatory atmosphere and created opportunities for the children to 'have access to the expertise of their peers' by removing herself from the position of "knowledge holder" and avoiding providing an answer every time that a pupil asked something related to the topic they were covering. Instead, in response to these questions, she often replied that there were other people in the room that may have known the answer, redirecting the learning dialogue to a peer-to-peer dimension. Some children

adopted this behaviour earlier than others, and children were often ready to provide answers as can be seen in the excerpt below.

Alex	che è giochi? che è giochi? <what is 'giochi'? what is 'giochi'?>
Teacher	cos'è giochi? Ma (.) guarda che hai uno due tre quattro cinque sei, sette compagni di classe a cui chiedere <what's giochi? But (.) look that you have one two three four five six, seven classmates to ask to>
Annabel	un nome! <a noun!>

This form of communication, and connection, between the teacher and the children had the potential to lower the emotional distance between participants in learning, sustaining a “pedagogy of friendship” (Albrecht-Crane, 2005). All learners were part of an active exchange, beyond given roles of power and authority, and so their “dialogue becomes a ‘game’ in which identities and positions are established and disjoined and participants multiply and produce new modes of being together” (ibid., p.492). Another example of this is the tone that the teacher had to talk to the children, with humour and in a style that did not differ from her natural communication with her own peers. In other words, she made communicative choices that were appropriate to the age of the students but did not make differences between children and adults in the modulation of her voice, for example, and sometimes, in using more colloquial expressions as it can be seen also in the following example:

Teacher	mettiamo le foglie sui fogli, è come uno scioglilingua <we put the leaves on the sheets, it's like a tongue twister>
Guido	come? <what?>
Teacher	come si dice in inglese scioglilingua? <how do you say tongue twister in English?>
Guido	[let's put the paper on-
Annabel	[tonguetwister!
Teacher	brava oh! ma sei sul pezzo oggi <bravo! You are on the roll today>
Guido	tongue twister ((stylized))
Teacher	che vuol dir- cosa vuol dire [tongue twister? che s- <what does it mean tongue twister? What d->
Annabel	[scioglilingua! <tongue twister!>

Alex [sopra la panca la capra campà sotto la  
panca la capra crepa<sup>4</sup>  
Teacher come come come? <*what what what*>  
Alex sopra la panca la capra campà sotto la panca la capra crepa

Here Annabel promptly replied to the teacher's question and the teacher reacted with the comment '*brava oh!*' with an informal tone and added '*sei sul pezzo*' which could be translated as 'you're on a roll'. According to Albrecht-Crane (2005) and Giles (2011, p.66), pedagogy can be likened to a friendship, where there is a sense of "being-in" the teacher-student relationship, to feel relaxed in that relationship and ultimately, humanise the educational experience. Mulcahy (2012) further elaborates on this idea by discussing the importance of bodily affectivity and materiality in pedagogy. Creating conditions for emergent connections through jokes, irony, and casual talks is a crucial as these connections contribute to the construction of relationships of trust and consequently, to the development of learning (Giles, 2011, p.23). In this way, the teacher-student relationship becomes a space for fostering connections and allowing for a relaxed atmosphere, which is a pre-requisite for successful teaching and learning. Finally, the sense of participation and emancipation described so far can be perceived from children themselves in the development of classroom activities as displayed in the following fieldnotes extract (7.3) produced by Amelia in the last school term.

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<sup>4</sup> Well-known Italian tongue twister

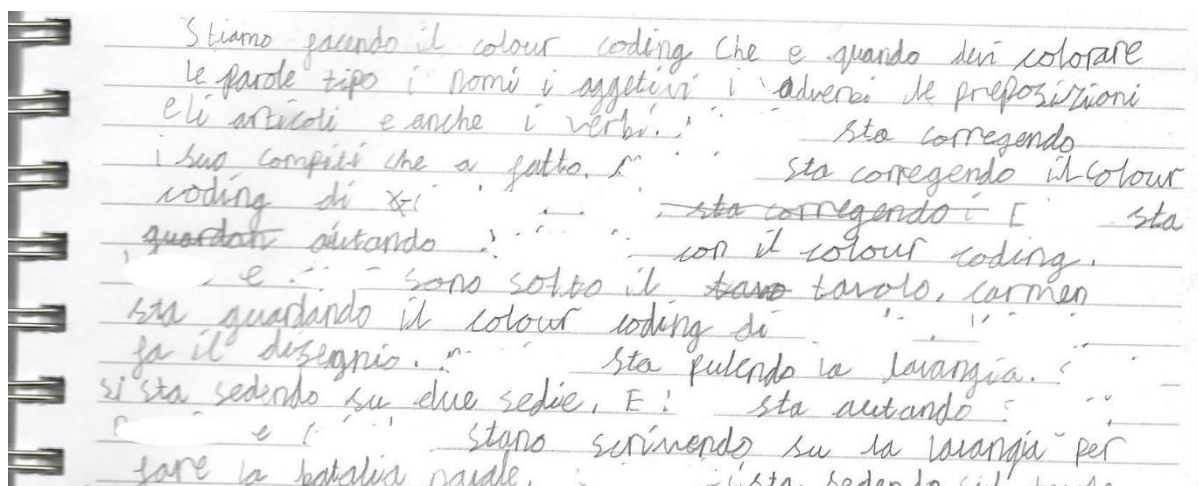


FIGURE 7.3 AMELIA'S FIELDNOTES (2)

Original transcription	Proposed translation
<p>Stiamo facendo il colour coding che è quando devi colorare le parole tipo i nomi i aggettivi l'adverbi [...] Valentina sta correggendo i suo compiti che a fatto. Maria sta correggendo il colour coding di Ludovico. Emma sta aiutando Valentina con il colour coding. [...] Maria sta pulendo la lavagna. Giovanni si sta sedendo su due sedie. Emma sta aiutando Giovanni. Maria e Ludovico stanno scrivendo su la lavangia per fare la batalia navale.</p>	<p>We are doing the colour coding, which is when you have to colour words such as nouns, adjectives and adverbs [...] Valentina is correcting her homework which is done. Maria is correcting Ludovico's colour coding. Emma is helping Valentina with colour coding. [...] Maria is cleaning the whiteboard. Giovanni is sitting on two chairs. Emma is helping Giovanni. Maria and Ludovico are writing on the whiteboard to make the battleship.</p>

FIELDNOTES 7.3 14TH JUNE 2022

Emma is the pseudonym used for the teacher. In this note, Emma is reported to be 'helping' others, whilst Valentina and Maria, two of the children, are 'correcting' other's homework and colour-coding activities. This classroom observation is symbolic of how

the teacher came to be perceived as a facilitator of learning and a helper and how students learned to learn from one another engaging in choral work for legitimate participation.

### 7.2.3. Voice and affiliative practices

As examined in Chapter 6, children started forming 'affective assemblages' in relations to the space and to the people with whom they shared their learning experiences. In this last subsection, I explore the role of conversations for phatic purpose (Toohey, 2000) in developing affective memories and I examine how children engaged in affiliative practices, as the ways in which they behaved and communicated in order to connect and 'affiliate' to a social circuit. Before delving into how children seek belonging through affiliative processes, however, I want to illustrate how voice as a sound was used at the beginning of the school year in different ways: to join and participating in learning (Vignette 7.4), to index social positioning around language proficiency (7.5) and finally, to manage anxieties (7.6).

In this first extract, I show how two new students started engaging with the other children and to use their voice and take the floor. Maria and Amelia were new to the group and although they would follow what happened in the lessons, I did not observe them actively participating in dialogue and using their voice if unprompted until this class.



FIGURE 7.4 CHILDREN IN DIALOGUE

Original	Proposed translation
<p>Maria si rivela un ottimo asset per la squadra delle “femmine intelligenti” e risponde a una parola dando tutti gli articoli da sola! Sta prendendo confidence, non si siede ma resta in piedi tra Amelia e Annabel e anche le altre bimbe si avvicinano. A questo punto Amelia si sente incoraggiata e inizia dare risposte -a far sentire la sua voce. Alla fine del primo midterm si inizia a sentire la loro voce.</p>	<p>Maria revealed to be a great asset for the team “smart girls” and answers to a word providing all the articles by herself! She is gaining confidence, she is not sitting down but stands between Annabel and Amelia and the other girls also get closer. At this point Amelia is encouraged and starts giving answers -making her voice heard. At the end of this first midterm, we start hearing their voices</p>

FIELDNOTES 7.4 19TH OCTOBER 2021

In this game, they needed to formulate answers to the teacher's prompts, which were grammar cards. They were invited to write the answer on a small whiteboard and they would then have to say the answer out loud. In this note, I wrote that Maria took the floor and I added an exclamation mark. It was surprising at that stage. The same happened with Amelia. In this visit, I understand that formulating the answer together with their peers gave them the necessary confidence to speak. Maria's physical positioning, not taking a place at the desk but standing and gravitating around the group suggested an exploration of the bodily experience of connection and intersubjectivity. But it is only in entering in dialogue with the other girls that she recognised a shared understanding with others which in turn led to confidence in taking the floor and answering for the team.

In contrast to this collaborative instance, in the following extract I bring the example of how the lack of voice in dialogue between a highly proficient student and a new learner with limited fluency in Italian, became the tool to express alterity, intended as the opposing need to distinguish from others, and how not using one's voice served to the positioning and indexing a power position in the group.

Original	Proposed translation
<p>La maestra chiede ai bambini di spiegare la battaglia ai nuovi in classe. Alex prova in italiano e dice un po' di regole del gioco. Leo non segue molto e [la maestra] chiede se qualcuno lo può spiegare anche in inglese. Valentina prova ma si blocca come se non avesse il lessico. Sembra quasi</p>	<p>The teacher asks the children to explain the battleship to the new students. Alex tries in Italian and says some of the rules of the game. Leo is not following and [the teacher] asks if someone could explain it in English as well. Valentina tries but she stops like she didn't have the words. It almost looks like that English is outcast</p>

<p>che parlare inglese sia da outcast in questo contesto e nessuno si propone di farlo. La maestra spiega a Leo il gioco in inglese.</p>	<p>in this context and nobody offers to do it. The teacher explains the game in English to Leo</p>
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FIELDNOTES 7.5 5TH OCTOBER 2021

- Teacher andiamo (.) intanto nome maschile per favore, di animale. Tu pensa a due femminili. Allora dobbiamo spiegare la battaglia navale a Leo (.) glielo possiamo spiegare in inglese <come on (.) first masculine name please, of animal. You think of two feminine ones. So we need to explain the battleship to Leo (.) we can explain it in English>
- Guido così tanto <that much>
- Teacher ci aiuti a spiegarlo? <can you help explain it?>
- Ludovico ehm, no?
- Teacher dai Ludovico (.) anche Valentina, insieme <come on Ludovico (.) Valentina too, together>
- Valentina sì sì ((annoyed))
- Teacher ok vai
- Valentina ((mumbling)) ehm two boats? ((looking at Leo, then long pause)) quante? <how many?>

In this case, deciding to not have a voice revealed the intent of social stratification based on language proficiency. Ludovico with an almost sarcastic tone says that he does not want to explain it in English. Valentina mumbles and appears to not remember the game, nor English. I interpret their decision as indexing the legitimacy of speakers in the classroom on the basis of language proficiency in Italian. Indeed, at the beginning of the year, Leo found it difficult to enter into dialogue with the other children. However, as explained in 6.3.2, once he ‘cracked the code’ of strategy for the battleship, he opened a dialogue with the others as his strategy skills conferred him a more favourable position and, in the meantime, a translanguaging approach was establishing itself, allowing him to join most activities.

In the last vignette (Fieldnotes 7.6), three girls offered to be one of the children’s voice. Rossella, who only attended part of the lessons at the CS, used to be silent and usually



recurred to other semiotic forms of communication but her voice. She mainly used body language and some writing to interact with her classmates. In this lesson, she wrote a short story and when the teacher asked her if she wanted to share it, she showed the intention to do it but refused to read out loud.



FIGURE 7.5 CHILDREN READING TOGETHER

Original	Proposed translation
Rossella non vuole leggere, infatti non parla mai. La maestra chiede se vuole farsi aiutare dalle sue compagne. Annabel, Valentina e Maria si avvicinano e iniziano a leggere insieme contemporaneamente (foto). ... È il turno di Annabel che chiede aiuto per	Rossella doesn't want to read, in fact she never speaks. The teacher asks her if she wants her girlfriends to help. Annabel, Valentina and Maria get closer and start reading together simultaneously. It is Annabel's turn and she asks for help to read so again Maria

leggere e di nuovo Maria e Valentina leggono con lei ad alta voce simultaneamente.	and Valentina read out loud simultaneously with her
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**FIELDNOTES 7.6 2ND NOVEMBER 2021**

The teacher asked Rossella if she wanted her girlfriends to help her, and Annabel, Valentina and Maria spontaneously stood up and got closer to Rossella. They read out loud simultaneously in sync and in doing so, they give a ‘choral voice’ to Rossella. Here the polyphony and the children’s spontaneous participation (including Maria) permitted Rossella to be a “legitimate peripheral participant” in the activities (Toohey, 2000) regardless of her emotional challenges. Later, Annabel, who had no issues in taking the floor but enjoyed reading simultaneously with others, asked for help when it was her turn to share her story so that they could repeat the chorus. Having discussed the different ways in which children used their voices to connect or indexing positions, I move now onto exploring how they were connecting in smaller groups and building a sense of belonging (or not).

In investigating prosocial motives and emotions, as behaviours that can benefit others such as helping and sharing and the emotions that can emerge from that, Gilbert (2015) explored how affiliative processing can support wellbeing and prevent mental health distress. Parenting and educational programs are believed to play a pivotal role in supporting so-called prosocial behaviour and affiliative processing. Gilbert analysed emotions on physiological basis by examining the role of oxytocin and other hormones, and concluded that affiliative practices, as actions and behaviours aimed at achieving a sense of belonging and conducive to prosocial behaviours, can be “a way of helping to stabilize affect regulation and sense of self” (ibid., p.387). Although these studies situate their ontology of research on wellbeing in an evolutionary approach, I found the

findings helpful to understand the biology of belonging and the role of affiliative processing in regulating affect and developing a sense of self. Establishing positive relationships and feeling a sense of care can have a psychophysiological regulating impact. In this last part of the section, I analyse free conversations among children to uncover practices of affiliation.

The following series of interconnected vignettes and fieldnotes portray one of the ways in which children used language to socialise and affiliate, and how affiliative allegiances were perceived by one of the children, Carola (Yr2, age 6/7). During the first term, due to Covid protocols, children were asked to bring their own pens but not everyone did so for every class. In the first weeks of school, the teacher attempted to navigate the complexity of protocols and the inapplicability of some restrictions, until she found ways to attend to the anti-covid guidance while minimising the impact of the historical event on this cohort of children, already emotionally highly affected during lockdowns. The management of material resources was problematic and risked reinforcing the sense of ‘some having more than others’. In the following fieldnotes and classroom interaction excerpts, children were talking about sharing their colours.

Original	Proposed translation
<p>Qualcuno dice che non vuole prestare le sue matite colorate, Peter ripete [la frase] ma guarda il suo foglio e continua a colorare mentre Giuliano ripete che anche lui non presta i colori ma guardando Peter e sorridendo (in cerca di complicità?) [...] Tutti sono d'accordo che è brutto, allora Alessandro dice che</p>	<p>Someone says that doesn't want to lend his coloured pencils, Peter repeats [the sentence] but looks at his paper and continues to colour while Giuliano repeats that he too doesn't lend the colours but looking at Peter and smiling (looking for complicity?) [...] Everyone agrees that it's ugly, then Alessandro</p>

a lui invece piace e dicendo il contrario tutti ridono. Giuliano cerca con lo sguardo Peter e Alessandro cerca Giuliano.	says that he likes it instead and saying the opposite makes everyone laugh. Giuliano looks for Peter with his eyes and Alessandro looks for Giuliano
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## FIELDNOTES 7.7 4TH OCTOBER 2021

Teacher	Come on, proviamo a fare questa cosa insieme? Carola, tutto ok? <come on, shall we try to do this thing together? Carola, are you alright?>
Carola	I (.) I need a coloured pen
Teacher	Ok, Viola hai preso i colori per tutti? <ok, Viola have you taken the colours for everyone?>
Viola	sì:: ((annoyed voice)) ci sono solo quelli <yes there's only those>
Teacher	ok, passiamo un po' i colori <ok let's pass the colours>
Lx	ma non ci sono quelli di tanti <but there aren't many>
Ale	io li ho fatti i miei colori <I did it with my colours>
Giuliano	io non passo i miei colori <I do not pass my colours>
Peter	neanche [io <me neither>
Lx	[neanche io <me neither>

Possessions came to represent an identity anchor and a limitation to the sharing experience of learning. Through the repetition of the words 'me neither', children tried to affiliate to a group of children based on the feature of having coloured pencils. According to Bakhtin (1986), we learn language through "concrete utterances that we hear and that we ourselves reproduce in live speech communication with people around us" (p.78). This means that speakers may take words from others and appropriate them when they serve their needs. Alessandro said that he was using his own pens. Giuliano then decided not to borrow his. Immediately Peter copied them and another child followed saying 'neanche io', using the same words to position themselves in this abstract social space where owning colours defines a social group. By copying each other's behaviour, were the boys building some kind of social stratification? In Fieldnotes 7.7, I observed how Giuliano looked at Peter in search of complicity in the same moment when he said 'me neither'. Slightly later, Alessandro

made a joke and the three boys looked for complicity in a chain of communicative sights: 'Giuliano looks for Peter (with his eyes) and Alessandro looks for Giuliano'. In the meantime, Carola, who needed a pen, needed prompting from the teacher to express her needs, in English. As the boys completed the activity, they had extra time for drawing and engage in free conversations, in Italian.

- Giuliano ma hai disegnato a Pichu o a Pikachu? È pichu! *<but have you drawn a Pichu or a Pikachu? This is Pichu!>*
- Peter anche io disegno i Pokemon *< I am also drawing Pokemon>*
- Giuliano il pokeball! è quest- è questo il Pikachu? È questo Ash? *<the pokeball! Is this Pikachu? Is this Ash?>*
- Peter eh? *<what?>*
- Giuliano è questo Ash? *<is this Ash?>*
- Peter no:: questo è uno morto *<no:: this is a dead one>*
- Giuliano ma perché è morto insieme a (.) ehm *<but because it died with a (.) ehm>*
- Peter insieme a ### l'ha mangiato *<with a ### it ate it>*
- Giuliano io non c'ho il rosso *<I don't have a red>*
- Peter era bellissima e l'ha mangiato *<she was beautiful and it ate it>*
- Giuliano che tipo di dinosauro ha mangiato? *<what kind of dinosaur did it eat?>*
- Peter ### ganga
- Giuliano ha mangiato un ganga?? *<did it eat a ganga?>*
- Peter sì @@@
- Viola io faccio dei ### io faccio un drago come in ### *<I make some ### I make a dragon like in ###>*
- Giuliano come Ryanair? *<like Ryanair?>*
- [...]
- Giuliano che Pokemon è questo? lo voglio disegnare cento milioni di Pokemon! *<what Pokemon is this? I want to draw a hunder million Pokemons!>*
- Peter anche io! *<me too!>*
- Giuliano cento milioni di Pokemo:::n! *<a hunder million Pokemo:::n!>*
- Lx Pikachu o pichu::
- Peter Pokemon! Cento Pokemon! ((stylized)) *<Pokemon! A hunder Pokemon!>*
- Giuliano troppi Pokemon! *<too many Pokemon!>*
- Peter troppi Pokemon ((stylized)) *<too many Pokemon>*

Giuliano was talking about drawing Pokemon. Peter tried to draw one but he did not manage to make a good drawing and so he said that he drew a dead Pokemon because a dinosaur ate it, creating a story to maintain his affiliation regardless of his

drawing abilities in a creative construction of his resources in support of an affiliative attempt. Alessandro, Giuliano and Peter continued to foster a friendship throughout the year and Carola, who looked with interest at their social circuit, portrayed a similar scenario towards the end of the school year.

20 juno

I can see that we are choosing the name for the new cat. Everyone is shouting the name that they want. They are talking to the cat. The cat is called malendrina. is eating crisps. is unkeling the malendrina. is exploring what to do. Now we are doing the work & sheet that the teacher gave us. is asking for help. we are working in silence and doing what they have to do to talk. and are finished. is also finished his work. and are helping each other. Now also is finished. is nearly finished. is still doing her work. and are talking. is also finished. went to the bathroom. Some people are drawing pictures. The three boys are talking. is with carmen. is finished the drawing. is finished. I like and's handwriting. is sitting on the table. They are almost finished all their work. I think everyone is happy.

FIGURE 7.6 CAROLA'S FIELDNOTES

Partial transcription
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Chiara is eating crisps [...] Rosa is explaining what to do. We are doing the worksheet that the teacher gave us [...] Peter and Giuliano and Viola are finished. Ale is also finished his work. Peter and Viola are helping each other [...] Arianna went to the bathroom. The three boys are talking [...] I like Viola's and Peter's handwriting. Ale is sitting on the table. They are almost finished all their work. I think everyone is happy.
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**FIELDNOTES 7.8 20TH JUNE 2022**

Carola noticed, in her fieldnotes, that Giuliano and Peter finished their work and added “the three boys are talking”, referring to them as *the* three boys. Her notes portray her perception of social affiliation and the continuous references to them denotes an interest in a sub-group of her class friends who she did not manage to get close to because, in her view, language proficiency constituted a distance. During the interview she shared her perception of it:

Carmen	and how do you feel about you have some Italian friends here? in London
Carola	o:::h I feel kind of happy because 'cuz I feel they know more than me of Italian. they know more Italian than me how to speak it 'cuz when I first came in they were already there so::
Carmen	mmm
Carola	they knew more

Carola reflected on her fluency in Italian and pictured it as an obstacle in becoming friend with some more proficient children, who joined the CS before her. In self-positioning outside the social allegiance of ‘the boys’, she linked knowledge to power and relationships, and this translated in her bodily matter of happiness. Whilst she closed her classroom observation on a positive note with ‘I think everyone is happy’, in her interview she reported feeling herself ‘*kind of happy*’ because of a perceived differential in linguistic capitals. In the next section, I discuss language practices and

multilingualism in the HL class starting from how children perceived language policies in the CS based on their experiences in the mainstream schools.

### **7.3. Multilingualism in the Italian HL class**

Language policies, and specifically language-in-education policies, draw on specific ideologies to set what language(s) should be used and how. Macro-level policies are guidelines which may be found in official documents and that can affect language use in class, turning ideologies into practices (Shohamy, 2005). They represent the structures through which “students and teachers have their language controlled, regulated, monitored and suppressed on the basis of language ideologies” (Cushing et al., 2021, p.1). In fact, these policies are there to provide structure, but they also serve to legitimize and sustain particular beliefs about languages. In the complementary schooling sector, however, (more or less overt) language policies in the form of official documents are not always in place and so, schools may retain institutional freedom in the development of curricula and manage their own language policies (Creese et al., 2006; Cushing et al., 2021; Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2014; Liu, 2022).

As introduced in Chapter 1, this CS was operating under the management of a promoting organisation of the Italian consulate. Although courses were mostly attended by heritage language speakers, they were promoted as classes of Italian language and culture open to everyone and so, the syllabus came to reflect the aims of foreign language teaching. In the Syllabus Overview document provided to the teachers (Appendix F), the grammar and lexical topic list is indeed designed for teaching Italian as a foreign language. This is already visible at the beginning of the document; in the first line under ‘rationale’ it states that the course’s objectives are “to



enable pupils to express their ideas and thoughts in another language and understand and respond to its speakers". The use of the adjective 'another' next to language and the possessive adjective in 'its speakers' in the first sentence suggest that Italian is not seen as 'owned' by the children who, supposedly, all have a language other than Italian as 'their' language. Italian heritage language speakers are hence excluded from the learning planning of the institution. This document places heritage language education again to the margins despite the original mission of the Italian promoting bodies<sup>5</sup>. The teacher retained a high degree of operational autonomy and could take pedagogical decisions. Indeed, she considered the proposed syllabus inadequate and decided to select the topics based on the needs of the heritage speakers attending her classes.

In this section, I illustrate some of the children's perceptions of (assumed) top-down policies and give examples of classroom interactions as I examine how local needs were organically addressed by the community. I explore how a process of negotiation between the teacher and the children, and among children, opened new possibilities for multilingualism (Liddicoat and Taylor-Leech, 2014) and show how micro-level policies were established in the course of the school year through language use and explorations.

### 7.3.1. Children's perceptions of language policies

The teacher took to the classroom her own view of language and all the children, to different extents, embraced a translanguaging practice. It could be argued that, in a way, she imposed an ideology option and that a micro level policy could still be the

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<sup>5</sup> The extra-curricular classes of Italian language and culture offered through the promoting organisations of the Italian consulates were originally planned for children of Italian origins (Ministero degli Affari Esteri, circolare n.13/2003). The new *circolare* from Decreto legislativo 13 aprile 2017 n. 64, does not make explicit mention of second generations and students of Italian origins. The promoting organisations are hence opening enrolments for all students, regardless of ties with Italy.

vehicle for language ideologies. Yet, the conversations about languages we had during the interviews as we were discussing the differences between the CS and the mainstream school revealed some different and contrasting ideologies.

In this first extract, Alex immediately referred to languages use as the main difference between the two settings by saying that his CS is a place where children speak in Italian instead of English, and that they speak very little English (*'pochino pochino'*).

- Carmen      pochi::no quand- quand'è che si parla inglese nella scuola di italiano? <*a li::ttle when is it that one speaks English in the Italian school?*>
- Alex          prima che vai tutti dentro un pochino perchè non devi parlare italiano@ <*before everyone goes in a little because you don't have to speak Italian @*>
- Carmen      ah ok e poi quando sei in classe? <*ah ok and then when you are in the classroom?*>
- Alex          @si parli in italiano? <*@one speaks Italian?*>
- Carmen      sempre sempre? <*always always?*>
- Alex          @hihi ((laughing))

Alex made a case for space as the factor determining when to speak a language or another. This division between the in and out of the classroom illuminates on his perception of a language policy in which in the Italian class, people should only speak Italian. When I asked about how he used language in the classroom, he replied laughing and with an interrogative exclamation tone that 'one speaks Italian', with what I interpreted as an intent to give 'the right answer' despite being aware that this was not the typical practice in class and that English was used alongside Italian. Although he engaged in multilingual practices in the classroom, his sense of right and wrong language use seemed to be dictated by his experience of the mainstream school. When I asked him about what it was like in the English school, he stated that they spoke only English there and that there is a 'zero-zero percent' presence of Italian or other languages.

- Carmen o::k pochissimissimissimo e invece nella scuola inglese? <*ok very very little and in the English school instead?*>
- Alex zero zero percento@
- Carmen zero percento di cosa? <*zero zero percent of what?*>
- Alex italiano
- Carmen e tutto il cento per cento cos'è? tutto il resto <*and the hundred percent what is it? All the rest*>
- Alex inglese <*English*>

Alex's response suggests that children carry with them beliefs about potential top-down policies. Based on his sharp answer about language in the mainstream school, I interpret Alex's assumption of an Italian-only policy in the CS as arising from his experience of language-in-education policy in the mainstream school that he may have transposed to the CS context. This is perceptible also in the association of the physical space as determining the time for a language or another, and in generating borders between different language use options. This concept is not new in research on bilingual and mainstream schools. For example, in a study on French schools in Ontario, Heller (1996) noticed how students found the time-space for using a language other than French autonomously and writes "I have heard them argue that the French-only rule doesn't apply until the bell rings, carving out an autonomous space for themselves in the temporal organisation of the school day" (p.146).

During the interviews, in fact, I had the occasion to learn more about the children's language experience in the mainstream school and as illustrated in the extract below, the perception of having to adopt a monolingual approach to communication in the classroom is clear in the way children looked at their EAL classmates' practices. Here Carola talks about the importance of speaking only English at school and brings the example of two children in her class who were speakers of Russian (she labels them as Russian, however, considering the time of the research, they could have been Ukrainian refugees).

- Carmen do you speak only English at the English school? Do you speak any other language?
- Carola no not really because basically there's two students in the class, Alison and Lisa, they are Russian and sometimes they speak Russian
- Carmen with each other?
- Carola yes but then they kind of lose how they speak English? 'cause when you speak another language you kind of forget how to speak the other one?
- Carmen really? ((surprised tone))
- Carola yeah, yes because basically so they were talking in Russian and Lisa kinda said what is that what's that and stuff so she kind of a little bit forgot her English
- Carmen oh
- Carola we think, I don't know

Carola, who is in year 2 at the time of the study (7 years old), stated that by speaking another language, her EAL classmates risked forgetting English, portraying a language ideology that sees monolingualism not just as preferable but as essential. However, in finding a tone of surprise in my answers, she later reacted by saying that this is what is thought (we think) but that she was not sure about it (I don't know). If on one hand children may be influenced by their experience of language policy elsewhere, on the other hand they affirm to take linguistic decisions in the CS in relation to their needs -and not the assumed policies- as expressed by the same child, Carola, who, like other children, 'confessed' using English while unsure whether the practice was officially allowed.

- Carmen and how do you speak at the Italian school then?
- Carola I speak Italian
- Carmen only Italian (.) you speak at the Italian school?
- Carola yes but if it's hard I speak in English because I normally ## like maybe three years I don't know maybe more?
- Carmen so it's fine to speak English at the Italian school?
- Carola well I don't know about that but I do if I really need to

Despite a language separation ideology that emerged in the previous conversations, Carola reported using English in the Italian class when 'it's hard' to use Italian, exactly like the EAL pupils did in her class when speaking Russian. This possibility is

presented by children like Guido as a distinctive trait of his CS experience. When I asked children to describe their CS, and encouraged them to imagine that they would need to describe it to one of their classmates in the mainstream school, Guido, like Alex, referred immediately to the language use options:

I would tell him that mostly you have teachers speaking Italian and that if you don't understand what ehm they said ehm you could and you need to answer or reply you could speak English, and even if you don't know what to say and you knew in English you could say and tell them that you need to do that and that ehm they would speak in Italian a lot of the time so you need to pay attention and ehm learn quickly and that kind of stuff (Guido, Yr4)

Guido carefully stressed the fact that teachers mostly speak Italian and that it is important to pay attention, but that English can be used. Linked to the notion of investment as examined in section 6.2, Guido and Rosa are highly involved and engaged in the HL classes' activities. This particular teacher's application of translanguaging, with no compartmentalization of named languages and varieties, appear to have promoted participation in classroom exchanges and legitimated linguistic identities as appreciated by Rosa who makes a first point about her perception of a sense of care in her learning environment.

Rosa	Sì e mi piace di più questa visto che posso parlare in differente lingue a parte di un amico italiano che c'è alla scuola, ok diciamo che lui non c'è nella classe non posso parlare con nessun'altro, solo inglese <Yes and I like this more because I can speak in different languages apart from an Italian friend that is at school, ok let's say that he is not in the class I cannot speak to anyone else, only English
Carmen	Devi parlare sempre inglese <you always have to speak English>
Rosa	sì
Carmen	e ti scoccia un po'? <and does it bother you a bit?>
Rosa	eh?
Carmen	is it [you don't like that
Rosa	Yeah it's bo::ring! Nobody that I can talk to in other languages, I mean a parte di Dafne ehm parla spagnolo ok mettiamoli tutti e due via di nostra discussione < ... apart from Dafne whm she speaks Spanish, ok let's put them out of the discussion>

- Carmen @Ok the main difference is that at the English school you can only speak English
- Rosa Sì:::
- Carmen and at the Italian school?
- Rosa posso parlare tutte le lingue e c'ho più amici visto che questi sono più generosi ehm they're more generous di quelli in in- nell'altra classe e anche le professoresse sono mo::lto meglio nella classe gli dico alla professoressa se mi faccio male e mi dicono che non importa e cose così <I can speak all the languages and I have more friends since these are more generous ehm they're more generous than those in in- the other class and also the teachers are mu::ch better in the class I tell the teacher that I hurt myself and they say it doesn't matter and stuff like this>
- Carmen mmm
- Rosa no non come non gli importa ma che come (.) they act like (.) they don't ca::re e cose così <no not that it doesn't matter but that like (.) they act like (.) they don't ca::re and stuff like this>
- Carmen do you feel there's more care in the Italian school?
- Rosa yes
- Carmen that children [and teachers care a bit more?
- Rosa [yes!

In relation to the analysis of the CS space, the participatory approach combined with a flexible language use as well as opportunities of physical proximity, and playful and humorous moments, may constitute the basis on which Rosa developed an idea of her CS class as a place of care. When she referred to the CS as a place where 'all languages' can be used, she shared appreciation for the possibility to use her full repertoire which counts three named languages, and she made an example of how she could speak with her brother who shares her same repertoire.

- Rosa io gli posso rispondere <I can answer him> 'a mi me gustan but they don't really look that good today ma mi piacciono normalmente'
- Carmen puoi mettere tutte le lingue in una frase <you can put all the languages in a sentence>
- Rosa sì!
- Carmen ti piace questa cosa? <do you like this?>
- Rosa sì!
- Carmen how do feel about todas las lenguas en la misma frase? <...all the languages in the same sentence?>
- Rosa bien <good>

Rosa shared that her translanguaging practices at home are one of the things that she can do and that she likes. In reflecting about her language practices at home, in the mainstream school and in the CS, Rosa shared her sense of wellbeing and appreciation for the freedom of language choices in the CS against the ‘so boring’ monolingual environment of the mainstream classroom. In sum, while some students continued to carry with them assumptions about language policy of language separation despite their own practices in class, others explicitly valued the practices established in the classroom and highlighted the flexibility in language use as distinctive trait of their CS.

### 7.3.2. Policy as practice

According to Creese and Blackledge (2011), complementary schoolteachers in the UK are typically more proficient in the community language, while students are generally more proficient in English. Although this is true in this context as well, I observed that in this setting, the default mode was not for teachers to speak Italian and for students to use English unless instructed otherwise. Rather, language practices were complex and multifaceted, with both teachers and students using a range of communicative resources for different purposes. In the following vignette from the beginning of the school year, I notice that children were using Italian to speak among themselves, in contrast to what I had been reading in the literature.

Original	Proposed translation
Nella fase del colour coding noto come Valentina Amelia e Violetta stiano collaborando molto per capire che colori usare per l'analisi grammaticale e	During the colour-coding I notice how Valentina, Amelia and Violetta are collaborating to understand what colours to use for the grammar analysis and

parlano tra di loro in italiano (check creese stating class with teacher speaking only community language and children mainly English- this doesn't seem to be the case) I notice a lot of humour and collaboration during this activity. And they speak Italian!	speak with each other in Italian (check creese stating class with teacher speaking only community language and children mainly English- this doesn't seem to be the case) I notice a lot of humour and collaboration during this activity. And they speak Italian!
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**FIELDNOTES 7.9 2ND NOVEMBER 2021**

In the early stages of my classroom observations, I was paying much attention to the participants' use of distinct elements of their repertoire, and I can see in Fieldnotes 7.9 that reading relevant literature in the months prior the data collection may have driven some of the considerations. In this case, I focused on a group of children collaborating to complete a grammar activity and I found myself surprised to hear that they were using Italian without prompting. However, sometimes children were unsure about the possibility to use different languages.

In the extract below, Guido asked for permission to use English because he said that did not know how to say that in Italian. The teacher's answer encouraged not only Guido's full expression, but it also includes the group in the linguistic exploration.

- Teacher ora vi dico una parola e voi mi dite tutto quello che vi viene in mente. Tutte le parole che vi vengono in mente ok? pensate... a... la scuola <*now I will tell you a word and you tell me all that comes to your mind. All the words that come to your mind ok? Think of... the school*>
- Guido mmm  
((ind chattering))
- Teacher pensate a cosa vi viene in mente, alzate la mano e poi me lo dite (.). Guido <*think of what comes to your mind, raise your hand and then you tell me (.). Guido*>
- Guido mmm posso dire un po' di parole in inglese che non lo so come dire in italiano? <*mmm can I say some words in English that I don't know how to say in Italian?*>



- Teacher certo. E poi vediamo se lo sappiamo dire in italiano <*of course. And then we see if we know how to say them in Italian*>
- Guido mmm mio partner che fa il brutto mmm bad manners and also ... he is quite disruptive
- Teacher quindi il tuo compagno di classe? <*so your classmate?*>

The use of the first-person plural was common in the teacher's way to maintain a sense of policy for the Italian class where the use of Italian was encouraged but children were not expected to use it all the time. Instead, the teacher ensured that children could use their own voice to communicate, having dialogue at the core of the activities, and then guided a collective reflection on the ways things could be said using existing *and* new parts of their repertoire. Instead of "fixing" language and imposing a separate and standard use, the teacher was observed to work towards an expansion of the repertoire at the time and pace of each learner by promoting a collective discovery through the use, for example, of the first-person plural.

In the research on heritage language education, the ways teachers attempted to enforce a minority-language policy is widely documented (e.g., Lytra and Martin, 2010) and the approach is that of exhorting the students to speak the HL by asking or by using an imperative form. For example, in French schools Heller noticed that "teachers work on the creation of institutional monolingualism as a component of this idea of bilingualism, and therefore spend a fair amount of time exhorting or imploring, in shouts and in whispers, "*Parlez francais!*" (1996, p.146). Although the teacher in this study aimed for the children to learn and to speak Italian, she did not recur to an imperative form (*parlate italiano*) or an imperative question (*potete parlare italiano?*). Instead, she created a participatory atmosphere by not problematising the use of English and recurring to the multilingual knowledge of the group, children and teacher together.

I interpret this anecdote as an example of legitimate languaging. Guido started with the assumption that English is not a legitimate language in the Italian class, the teacher encouraged him to express himself the way he wanted and said that they could work on the language aspect later and together, legitimising the use of English for expression and calling for a collective work to find the Italian way to say that. Guido was attached to his ‘good learner’ identity and tried to say something in Italian to perform that but appreciated the chance to express freely as reflected at the interview stage just explored in Section 7.2.2.

A flexible language use was also reflected in literacy as it can be seen in the following vignette:

Original	Proposed translation
<p>Le frasi di Valentina sono “sono andata al Lost Kingdom” e “ho fatto un sleepover”. Non ci sono correzioni tutti proseguono senza chiedersi come si dica <i>sleepover</i> in italiano. Trovo che questa mancata interruzione [...] in realtà stia garantendo un certo <i>smoothness</i>.</p>	<p>Valentina’s sentences are “I went to the Lost Kingdom” and “I had a sleepover”. There are no corrections everyone carries on without asking how to say sleepover in Italian. I find that this lack of interruption to ask [...] it is actually providing some kind of smoothness.</p>

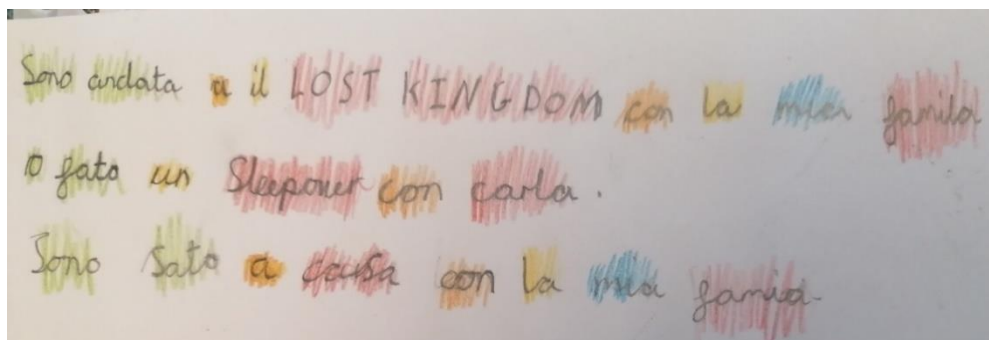


FIGURE 7.7 VALENTINA'S SENTENCES IN COLOUR CODING

The expression 'fare uno sleepover' is typical of the home context for the children of Italian background and I have personally heard and used this expression several times in my experience of working with children but I acknowledge that 'sleepover' is not a word that would be used in Italy and that I adopted such expression only after moving to the UK. As observed before and after classes, the teacher here engaged in very similar practices to the ones of the children's parents as they shared the same multilingual practices characteristic of Italian migrants in London (Pepe, 2022). For this reason, some elements of the translanguaging practices that children experienced at home may match with the ones of the teacher in this classroom. What I noticed in Fieldnotes 7.10, however, is that the class continued without interruptions for translating and that the writing of an English word in Valentina's Italian sentences was not perceived as problematic and it did not preclude the completion of the grammar analysis, and so in the "emergent matching of repertoires, the discussion flowed" (Rymes, 2010, p.537). In exploring the combined use of English and Italian in writing, children had an occasion to move beyond the notion of correctness and standard language to focus on the communicative practice and on the aim of the exercise, which in this case was the grammar analysis that Valentina completed regardless of the language used as she coloured in red (the colour for nouns) the word 'sleepover'. As

Rymes (2010, p.538) points out, “[r]ecognizing the ebb and flow of teacher and student repertoires across contexts makes it possible to do more than simply focus on a correct ‘standard’, or the ‘proper’ thing to do, and to focus instead, on moving across discourse boundaries so that human connection and relevant learning can occur”. Accepting the word sleepover and allow the child to continue her grammar analysis regardless of the different named languages in the text revealed a way of moving across the boundaries of discourses about languages.

In conclusion, the space of this CS can be described as multilingual because of the participants’ repertoires and their practices. By embracing a translanguaging stance, in speaking and writing, the teacher and the children in this HL classes defined the outline of a tailored de facto policy, which sees multilingualism as natural and unproblematic. This micro-level policy plays an important role in generating new and innovative ways of learning that may not occur under the existing provision in most schools (Liddicoat and Taylor, 2014). In the next section, I further examine multilingual practices for heritage language learning by illustrating how the participants navigated and explored their multilingual repertoires.

### 7.3.3. Multilingual explorations and agency

Drawing on some interconnected vignettes, this section illustrates how language practices related to the children’s sense of agency in their learning environment and show how participants employed their communicative repertoires to learn and to socially connect. I open with a discussion on how participants moved between English and Italian by using different ways to describe how words in the two languages are bounded. Then, I focus on one of the participants, Annabel, and portray the potential of an emancipatory style of education by illustrating how she participated in learning,

with agency both at linguistic and educational level. Annabel attended this school since reception class (age 4) and she is in Year 4 (age 8) at the time of the study.

The teacher used different strategies to navigate the space between the named languages English and Italian. In the following excerpt, the children are engaged in a lexical domain activity where they drew a tree and decorated its leaves based on the color-coding technique. Nobody found an adjective for the root "gioc-", and the teacher tried to help them by building on their knowledge in English.

- Teacher      come si dice in inglese infatti? *<how do you say it in English indeed?>*
- Alex            adjective
- Teacher      @ chiaro *<sure>*
- Alex            cosa? *<what?>*
- Teacher      ma quando dite @ lo voglio dire in italiano però @@@ qual è un sinonimo per questo aggettivo? *<but when you say @ I want to say it in Italian @@@ what is a synonym for this adjective?>*
- Carmen       stiamo parl- la stessa radice di play no?! *<we are talk- the same root as play right?>*
- Teacher      mh mh quando volete dire un aggettivo per play *<mh mh when you want to say an adjective for play>*
- Annabel      giocare *<to play>*
- Teacher      pensaci anche in inglese eh *<think about it in English as well>*
- Lx              [playley
- Teacher      [pensa a] play, questo bambino è proprio gioc- *<think of play, this child is really gioc->*
- Alex            gio::cando?  
((ind chattering))
- Alex            giocone
- Annabel      gioco:: nni
- Teacher      in inglese come lo chiamate un bambino a cui piace un sacco giocare, sempre sorridente che- *<in English what do you call a child who likes to play, always smiling that->*
- Valentina    giochiss- im-
- Amelia       playful?
- Teacher      l'ha trovato! come si dice playful in ing- in italiano? Pensiamo a una parola *<she found it! How do you say playful in eng- in Italian? Let's think of a word>*
- Valentina    giochissimo
- Teacher      non proprio *<not exactly>*
- Lx              playful
- Teacher      Alex c'era andato vicino ha detto gioco:: *<Alex was very close he said gioco::>*
- Lx              ne!
- Valentina    gioconi

Teacher no @@@  
 Annabel giocona  
 T e @vabbè! @@ <@oh well/whatever @@>  
 Lx giocono!  
 Teacher giocos:-  
 Valentina giocoso! <playful!>  
 Teacher giocoso <playful>

During this activity, the students were tasked with expanding their vocabulary and grammar knowledge by finding as many words as possible that belonged to the same lexical root and that would fall into different grammatical categories. The teacher guided them towards building the word '*giocosò*', which means 'playful' in English, by explaining the concept in Italian and recurring to the children's lexical knowledge in English. After some discussion, Amelia provided the answer in English by saying the word playful. Alex, Annabel, and Valentina continued to play with the word endings until the teacher made it obvious. Two elements of this dialogue depict the translanguaging dimension of this class. Firstly, the word 'synonym' was here used to refer to words that have the same or nearly the same meaning but instead of being within the same language, in this case, the synonyms would be within the same repertoire but across named languages. Secondly, the teacher created a translanguaging space by asking the children to find "*un aggettivo per play*," which solicited a metalinguistic reflection on adjectives in Italian ("un aggettivo per"), while using English as the subject of analysis ("play").

In the same activity, a common doubt regarded the grammar categories of the words the children found. Since they were using colours for the grammar analysis, children sometimes were unsure about what colour they needed to use for the various leaves based on the words. Amelia asked the teacher if the leaf-shaped paper on which she wrote *gioco* should be coloured in red for nouns or green for verbs and in fact, the word *gioco* can be both (it is a noun, singular, as well as a conjugation of the verb

*giocare* at the present tense; in English it can be translated as both ‘game’ and ‘I play’). Annabel who is sitting next to the teacher took the initiative and spontaneously answered to help her friend.

Original	Proposed translation
Annabel va ad aiutare Amelia e prova a spiegare perché ‘gioco’ è sia rosso sia verde, dunque nome e verbo e per spiegarlo inizia in inglese ‘it depends on how you use it’ per poi fare esempi in italiano.	Annabel goes to help Amelia and tries to explain why gioco is both red and green hence noun and verb and to explain it she starts in English ‘it depends on how you use it’ to then make examples in Italian

**FIELDNOTES 7.11 23RD NOVEMBER 2021**

Later, Annabel took the decision to modify the activity and for the following lexical root she wanted to draw a pizza instead of a tree, using the semiotic resource of drawing to express herself differently. She first tested her idea with her classmate Maria, who liked the plan and so Annabel carried on drawing a pizza and using the leaf-shaped papers as they were pizza toppings.



FIGURE 7.8 ANNABEL'S TREE AND PIZZA OF LEXICAL ROOTS

At the end of each class, the teacher used to give a star sticker to one or more children when they did something special. On this occasion, Annabel won the star because of her pizza. Against the assumption of some children who said that a child wins the star if 'they were good and listened', taking initiative in this case was better regarded, drawing a contrast between a 'banking style of education' and the aim for agentic learning.

Original	Proposed translation
Annabel ha deciso di fare una pizza col radicale 'oper-' instead of a tree. She discusses it with Maria and speaks Italian. [...] L'ultima fase della sessione è la stellina. La riceve Annabel. La	Annabel decided to make a pizza instead of a tree for the root 'oper-'. She discusses it with Maria and speaks Italian [...] The last phase of the session is the star of the day. Annabel



<p>maestra chiede perché e i bambini provano a elaborare -di solito è un semplice 'è stata brava, ha ascoltato, etc'. La maestra spiega che è per la pizza e dunque per l'inventiva. Creativity and own initiative get praised.</p>	<p>receives it. The teacher asks the children why [she got it] and they try to elaborate -usually it is simply 'she has been good, she listened, etc.'. The teacher explains that it is because of the pizza and so for the inventive. Creativity and own initiative get praised</p>
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**FIELDNOTES 7.12 23RD NOVEMBER (2)**

Two weeks later, the fact that Annabel took her own initiative and modified the activity is remembered by the children as seen in this fieldnotes extract from the end of that school term.

The teacher asks what they have done in this term and in order they reply: *lupo mangiagrammatica, battaglia navale, preposizioni articolate, l'albero di gioc-*. Valentina remembers the aspect of flexibility started from the kids themselves and specifies that [the latter] could also be a flower or a pizza or anything you like. (7th December 2021)

Data show how pupil agency is shaped by the pedagogical approach, which praises children's participation and initiatives, and how, in turn, it shapes the learning style, with peer-to-peer exchanges. In fact, "structure and agency are mutually constitutive and shaping" (Lytra, 2011, p. 25), and the structure provided by the emancipatory approach adopted by this teacher is influenced and is influencing the way Annabel acted in the classroom and consequently, how other children made sense of her action as structure ('it can be a flower a pizza or anything you like').

Agency was praised and supported in the learning process, and it was also emerging in the language explorations of the children. In the last session of the term before the Christmas holidays, the children were creating cards for their Italian families and were doing some art and craft. Dialogue was not structured in any way and children

engaged in a free talk (or conversation for phatic purposes) while decorating their cards. Annabel was using some cotton pads to make Santa Claus' beard and at some point, started singing some Christmas songs.

- Annabel     ♪ feliz navidad feliz ano di felicità::: feliz navidad proes- ano di felicità:: @ I wanna wish you a merry christmas I wanna wish you a merry christmas  
 ((follows choirs with Alex))
- Annabel     ♪ babbo natale babbo natale babbo natale all the way babbo natale babbo natale all the way
- Valentina   ♪ babbo natale è strano:: <*Santa Claus is wei::rd*>

Here the spontaneous production of self-speech and singing was not directly aimed at interacting and Annabel was observed to be engaging in singing in multiple languages for her own leisure and entertainment. She must have learnt the song *Feliz Navidad* but she did not know much Spanish and when the song was at the point of '*prospero año de felicidad*', she did not remember the exact words. Yet the proximity of the word *felicidad* to *felicità* (happiness, in respectively Spanish and Italian) led to a song that moved from Spanish to Italian and then to English. Annabel was recorded singing her own new version of the song for almost seven minutes, and this repetition speaks for her enjoyment in singing, and singing using three languages. In the meantime, Alex joined in and started singing with her using a stylized voice. In their shared music play, practices were negotiated and co-constructed for the play frame to be sustained. They continued to sing typical English Christmas songs and changing some words like in the example of Jingle Bells where Annabel replaced the words jingle bell with *Babbo Natale* (Santa Claus in Italian).

In the playful space of spontaneous language exploration, the children moved towards a configuration of identity that was unique to them as Italian heritage speakers of primary school age in London. They had the opportunity to explore new and creative ways to sing, for example, Christmas songs using their linguistic repertoire and in

doing so, connecting elements of their experience of Christmas, which is often celebrated with their Italian families, to the decorating of Christmas cards in an educational setting. In their small group of English-speaking children who also speak Italian this experience can be shared, allowing for that identity to be legitimised and appreciated through a process of identification and socialisation in a use of “their complex linguistic repertoires” which “bear the traces of past times and present times, of lives lived locally and globally” (Creese and Blackledge, 2011, p.1206). Furthermore, in bringing together elements of their linguistic repertoire, HL speakers made meaning in diverse and surprising forms as it can be seen in the next excerpt. This is the first class after the Christmas break and Annabel noticed that one of the penguin-puppets that usually lived in the classroom was not there. Because the teacher was in isolation due to Covid, I was asked to cover her class. When asked what happened to the puppet *Lino il cugino*, I spontaneously made a joke about the penguin being kidnapped with the word ‘penguinnapped’. Annabel built on the joke to create new words that encompassed elements of both English and Italian. English and Italian were not only juxtaposed in the same sentence but in the same one word.

Annabel	dov'è il cugino? < <i>where is the cousin?</i> >
Carmen	Lino il cugino è stato rubato, kidnapped < <i>Lino the cousin has been stolen, kidnapped</i> >
LL	((shouts))
Carmen	anzi pinguinnapped < <i>actually penguinnapped</i> >
LL	@ @ @
	[...]
Carmen	niente se lo è portato a casa qualcuno l'hanno kidnapped (.) anzi < <i>nothing someone has taken it home they kidnapped it (.) actually</i> >
Valentina	rubato < <i>stolen</i> >
Maria	pinguinnapped
Guido	@pinguinonapped
Annabel	cuginonapped (.) cuginonapped (.) era @cuginonapped < <i>it was @cousinnapped</i> >

In this instance, it can be noticed how the children, when inspired and encouraged, can enjoy exploring the space between languages, play in it, and push the boundaries of linguistic systems. Whilst transgression may tend to surface within the limits of one named language and as, like Bourdieu (1977, p.659) affirmed, “in the certainty that they incarnate the linguistic norm, [the speakers] can permit themselves transgressions which are a way of affirming their mastery of the norm”, the multilingual children in this class had the chance to affirm their legitimacy as multilingual speakers in this market, allowing consequently for transgression and linguistic creativity. This is also noticed by Rampton’s study on language crossing (1998) when he claims that adolescents engage in linguistic practices that allow them to negotiate and perform ethnic identity through appropriation and invention of alternative linguistic practices in their communicative repertoire. In this example, the participants’ invention of new and creative ways to make meaning marks their identity as multilingual speakers and learners, where a penguin puppet can be cuginonapped.

Lastly, in fieldnotes from the last school term, Annabel brought to life several elements of her communicative repertoire on page:

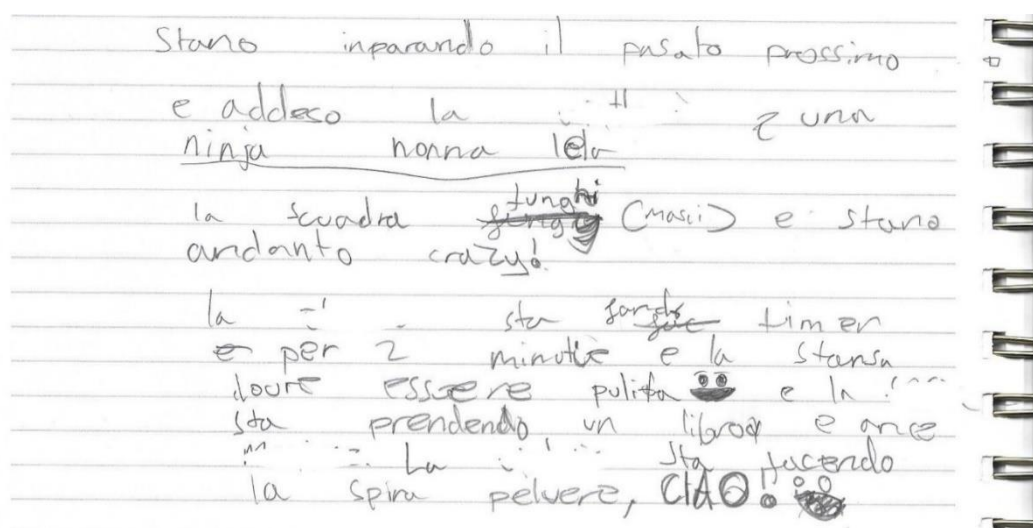


FIGURE 7.9 ANNABEL'S FIELDNOTES (2)

Original	Proposed translation
<p>Stano imparando il pasato prossimo e addeso Valentina e una ninja nonna lela. La squadra funghi (maschi) è stano andanto crazy! La Emma sta fando timer per 2 minutie e la stanza dovra essere pulita 🤖 e la Amelia sta prendendo un libro e ance Maria. La Valentina sta facendo la spira polvere, CIAO! :)</p>	<p>They are learning the past tense and now Valentina is a ninja grandma Lella. The mushroom team (boys) is going crazy! Emma is setting a timer for 2 minutes and the room needs to be cleaned 🤖 and Amelia is getting a book and Maria too. Valentina is vacuuming, BYE! :)</p>

#### FIELDNOTES 7.13 10TH MAY 2022

Annabel used English and Italian, as well as emoji and elements of her (mother's) regional variety as they all leaked into one another, portraying on paper a more precise picture of her socio-linguistic experience. She held a base of Italian in her writing, added English words like in '*andando crazy*' and included the determinative article '*la*' (the) in front of people's names (e.g., *La Emma*) which is a practice typical of the place of origin of her family. In developing agency in the learning environment and in their social practices, children like Annabel also exercised agency in their use of language, embracing the opportunity to explore their communicative repertoires for various purposes.

## 7.4. Summary and discussion

Through emblematic excerpts of classroom interaction and observations, children's work, interviews and fieldnotes, this chapter illustrated how a participatory approach combined with a flexible use of language and a game-informed design in this complementary school classroom created a 'safe space' (Conteh and Brooke, 2011)

for the children to explore their repertoires and develop a deeper understanding of their community, the society in which it lives, and of oneself. The chapter opened with an analysis of the pedagogical approach promoted for this HL classes as I elaborated on the ways in which children participated in learning and developed a sense of agency in their learning space. I examined how games supported connection through humour and proximity and facilitated the direct involvement of the children in the planning process, providing them with more opportunities to develop agency in their learning context and in their use of language. Moreover, I demonstrated how such activities helped uncover the pedagogic functions of classroom tasks in which the focus shifted from the mere acquisition of knowledge to a dialogical dimension of education, in which children learn to question and to connect, with others and with their own sense of self.

Dialogism became an essential element of how children used their voices and communicated with their community of peers to explore and negotiate identities. In dialogue with peers, the children developed their understanding of 'the word and the world' (Freire & Macedo, 1987) as while studying the language and its features (with often a focus on grammar) they also established human relationships and connections with other peers from their minority community. Informal dialogues and children's conversations for phatic purpose represented an important part of the social experience of language learning (Toohey, 2000) and the teacher in this study was indeed observed to ensure moments for peer talk 'for the sake of it', encouraging connection as well as exchanging knowledge as seen throughout this chapter. As Toohey (2000, p.127) recommends, instructional practice for language development should minimise recitation sequences and should, instead, increase collaborative groupwork and peer to peer conversation time. Some examples of the children's

interactions in the HL classroom illustrated how this “pedagogy of language may contribute to an emancipatory ideal that empowers one’s sense of dialogical agency, ownership of peripheral culture heritage, and intercultural togetherness” (Formosihno et al., 2019, p.170).

Whilst complementary schools may be complicit in a construction of boundaries around cultures in the social and political process of establishing what counts as English or Italian (Francis et al., 2009), the pedagogical approach and the language practices embraced by the teacher in this study made space for a wider exploration of new multilingual practices in education and consequently, new identities. Classroom observation data suggested that children in the HL classroom often re-constructed a sense of Italianness in relation to their Italian space in London. Thanks to recurring moments of free and spontaneous interaction among pupils, and the building of new narratives through activities such as *la storia senza autore*, children came to re-discover their shared experiences and interests with their peers who have a similar background. Instead of a “boundaried” Italianness, an idealised and static culture, children were making sense of their cultural inheritance by means of sharedness, where princesses eat pizzas and the words of the *Jingle Bells* song could be replaced by Italian words like *Babbo Natale*. Precisely because of potentially competing perspectives, a “new set of diasporic cultural identity” developed and emerged (Li Wei and Wu, 2010, p.44).

In the second part of the chapter, I analysed how children reflected on perceived policies in the CS and identified two different attitudes. In some cases, children would engage in multilingual practices in the HL class but would carry with them an ideology of separation between languages which I interpreted as one developed in their mainstream school contexts where all the children reported to be only speaking

English, saying that there is no space for other languages ('zero-zero percent'). On the contrary, other children defined the translanguaging practices in their HL classes as a distinctive trait of their complementary school experience and expressed appreciation for the freedom they had in using their full repertoire. In the case of Rosa, for example, the possibility to make use of her linguistic repertoire was connected with a sense of care and wellbeing.

I then examined the children's use of language in the school and analysed their multilingual explorations in conjunction with their sense of agency through the lens of 'communicative repertoire' (Rymes, 2010). The teacher created a participatory atmosphere where children's bilingual knowledge was not only recognized but valued and agentively legitimised as she guided the children in the development of their own voice in Italian respecting the communicative needs of each child. Italian was still the target language, and it held a high currency on the HL class market (Bourdieu, 1977) but it was not placed in a dominance position, and other currencies (languages) were also valued and legitimated. This approach allowed for a more collaborative and inclusive learning environment where children were comfortable expressing themselves in both/all languages, while gaining awareness of their full repertoire and distinctive capital.

In her work on classroom discourse analysis, Rymes (2010) reminds us of the importance in education research to understand the awareness of one's communicative repertoire and how this could be an end in itself as she writes that "[b]uilding metalinguistic awareness of communicative repertoires is a life-long process, facilitated by travel across social boundaries" (p.529). I understand her call for a 'metalinguistic awareness of communicative repertoires' in education as a way to develop an understanding of one's own resources and of when and how they can



be employed for communication in various social spaces. The value of the HL class resided in the fact that children shared many elements of their repertoire (named languages, some varieties, generational speech, for example) and could explore the uniqueness of a 'common communicative currency' (Rymes, 2010, p.) to make sense of their own resources and their social identities. On a market in which value is conferred to a multilingual communicative currency (instead of being only assigned to specific named languages) HL learners' capital gained a value and sense of legitimacy that in other educational markets (i.e., mainstream schools) would not acquire. In other words, not only minority language and identity options are legitimate on a market in which Italian has a higher currency than English, but an additional option opens and it retains higher value, which is the multilingual identity option in education.

Finally, the medium through which interaction as well as learning took place in the classroom was the result of all participants' language practices when in dialogue with one another. Whilst the teacher mainly used Italian to guide the students in their activities, languages were not used to 'instruct' but mainly to connect, through games and conversations and peer-to-peer exchanges, and to learn in the space of such connection. The children and the teacher delineated together a *de facto* multilingual policy for which communicative and learning needs were tailored on local needs and the multilingual repertoire of all the participants to the learning experience was the medium of classroom interaction *and* of instruction.

To sum up, the results indicate that a critical-participatory and translanguaging pedagogical approach to HL education promoted dialogue for a critical understanding of the social world and enabled the children to learn about themselves as learners who can use a wide communicative repertoire, which encompasses multiple named languages and semiotic resources. As Formosinho et al. (2019) rightfully point out, "an

emancipatory translingual pedagogy would enable and empower every learner to synthesise a contextually creative field of new semantic and social relationships” (p.169). In conclusion, I argue that complementary schools in which teachers apply a similar approach represent a precious space for heritage speakers to discover their multilingual learner selves and find legitimacy in this identity option.

## **Chapter Eight. Conclusions**

In this final chapter, I bring together the thesis as a whole with a concluding discussion and a summary of the answers to the research questions. I illustrate the research contribution with attention to the theoretical, methodological and pedagogical aspects before I outline the implications of this work for families, schools and policymakers and most importantly, practitioners. I conclude with a consideration of this study's limitations and avenues for future research.

### **8.1 Bring it all together: a concluding discussion**

#### **8.1.1. Complementary schools as breathing spaces**

Children who were born and raised in England and whose parents migrated from Italy (or other countries) may grow up developing a communicative repertoire that encompasses more than one named language as well as values and traditions associated to more than one culture or place. To the plurality of their social identities, characteristic of any social actor in a any given social setting, children with a migratory background may encounter an extra layer of complexity in elaborating a coherent sense of self when compared to individuals that grow up in monolingual/monocultural families. In this thesis, I investigated multilingual practices, multilingual pedagogies and multilingual identities in an Italian complementary school to understand how children who have an Italian migratory background in London learn about and through their HL and how they perform and negotiate identities in their complementary school classroom.

The starting point was that due to the monoglossic conception of languages in

mainstream education, children whose linguistic repertoires encompass multiple languages and varieties which are not mirrored in school practices may not get the opportunity to express, experiment with and discover their multilingual selves in education. As mentioned in the introduction, such lack of opportunities brings about implications in terms of identity development and wellbeing. An educational time-space in which multiple languages and varieties are used, strategically and creatively combined, and more importantly, valued, becomes crucial for legitimising children's minority linguistic and identity options, and for supporting multilingual children to develop language skills alongside a harmonious sense of self. As Hall (2013) reminds us, "the challenge is not necessarily how individuals detach from a local world, but how they are encouraged and supported to accumulate and belong in a *number* of local worlds" (p.51, emphasis in the original). For the maintenance and development of the heritage languages, complementary schools may offer the children a zone of contact to explore their sense of belonging to multiple local worlds.

I observed how children learn in and through their heritage language and how they developed their sense of 'Italianness' in relation to their local space. Forminho et al.'s (2019) stress that "an emancipatory educational action should conjoin the liberating potential of unbounded multilingualism with the rootedness of sociocultural belonging" (p.175). Such liberating potential can be unlocked with multilingual explorations in a heritage language learning journey. The analysis of ethnographic data revealed how multilingual explorations developed alongside and in conjunction with the development of a sense of agency in the learning space. The combination of a translanguaging and a critical-participatory approaches enabled children 'to express, experiment with and discover their multilingual selves in education'.

Like in other CSs, the school promotes bilingualism as usual and unproblematic and

makes space for communicative explorations by valuing the linguistic repertoires present in the classroom. For example, in studying the grammar of Italian language while negotiating their language practices with teachers and peers, and explicitly building on their pre-existing knowledge in English, children gained a chance to learn how to employ all of their resources to advance and learn. Additionally, their multilingual experience at home and in the family were deemed of value by educators, who are themselves part of the same (minority) group. For this reason, “complementary schools can emerge as important sites for intergenerational transcultural negotiations where knowledge is distributed rather than the prerogative of the teacher and where the children’s knowledge and experiences outside the complementary school classroom can support the formal learning of the community language and culture” (Lytra, 2011, p.34).

Through a closer look at the learning activities in this CS, I illustrated the participatory nature of this teacher’s approach beyond the objective of mere content acquisition, which sees language as a commodity and language learning as an individual experience. In the analysis of Cushing et al. (2021), a functionalist view of education in mainstream schools emerged as they explained that “[t]ypically, [teachers’] justifications were geared around a neoliberal, product-focused ontology of language: jobs, finances, employment and academic achievement” (p.9). Indeed, the English education system is highly regulated by policies and oriented to prepare the students for the job market, where the ability to master the “Standard English” conventions becomes a necessity and almost an imperative. Complementary schools like the one researched here, instead, recall to the importance of having a variety of educational realities and educational experiences for exploring different ways to think and express ideas in dialogue with others and start becoming “master of their thinking” (Freire,

1970, p.124).

Education outside the mainstream school, in contexts where policies may play out differently, can provide space for teachers to implement pedagogical practices that would allow children to explore more identity options, creative ways of learning, and develop a sense of self as legitimate multilingual learner. The teacher's agentic power, with the decision to welcome all forms of speech and writing, combined with the absence of institutional language policing, made possible to promote a critical and multilingual mode to teach and learn. Against a banking concept of education (Freire, 1970, 1987) in which students accumulate knowledge and develop competences for employability, in this educational setting, thanks to its flexible structure, children found the space to develop foremost as people, discovering more identity options and legitimising their belonging to multiple worlds. Such legitimisation has the potential to support them in feeling in harmony with oneself, with one's multiple affiliations, and consequently, with the others, as the value of one's linguistic productions and one's self-perception are closely linked:

One's initial relation to the language market and the discovery of the value accorded to one's linguistic productions, along with the discovery of the value accorded to one's body, are doubtless one of the mediations which shape the practical representation of one's social person, the self-image which governs the behaviours of sociability and, more generally, one's whole manner of conducting oneself in the social world. (Bourdieu, 1977, p.660)

Complementary schools are primarily sites of language learning and legitimisation where the HL can 'breathe' (Fishman, 1991), opening a critical reflection on the asymmetrical value and differential positions that languages have and occupy in our socio-political system. But they can also be important sites of social identification, "a platform to offer space for pupils to build friendships with peers who have the same ethnic background" (Hu, 2020, p.25 cited by Liu, 2022, p.329). The Italian HL class

represents in fact a unique time-space in which children of Italian origin can meet, discover a shared combination of multiple worlds in an educational setting, learn to use the full repertoires at their disposal and are free to confer legitimacy to their multilingual learner identity.

The discovery of a multilingual learner identity in a critical participatory style is invaluable in an education system regimented by neoliberal policies. In fact, finally and most importantly, schools for HL maintenance form part of an educational reality that is complementary to mainstream schooling: a space in which teachers and students can 'breathe' linguistically and educationally.

### 8.1.2. Language and learning as integrated systems

In complementary schools, children were observed to learn to use their languages and negotiate practices in a formal educational setting while discovering a broader sense of self through meaningful social connections with their peers. Peer to peer learning and connection in the CS opened avenues for intercultural learning journeys where students "mediate, negotiate and reflect belongingness" through language (Arvanitis, 2014, p.61). This process of mediation and negotiation occurred within the classroom community but also within oneself. Alongside the learning of grammar, reading and writing, children started making sense of their identities as multilingual learners and of their sense of belonging to multiple worlds by exploring, experimenting and negotiating language use with children who shared a similar background. As Formosinho et al. (2019) again suggest, "subjectified innovation requires the developmental, socialised ability to perform powerful creative speech-acts, intentionally trained by an emancipatory language education programme, that have a transformative effect on the speakers and on their web of relationships" (p.171), that is to say that the

experience of belonging and feeling socially connected in the learning environment is dependent upon the language used and only through exploratory, creative, and innovative ways of using symbolic and linguistic resources, can meaningful connections and the emancipatory goal of education be achieved.

Children may start learning their HL at home by communicating with their families but the shared learning experience with their peers and the engagement with literacy practices in the school proved important for growing a sense of belonging to multiple worlds and legitimising a plurality of identities in relation to language and culture. In a language learning journey that embraces translanguaging and participatory principles, children got a chance to explore and combine the use of languages and language varieties, within the same interaction, text or even in the very same word (for example, Annabel, Section 7.3.3) and to do so together with their peers to achieve learning and social connection. Linguistic diversity is not merely celebrated, and looked at 'from above', but it is enacted and adopted providing avenues for the legitimization of all repertoires and consequently, of the plurality of identities. Complementary schools, then, have the potential to empower children by providing a 'breathing space' for their heritage languages and a 'safe space' for sharing their 'creative multilingual voice' (Cenoz & Gorter, 2013).

The analysis and discussion chapters showed how children shaped multilingual spaces at home as well as in the complementary school, and how critical pedagogies and a participatory approach to the organisation of the physical space of the classroom can provide children with opportunities to increase their sense of agency and consequently, increasing participation to learning and the opportunities to use their languages. Promoting participation proved key in the development of the children's communicative tools, supporting a sense of ownership of one's full communicative



repertoire which, in turn, fostered confidence and agency.

A pedagogical approach oriented towards democratic participation provided the chance to access language and reach more favourable positions, essential elements of any educational experience to make sense of one's own opportunities in the social world(s). This study thus contributes to the conceptualisation of the relationship between language and identity as mutually constitutive (Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004), of named languages as elements of one's communicative repertoire (Rymes, 2010) and of language and learning as complementary elements of the same system, in which both language and learning inextricably link to the ways children make sense of their worlds and of themselves, of their identities.

### 8.1.3. Integrated systems, harmonious identities

In the ethnographic exercise of “integrating innumerable parts into shifting wholes” (Heath & Street, p.57), I brought together very different types of data to see them taking shape in their coming together and I was always trying to combine them harmoniously, like bits of a sound that forms a sequence of melodies and that by being in harmony, it pleases the listener's ears. As I was analysing the children's “emotionally and bodily lived experience of language” (Busch, 2021, p.191 cited by Little, 2023, p.220) in the section about space (6.3), I found myself often reflecting on the role of harmony versus conflict when multiple worlds interconnect in and around the learner, and so I tended to explore the data often in relation to the concept of harmony of identity and language use. Whilst De Houwer (2015) conceptualises *harmonious bilingualism* as the result of a subjective wellbeing that is not negatively affected by the experience of bilingualism, and states that harmonious bilingualism “is to be seen as a feature of families, not individuals” (p.171), I, instead, focused on how

children may develop a sense of harmony with their peers in their learning space, and with their own sense of identity. Like Hanish et al. (2016, p.58) remind us, feeling socially connected and belonging in “socially harmonious classes and schools” is crucial to the children’s social and academic success. The development of a sense of harmony with others and with oneself are processes strictly linked to one another, and legitimising one’s multilingual and multicultural identity to find harmony in diversity is an essential prerequisite for establishing harmonious relationships and participate in learning with a sense of meaning and purpose. The use of language and other semiotic resources sits right at the core of this process.

As illustrated in Chapter 7, children like Guido and Rosa showed appreciation for the possibility of learning in and expressing themselves using more than one named language. The analysis shed light on how children engaged in playful multilingual explorations in language learning and, how Carola said, ‘have fun with it’. For example, when Rosa described her educational experiences in relation to the use of language, she reflected on the different approaches and this clearly evoked emotions about language use in different contexts as she talked expressively about her language practices in the mainstream school saying ‘*it is bo:::ring! There is no one I can talk to in other languages*’, and shared appreciation for the opportunity in the CS to explore multilingualism with her peers (Section 7.3). When she described her own translanguaging practices, making up an example of how she could speak with her brother, she shared her perception of wellbeing in relation to multilingualism by saying that it feels good. Although it would be virtually impossible for a researcher to establish that a child is indeed experiencing harmony and wellbeing overall, the conversations I had with children in this study (including, of course, those which do not feature in this thesis) suggest that multilingualism and a flexible use of one’s communicative

resources in the CS is appreciated, in contrast with the sense of frustration emerged in discussing language options in the mainstream school classroom.

As Little (2023, p.220) reminds us, “language acquisition itself is an emotional endeavour” and cannot transcend belonging and identity, and ultimately wellbeing. In the study co-conducted with her mother, Toby, age 7, reflected on his HL (re-)learning journey (Little and Little, 2022). In the course of the data collection, he stated that he enjoyed playing with language and that when he cannot use his repertoire he feels like “*you can only say half of what you mean, and other people only understand half of who you are*” (Little, 2023, p.226), showing a strong sense of connection between language and identity and articulating his need to express himself multilingually to feel himself: to perceive a coherent sense of self. I believe, in fact, that the common use of the fraction metaphor to describe multiple national and cultural identities (‘being half Italian and half English’) is in itself symptom of this sense of fragmentation and compartmentalization which is common in discourses on migratory backgrounds, where boundaries can be perceived of as very rigid. When I was talking with Alex about the football European Championship and asked him why he was supporting Italy, he said that it was because his father is Italian while he is “half Italian, half English, half South African and half German”. He then reflected upon it and rectified: ‘*no, come un quarto di tutto*’ <no, like a quarter of everything>. Feeling like halves and quarters does not suggest a sense of coherence and harmony.

Going back to the notion of harmonious bilingualism, it is important to specify that De Houwer’s idea of harmony (2015, 2020) is related to the development of language skills, referring to the ability of the child to speak two or more languages at similar levels of proficiency, implying that an unbalanced level of proficiency can lead to negative impact on the child’s wellbeing. Whilst she started with an interest in the

children's wellbeing, her focus appears to be remaining anchored to the technical skill of language production as the extent to which such skills are developed is seen as the key factor for experiencing harmony. The development of a sense of agency, legitimacy and ownership of one's linguistic repertoire and affective connections as discussed in this thesis, instead, are seen as more relevant comparing to the children's language abilities per se. It is not that proficiency does not play an important role but harmony, to me, is linked to social connection as a fundamental stage for the active and agentive use of language. As illustrated in Chapter 7, the legitimisation of a multilingual identity proved pivotal in supporting participation in learning and children's identity positioning and negotiating process aimed at finding wellbeing and harmony in relationships of power.

Also, despite her critical view of the 'monolingual ideal practice' in research on bilingualism, where language proficiency of bilingual children is always compared with the monolingual speaker's competence, De Houwer (2015) remains anchored to an idea of proficiency as an ultimate goal for harmony and affirms that "[p]arental monolingual discourse strategies in each of two languages support children's active use of two languages. Parental bilingual discourse strategies in either language do not support children's active bilingual use" (p.176) criticizing translanguaging practices as not conducive to harmonious bilingualism. Building on a large-scale quantitative study (Tseng and Fuligni, 2000), De Houwer (2015) highlights the issue of emotional disconnection between generations saying that "[a]dolescents who conversed with their parents in different languages felt more emotionally distant from them" (p.172). Yet, she did not specify what different languages mean and what deferential power may exist between the different linguistic and identity options that the adolescents in that study could explore. The analysis of multilingual practices cannot ignore the

currency that different languages have in different marketplaces.

Finally, she states that “[t]he very fact that there are no studies that critically discuss the use of the same language within family discourse suggests that *not* using dual-lingual conversations is commonly regarded as unproblematic” (ibid., p.172). It could be argued that the lack of studies is not necessarily a lack of need for studies. The lack of such studies, instead, is something I interpret as a confirmation of the problematical discourses permeating quantitative research on multilingualism, in which answering very delimited questions force a standardisation and simplification of social dynamics. A significant difference, perhaps, is that language in such research is conceived more often as a unitary concept with definite boundaries between named languages, in contrast with a translanguaging stance for which in this study the need and desire to use one’s full repertoire and to connect with others resulted to be prominent. Children’s expression of discomfort in face of strict OPOL policies and strong monolingual ethos in mainstream schools was clear throughout the analysis. These are the very problems I observed, and I perceived them as emblematic of the need to find a multilingual harmony, against the risks of structurally trying to keep such dimensions as distinct. In fact, as De Houwer concludes, “[s]ystematic research is needed on how young families in a bilingual setting and their individual members evaluate their bilingual experience so we may have a better empirical basis for defining what harmonious bilingual development generally means and implies. This research needs an ethnographic approach.” (ibid., p.179).

To conclude, the conceptualisation of harmonious bilingualism this study offer differs from the one proposed by De Houwer because (1) it expands its notion by moving from an interest in the family alone to the children’s peer community and educational experiences, (2) builds on the concept that language production is inextricably linked

to identity and self-perception (3) harmony is conceived as disjunctive from oral production and proficiency in single named languages but as dependent on the use and explorations of one's whole communicative repertoire. Therefore, I argue for a new conceptualisation of harmonious bilingualism, or better, *harmonious multilingualism* that has the children's experience of self-perception and wellbeing at heart, beyond matters of language proficiency. As explored throughout the thesis with the analysis of the language and learning practices of children in an Italian complementary school in London, I consider this sense of wellbeing to be connected to a whole range of aspects of the children's social experiences. Whilst studies on bilingualism may tend to put proficiency at core, this study intends to emphasize the interconnection between language and agency, human connection, and ultimately, identity.

Finally, I posit that creating spaces for multilingual education is crucial, and that such education should aim first at unlocking the children's potential to feel in harmony with their multilingual selves by working towards the following interconnected milestones:

- i. developing a sense of agency and emancipation in one's learning and social space and participate in learning through democratic forms of dialogue
- ii. expressing and exploring one's communicative repertoire to enable socially meaningful connections and finding legitimisation to one's own repertoire and plurality of identity
- iii. developing self-awareness by making sense of one's language and identity-in-being and acknowledging their unfinishedness

Considering the limits of the UK mainstream school system (e.g., highly structured curricula, OFSTED inspections, etc.) and the need for children to connect and identify

with their peers, complementary schools, where principles of multilingual critical pedagogies can be applied, represent a unique and important space for heritage speakers who can develop a more harmonious relationship with their multilingual learner selves and move on from feeling like halves and quarters.

## 8.2. Answering the research questions

Building on the existing knowledge about the benefits of embracing multilingualism in education (e.g., Garcia, 2009; Creese and Blackledge, 2010; Costley and Leung, 2020), this study investigated multilingualism, identity and pedagogy in an Italian complementary school in London trying to answer five research questions. Below, I illustrate how they were explored and answered.

**RQ1. Why do some children in London attend Italian HL classes? Why did parents enrol them in complementary schools? And what is the role of complementary schooling in the children's experience of multilingualism?**

To make sense of language and learning in the Italian complementary school, it was essential to first gain an understanding of why such schools existed in the first place, hence the families' reasons for enrolling young children in HL learning programmes. Before starting with classroom observation, I circulated a questionnaire for London-based families of Italian origin with children of primary school age (Chapter 5). The results of the survey portray a complex mosaic of languages and language use in the community and the analysis of family language practices and policies, and of the challenges faced by parents in transmitting and maintaining the HL, suggest that families cannot bear alone the responsibility of HL transmission, a concern already

expressed in FLP research (for example, Curdt-Christiansen and La Morgia, 2018; Romanowski, 2018).

In analysing the reported language practices, I explored the children's language choices and found substantial discrepancies between the strategies suggested by parents (i.e., OPOL) and the response of the children who mostly preferred the language of society. The findings remind us of the importance of children's agency in defining linguistic ecologies. Building on this quantitative analysis, I explored how parents reported on the perceived challenges to HL maintenance and discovered that children also tend to socialise parents into English (Luykx, 2003), reducing the opportunities of exposure to the HL, Italian, and forcing parents to look for activities that could support their children in developing communicative skills in Italian. English is dominating the children's lives, especially once they start schooling (see Section 5.4.1), but there are also some difficulties in making space for HL due to limited contact with the families (because of distance) and with the community at large, with some considerations about the accessibility and affordability of activities specifically for children.

Parents commented on how using the HL mainly or only in the home environment can be an hinderance to the development of language competences for use in a variety of social situations and to give meaning and value to the use of the HL, shedding light on the crucial role of the community in the maintenance of minority languages. In fact, the effects of the pandemic on the children's competence in the HL were not always positive, with one third of the participating families stating that during periods of lockdown their children's ability to speak Italian diminished. In this sense, complementary schools represent an important (physical) space for the development



of HL language competence as well as a community space for children to build a relationship with their own heritage language and culture.

Towards the end of the school year, I interviewed children and parents and explored further the reasons for attending a CS. A common theme is that of HL maintenance for intergenerational connection (Francis et al., 2009) but also intra-generational connection as it emerged in talking with children who mentioned cousins, and not only grandparents. In conversation with parents, the themes of education and cultural values resulted prominent. Some parents perceived HL education as an integrated (or to be integrated) part of the children's learning journey and a space for their children to learn more about values and traditions of the Italian people. Whilst some families had expectations more closely related to knowledge and competence (like grammar and literacy, or cultural traditions), others valued complementary schools (compared to "general" language schools/MFL courses) because they were seen as spaces for the children to socialise with other peers who share a similar background and expand their opportunities to meaningfully use the language, and consequently, develop a sense of ownership of their HL as something separate from their family.

**RQ2&3. What are the language practices and policies at play in an Italian complementary school? And how do children engage in and/or contest them? How do children make sense of their multilingual repertoires and multilingual selves in education?**

By taking an ethnographic perspective, I was able to capture some salient aspects of the children's language and learning experience in this complementary schools. In terms of language use, both the children and the teacher were often translanguaging for maximum communicative potential (Garcia, 2009). The way in which they were

making use of their linguistic repertoires was natural and unproblematic and it was also supporting learning. In Chapter 7, the analysis of classroom interaction illuminates how the teacher not only allowed the use of other resources (i.e., English) but encouraged and enabled the use of the children's linguistic repertoires by inviting them to elaborate on grammar concepts using Italian and English, hence creating moments for thinking and learning multilingually, and by giving opportunities to explore and experiment with language.

The analysis of such explorations and experimentations shows how language is constantly evolving, serving people and not places, hence challenging the idea of territorialisation. In the process of discovering new ways to communicate and being together, "new sets of diasporic cultural identities emerge[d]" (Li Wei, 2010, p.44). Supporting the transformative potential of translanguaging (as a practice and as a pedagogy), was the approach to teaching and learning in this school which combined elements of multilingual education with critical pedagogies, enabling the children to develop a sense of agency which, in turn, allowed them to discover and experiment with their multilingual learner selves.

Although there was a de facto multilingual policy (see Section 7.3.2), in conversation with children, I discovered how ideas about language-in-education policies were influencing their perceptions of their own practices in the complementary school based on their experience of language use in the mainstream schools. Despite 'admitting' to using different languages in the Italian CS, some children made a case about space for the use of different languages, for example. Their engagement in multilingual practices in the classroom was not reflecting their understanding of language policies in educational contexts, which they believed to be that only one language should be used for learning. However, some children made comments about language

distinctions in the mainstream schools as limiting and “so boring!”, showing appreciation for the opportunity of expressing themselves fully in the CS.

**RQ4&5. How do teachers create spaces of and for dialogue? And how do teachers and children build community spaces in which communicative resources can be democratically accessed? Do children have a sense of agency in their learning space and if so, how do they exercise power and agency through language and through their bodies? Do they use language to resist exclusion or subordination? If yes, how?**

In exploring language practices and policies ethnographically, my attention was drawn to some wider social dynamics between participants. The way in which children were taking part in lessons and lesson planning, and the way they positioned themselves in space and in dialogue with their teacher and their peers led to the elaboration of further research questions (RQs 4 and 5). Exploring the role of dialogue and agency in the classroom re-focused my analysis to pedagogy, revealing how a translanguaging *and* critical approaches to HL could challenge the hegemonic discourse of named languages while re-assessing dynamics of power in learning, and more specifically in student-teacher relationships.

The findings about the classroom (Chapter 6) show how the configuration of the physical space proved crucial in supporting the children’s development of a sense of agency in their learning environment. An example of this was the use of the whiteboard (Section 6.3.2) which was rarely used by the teacher and was mainly used by the children during game activities, constituting a space of convergence for children to learn from one another and an area for physical proximity to develop trust. The whole-class desk for the children and the teacher favoured both verbal and non-verbal

communication and most importantly, removed physical projections of power dynamics between the children and the teacher. In sum, the material revealed to be an integral and essential element in the construction of a community space.

The analysis of data across time illustrated how the children were gradually given more agency in designing the lessons as the teacher invited them to propose the activities for the day and the children became increasingly more confident in participating in the lesson planning. Such collaborative practice was enabled by the game-informed design of the activities which were sufficiently customisable to be repeated in order to learn or revise a number of different grammar and literacy topics. Complemented by an invitation to use humour and produce sometimes funny sentences and stories (Section 7.2.1), this approach made possible the exploration of “new modes of being together” (Albrecht-Crane, 2005, p. 492), and a more relaxed atmosphere where projections of power were reduced and agency was developed and sustained. Emblematic of this is how children used language to resist subordination (Section 7.2.2) as they sometimes contested the teacher’s decision when not respecting the turn-taking and the generally democratic dynamics of the group.

Finally, the examples portrayed in this study show how establishing a community space and facilitating demonstrations of agency directly influenced the way in which children used different semiotic resources available to them to socially connect and how they started exploring how to make use of their full repertoires to enhance their learning.

### 8.3. Contribution to research

This study holds theoretical, methodological and pedagogical implications for researching language and identity in complementary schools and offers insight for heritage language education, and language education more broadly. In this section, I outline the contributions of this work to the field of socio- and applied linguistics, and point at how this doctoral study adds evidence, brings new knowledge and brings innovation to the field.

#### 8.3.1. Theoretical contribution

As explored at different stages, this research builds on a translanguaging epistemological stance. In the discussion of how children perceive and reflect on their complementary school experience (6.2.1) and how they engage in multilingual explorations in the classroom (7.3.3), I highlighted the ways in which opportunities to communicate multilingually allowed children to feel free to express themselves, participate in learning and form meaningful social connections while exploring different elements of their linguistic repertoires. Their engagement with and appreciation for multilingualism confirms the power of translanguaging practices to achieve maximum communicative potential (Garcia, 2009) and generate innovative and creative forms of connection that are “an important and integral part of language evolution” (Li Wei, 2018, p.14). The multimodal way of combining different elements of one’s communicative repertoire (for example, Annabel’s practices in 7.3.3) show how children navigate the space between communicative resources and between languages, and how “the relationship between language and the nation-state are being constantly reassessed, broken, or adjusted by speakers on the ground” (ibid., p.15).

Alongside the analysis of multilingual practices, I illustrated how identity is socially

negotiated and highlighted the important role of agency. When Amelia spontaneously goes to the whiteboard to share her spelling knowledge of the word *sciare* (6.3.2) and when Valentina contests the teacher's decision to organise the teams for the battleship (7.3.2), they exercise agency in their learning environment to position themselves and negotiate power and identity. With the application of a participatory approach, the teacher and the children in this study engaged in explorations of the different ways in which they could employ their communicative repertoires and their pre-existing knowledge to socially connect and further enhance their learning. Whilst I focused on how language was made one's own, the data also made visible how the use of language at times was the vehicle to index social identities (for example, Ludovico and Valentina refusing to explain the game in English for Leo, Section 7.3.4) and how language choices are inseparable from the speaker's view of their own and others' identities (Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004) and from their imagined identities (Kanno and Norton, 2003).

In exploring the children's positioning around language use in the classroom, the analysis demonstrated how language practices and language ideologies may diverge. Despite their engagement in multilingual practices in the HL class, at the interview stage, children like Alex and Carola (Section 7.2.2) shared their perception of the need for language separation in the classroom, with reference to their language use experience in the mainstream school. In a similar way, Curdt-Christiansen (2016) and Wilson (2020) remind us that also in the home setting positive attitudes to multilingualism do not necessarily translate into flexible practices, and vice versa. Such a mismatch between language use and language ideologies in HL studies show how linguistic practices form integral part of and are influenced by the complex system of power relations at play in society.

Finally, the findings of this study contribute to our understanding of complementary schools as sites of multilingualism (Lytra and Martin, 2010). The complementary school is described in this work as a place of resistance to English-dominant discourses and a breathing space for minority languages (Fishman, 1991), as well as a place where multilingual identities and critical forms of pedagogies can flourish. As emphasized in the concluding discussion, complementary learning spaces in which multiple linguistic and identity options are validated, and where teachers' have educational decision power to implement critical pedagogical approaches, are necessary part of the education system. Like one of the parents interviewed said, "*I wanted them to understand that Italian is a part of their curriculum (.) it's a part of their education*" (Section 6.2.3).

### 8.3.2. Pedagogical contribution

This thesis contributes to research on language, identity and education by providing practical examples of how complementary schools developed critical multilingual approaches to HL education, offering an evolving picture of complementary schooling. It illustrated how children develop criticality and creativity through language and identity explorations to find possibilities outside 'the boxes', transcending cultural and linguistic boundaries. It stressed the importance of developing a sense of agency in the learning environment and an awareness of one's communicative resources to participate in learning.

As observed in the children's fieldnotes (for example, Amelia's notes in Section 7.3.2), students' and teachers' roles are deconstructed and reconstituted through a progressive engagement in participatory activities which underlie a redistribution of agentive power. The analysis of the classroom space and materiality (Section 6.3) showed how the desk arrangements, like the whole-class table in which the teacher

sits among the children, shaped the interaction and improved verbal and non-verbal communication among children, and between the children and the teacher. I decided to emphasise the use of the whiteboard. By encouraging the children to make use of the board, limiting her own use, and regularly inviting them to write on it to explain concepts and sharing their knowledge with the others -to the point that children used to go to the board spontaneously-, the teacher in this study established a participatory atmosphere that permitted the children to actively take part in the process of learning, democratically and collectively.

Children were also gradually involved in the lesson planning. Since the teacher promoted a game-based design for most of the learning activities, and because such games were customisable, children had the chance to decide about the games they wanted to play to practice and revise the language and grammar content suggested by the teacher. The repetition of such games offered an opportunity for the children to self-manage their learning activities with minimal input from the teacher who, in the words of Amelia, 'helped' the students, positioning herself in the role of facilitator of the learning process.

In contrast to a banking concept of education, for which "[t]he teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite" and justifies his own existence based on the students' ignorance (Freire, 1970, p.72), the teacher in this study challenged her position of power by taking a different position from the start. She was always sitting at the desk with the children, she involved them in the lesson planning process, promoted occasions of knowledge exchange between peers, avoided a space of frontal teaching and, instead, encouraged the use of the whiteboard, favoured humour and a 'pedagogy of friendship' (Albrecht-Crane, 2005). Most importantly, she welcomed the children's full communicative repertoire, in speaking as in writing. All of



this combined allowed the emergence of multilingual learner identities.

Such examples are specific to this context of research, and I do not intend to say that other classes are not already participatory in style but because of my experiences both as a practitioner and as a researcher in this setting, I have reason to believe, and hope, that there is scope for more multilingual, critical and participatory ways of engaging with HL learning and learning more broadly. Despite the specificity of this educational setting, I believe that this work can be helpful for thinking about the applicability of multilingual and critical pedagogies, and about the role of education in the construction and development of harmonious social identities.

### 8.3.3. Methodological contribution

Finally, an element of innovation in this study resides in the methodology. Although initially unplanned, during the research I developed new ways to involve the participants in the process of data collection as well as refining the design of the questionnaires on family language practices. As thoroughly illustrated in Chapter 4, during the last school term I invited the children to join me in writing notes about '*what you hear, what you see*' (Viola, in Section 4.4.5) in the classroom. Their contribution, with precious insights on group dynamics and on their perception of the HL learning experience, proved invaluable as, combined with my own observations, constituted a crucial point of analysis of language and education in this complementary school.

As regards the quantitative part, I explained in Chapter 5 how questions about family language practices were posed in a two-way style, which means that I asked about the language(s) that each member of the family used with each other member, providing two variables for each pair (for example, how parent 1 speaks to parent 2 as well as how parent 2 speaks to parent 1). The questions were organised in matrix

tables, with coded numeric values between 0 and 1 where whole numbers referred to monolingual language use (0 for English and 1 for Italian) and variance in the combined use of the two languages was recorded in segments of 0.25. Collecting information about language use between all the members of the family unit and expanding the number of segments for a more accurate -although conventional- representation of multilingual practices, provided greater scope to the quantitative investigation of language practices in multilingual families.

## **8.4. Implications for policy and practice**

### **8.4.1. For families**

This study on Italian as a heritage language in London revealed some key challenges in maintaining the HL in post-Covid and post-Brexit England. Parents shared their concerns about finding the space and the time for Italian in a life dominated by English, and the complications that emerged once children started primary school. Their use of English became dominant, or got reinforced at the expenses of the HL, and parents were sometimes socialized into English (Chapter 5), making HL maintenance a hard task for families alone. In fact, one third of the families stated that their children's language skills in Italian deteriorated during the pandemic, confirming that families cannot bear alone the responsibility of language maintenance. Furthermore, the analysis of language practices and of the families' experience of HL maintenance (in and out of complementary schools) highlighted how children hold agency in shaping the families' language ecologies and how simply speaking to the children in Italian or adopting a one-parent one-language approach does not suffice for the development of a good level of proficiency in Italian. But they also shed light on the need of providing

children with opportunities for peer-to-peer interaction for legitimising the use of the Italian language in London (and not only when in Italy) and acquiring a sense of ownership of a language that is often solely connected to the Italian parents, who is generally “the only funnel to Italianess” (Section 5.4 and 6.2). Based on the conversations held with some key participants and their parents, the experience of complementary schooling can provide children with opportunities to explore their own relationship with their HL and more importantly, with their multilingual selves.

#### 8.4.2. For practitioners

The greatest implications of this research are for teaching practice. The study does not intend to tell how to teach Italian as a HL, but it offers perspective on how creating the right atmosphere in the CS class can support children in their learning experience. The analysis in Chapter 6 gives an overview of the role of space and materiality in the CS classroom and stresses the importance of organising the classroom for a better distribution of resources to access to favourable positions and to enable children to exercise agency in their learning environment. The translanguaging stance adopted by the teacher in these classes, combined with the participatory model applied and a game-informed design, constituted a crucial starting point for creating ‘safe spaces’ (Conteh and Brock, 2011) for the children to explore, discover and experiment with their multilingual selves in education. It also helped them to access to peer-to-peer knowledge exchange, which in turn reinforced a sense of agency while learning how to use all the resources at one’s disposal.

Against a deficit perspective, the teacher encouraged the use of different languages, language varieties and modes to communicate in order to learn and connect and viewed the children’s prior knowledge as a valuable asset for participating in the activities. The work in small groups promoted dialogue and connection in which

children claimed new subject positioning and explored different possible selves. Despite the principles of critical pedagogy were not deliberately applied from theory, the circumstances generated by the translanguaging stance and the participatory and game-informed design of the activities, created the prerequisites for the development of critical and multilingual modes of teaching and learning. Finally, the stories in this study can give teachers in mainstream school a better understanding of the full language and education experience of some of their pupils who have a migratory background.

#### 8.4.3. For schools and policymakers

At last, this study offers valuable insight into the ways institutions can improve HL learning programmes that benefit the children and their families. A key result of this study is the effect of a critical and multilingual approach to language education, which enabled children to legitimise multilingual learner identities. Whilst the teacher had no formal training in critical pedagogies, her academic background and interest in translanguaging, and the freedoms as well as the constraints of extra-curricular community-based education, allowed her to explore teaching practices which challenged the hierarchy between languages and questioned roles and power in the classroom.

A first point to raise is about the value of extracurricular educational spaces which, by being less structured and 'policed', can provide space for more critical pedagogies, reinforcing agency and participation, and communicative repertoires and identity explorations. A lesson learned through this study is about curriculum. In Chapter 7, it was mentioned how the Italian syllabus and the material proposed by the promoting body of the consulate, based on Italian as an MFL, had little currency for HL classes. The teacher's agency in tailoring the programme on the children's multilingual profile

and mediating policies (as the syllabus) proved the importance of open policies that can ensure that children benefit from educational practices tailored on their needs and find space, in extracurricular education, to escape the weight of curricular standardisation.

In conclusion, recommendations from this study revolve around the recognition of complementary schooling as important sites of learning and the need for teacher training on multilingualism and critical pedagogies. Connections between mainstream schools and complementary schools can be an important first step towards a dialogue on linguistic diversity and language education in truly holistic terms, as sharing the various ways in which teachers can engage with multilingualism in the CS classroom and elaborate on the meaning of learning in community-based spaces, can open reflections for training teachers. For these reasons, I echo the call of Curdt-Christiansen and La Morgia (2018) for the public educational system to provide support to families in their “battling against language shift and loss” (p.197), by enabling meaningful connections between educational settings and promoting teacher training modules and/or continuing professional development on multilingualism as well as on critical pedagogies.

#### 8.4.4. Policy and practice moving forward

In February 2024, the Global Heritage Language Think Tank published a Global Call to Action, emphasizing the consequences of inaction in relation to supporting heritage languages: “decreased linguistic diversity, language attrition and related generational trauma, increased alienation and conflict, and violations of linguistic human rights” (Anderson et al., 2024, p.6). In their call for action, the message is clear: HL education must become a core component of official language education policies worldwide,

encompassing governmental, familial, mainstream school, and social responsibility policies (ibid.)

Despite emerging initiatives like this one and ongoing research on multilingualism and HL education, achieving social justice in language education remains a challenge. While educational systems may celebrate linguistic diversity, they often fail to encourage and practically enable multilingualism. Complementary schools such as the one described here frequently serve as sites of linguistic diversity promotion and resistance, where multilingualism can be nurtured and not just 'celebrated'.

However, HL education primarily operates outside the public education system, lacking support and understanding from governments and society at large (Anderson et al., 2020). This thesis demonstrates how operating with greater flexibility outside (highly) regulated systems can foster multilingual and critical pedagogical practices that are beneficial to the children development of language skills as well as a more harmonious sense of self. Nevertheless, a limited awareness of such educational activities in the general public represents a limitation to the development of the sector. Among the many hurdles for complementary schools and HL activities, financial sustainability and teacher training strike one as at the most prominent (Thorpe et al., 2020; see also Section 1.2).

More positively, Australia and Iceland offer examples of administrative guidance and government funding for HL education initiatives (Community Languages Australia, 2018; Iceland Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2020). In contrast, the UK lacks a central system for recognising and registering complementary schools. The National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education (NRCSE), since 2022 part of the YPF Trust, serves as a space for supplementary education (not only related to

language). Yet, mapping the presence of complementary schools and promoting their initiatives remains difficult. Educators and grassroots organizations often lack awareness of their being part of the sector, with groups of teachers and students often calling themselves ‘Italian clubs’, ‘Portuguese club’, etc. rather than complementary schools, for example. The inconsistency in the ways each community calls such activities means also that the different initiatives often work in isolation, not feeling connected to other realities of similar intents, and not aware of the significance of their activities in the big picture (of language education). The future of HL education is dependent on matters of recognition. In fact, visibility and legitimisation are important for discussing finances and financial sustainability in effective terms. Moreover, the reduced visibility and legitimisation of CSs is often at the roots of a “struggle to form mutually beneficial partnerships with mainstream schools” (Anderson et al., 2020, p.5).

The idea that mainstream schools could facilitate HL education by encouraging language use at home and promoting educational community settings is not new (Kenner and Ruby, 2012, for example). Open school buildings, for instance, could provide free spaces for HL maintenance activities, fostering a sense of community ownership and supporting the activities also in financial terms. To different extents, some communities and organisations are already using mainstream schools’ premises for HL classes renting by the hour. Mainstream schools should consider offering spaces free of charge or at very reduced costs to provide organisations with greater opportunities. This would be ideally medium-small classrooms that could be specifically used for multilingual activities. They could have pinboards and posters for the different communities that use the room so the children could contribute to the wall decorations and not feeling like learning is occurring in “borrowed spaces”, which, otherwise, could undermine the students’ sense of legitimacy (Tsolidis, 2008). Instead,

they would be shared spaces where different named languages converge.

Furthermore, mainstream and complementary schools could cooperate in their local areas to make parents aware of the initiatives happening in given areas (in the UK, for example, this could be on a postcode basis). Today, mainstream schools may be hesitant to share information due to concerns about accreditation and teaching quality.

Beyond issues of logistics, legitimising HL education also involves enhancing teacher training and qualifications. Teacher training for and/or including elements of HL education is essential to start increasing the quality of education in both mainstream and complementary schools. Legitimising the community activities may translate also in mainstream schools actively playing a role in language education and multilingualism. Teacher exchanges and observations of classes in both mainstream and complementary schools could be integrated into continuous professional development (CPD). Workshops could illustrate diverse approaches to language education, making it clear that there are different dimensions to language education and that HL requires different activities compared to MFL and so-called L1 or L2. Some training modules could incorporate activities on how the same language content could be designed using different resources and approaches if taught as L1, FL, L2 or HL<sup>6</sup>.

An International Project of the Zurich University of Teacher Education (PH Zurich), for example, produced the series *Materials for heritage language teaching*, with a wealth of material for teachers that could be used to introduce HLE-specific activities. A group of organisations in Canada, Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands, and the United States

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<sup>6</sup> Taking the example of Italian and Italy and England, the definition 'first language' (L1) refers to Italian studied in Italy by students who speak Italian at home; Foreign language (FL) would be Italian studied in England by students who do *not* speak Italian at home; Second language (L2) is Italian studied in Italy by students who speak other languages at home; HL is Italian studied in England by students who speak Italian at home. Definitions of first, second, foreign languages are conventional.



also produced an international guidance for community-based schools (Aberdeen et al., 2021), reflecting the need for more specific resources and guidance for the teaching and learning of heritage languages.

Modules on heritage languages and heritage language education in teacher training programmes in the UK are needed to support multilingual children, but making all the institutions involved in HLE (such as the consulates and organisations from the countries of origin of some communities like seen in this work) aware of the differences in language education is also vital to ensure that the activities promoted by the local communities support and leverage the maintenance of the HLs. In other words, this is action that involves different actors, in the UK and in the countries of origin of some of these communities.

Finally, we should take into consideration the Brexit factor. The protagonists of this project were the children of some of the EU citizens who moved to the UK just before or straight after the global financial crisis and settled in London, where their children were born and raised. As the generation of post-2008 EU migrants gets older and starts having children, the need for HL maintenance for some European languages increases and will increase in the upcoming years. Taking into account these children's sense of connection to their languages and cultures of origin is essential for shaping the future relationships between the UK and Europe and the EU countries.

As Borthwick (2017, p.185) suggests in a volume dedicated to languages after Brexit, the UK "has the potential to jump-start its capacity for language skills if it begins to pride and support the language knowledge held by its community groups" because "[o]ur community language speakers and learners constitute a considerable, valuable and *ready* resource to help us meet the challenges of the future". Emphasising

readiness, I posit that instead of focusing the energies mostly -or only- on the promotion of foreign language learning, supporting and developing the area of heritage language education in post-Brexit England would be an efficient way forward: “at a time when it is widely acknowledged that the UK needs more linguists, it is perverse to ignore the language skills and knowledge held by the diverse groups within our communities” (ibid., p.193).

In conclusion, moving forward, HL education in the UK requires support from government institutions and public awareness efforts. Teacher training and qualifications should cater to the needs of HL learners, while institutions both in the UK and from students' countries of origin should support community initiatives. A key area for development is teacher training and qualifications/certificates for HLE to start not only providing the teachers with the tools to effectively support HL learners, but also increasing legitimacy of complementary schools to the eyes of mainstream schools. Mainstream schools must play a pivotal role in promoting the significance of HL education and facilitating information exchange among parents and communities. To do so, institutions need to develop and enhance the infrastructure to support the establishment of links between complementary schools and mainstream schools and this passes through teacher training and a constructive use of space. This collaborative effort should aim to preserve linguistic diversity, prevent generational disconnections, and uphold linguistic human rights.

### **8.5. Limitations and future research**

Like any research projects, there are some limitations in the work carried out here. First, it is important to explain that different themes would have been found with other

participants, or at other times, or if analysed by another researcher. Indeed, in Chapter 1, I introduced the time space of the research and the background of the author to position this work in its social dimension, clarifying that in taking an ethnographic perspective, the results are highly contextual. Second, the data presented are emblematic extracts from a large dataset and not all the participants could be mentioned in this thesis but they all contributed significantly to shaping this work and to broaden my understanding of their experiences. Because of the time constrictions of the doctoral training, there are areas that remained unexplored. Although all the data collected informed the work by providing context, I did not have the chance to conduct a systematic analysis of all the data as they did not reveal to be fundamental for answering my research questions. For example, in the interviews with children and parents, several interesting aspects about national identities and Brexit were discussed. However, since during data collection and analysis some new questions emerged, and the focal point of these was pedagogy and communication in the classroom space, a deep analysis of national identities would have not provided essential insights for the doctoral thesis.

Whilst a sociolinguistic insight into the experience of EU communities and multilingual families in post-Brexit England is critical and should be explored further to extend the conversation on the future relationships with the EU and its citizens, this study identified a critical gap in heritage language studies: the role of critical and multilingual approaches to education to legitimise minority language and identity options. An avenue for future research would be a comparative analysis of this approach across different CS with different languages. Such investigation would enable us to identify different patterns between practices and make more generalisations about critical pedagogy in HL education. Also, more cross-cultural comparative research in

complementary schools may help us understand the development of different HL programmes, and whether language learning alongside culture and traditions are always in function of the relationship to nation-states in an increasingly globalised world. A Participatory Action Research on critical multilingual approaches to HL education across different languages could be another way to understand HL education as well as exploring some teacher training options.

Finally, in terms of family language policy studies, an under researched area is that of children's language ideologies and how they are developed in the different educational settings where they encounter different discourses about language. A qualitative investigation on how children's ideologies about languages may change when they have long-term multilingual learning experiences and how such changes are reflected on changing FLP could improve our understanding of both HL maintenance and multilingual education.

## **8.6. Closing remarks**

This piece of work comes at the end of more than three years of doctoral training. Time in which I explored the complexity of knowledge and realised the importance of interdisciplinarity to study social issues and life experiences. And as I was trying to navigate such complexity, I had the privilege to learn from the many people with whom I could enter in conversation: from the ones who wrote and published scholar work, reports, blog posts, at different times and in different places, to the ones who shared their coffee break with me and enjoyed discussing matters of language and education, but most importantly, I learned from the participants to this study who put trust in me and generously gave me some of their time to share their experiences.

This project allowed me to reach a much deeper understanding of heritage language maintenance and education, but also of my own community and of my own language and pedagogical practices. I was able to see through new eyes the reality of complementary schools, and I concluded that such extracurricular educational spaces have the unique potential to provide children with linguistic and pedagogical 'breathing spaces' (Fishman, 1991) to develop a legitimate multilingual identity in education, and travel towards harmony.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A. Certificates of ethical approval



28/04/2021

Miss Carmen Silvestri

Language and Linguistics

University of Essex

Dear Carmen,

**Ethics Committee Decision**

Application: ETH2021-0940

I am writing to advise you that your research proposal entitled "European heritage languages: understanding identity and pedagogy in multilingual London" has been reviewed by the Ethics Sub Committee 3.

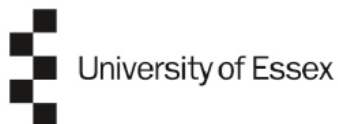
The Committee is content to give a favourable ethical opinion of the research. I am pleased, therefore, to tell you that your application has been granted ethical approval by the Committee.

Please note that the current Government guidelines in relation to Covid 19 must be adhered to and are subject to change and it is your responsibility to keep yourself informed and bear in mind the possibility of change when planning your research. We will keep you informed if there are any changes in the University guidelines.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information or have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

Beverley Pascoe



26/08/2021

Miss Carmen Silvestri

Language and Linguistics

University of Essex

Dear Camen,

**Ethics Committee Decision**

Application: ETH2021-2084

I am writing to advise you that your research proposal entitled "European heritage languages: understanding identity and pedagogy in multilingual London" has been reviewed by the Ethics Sub Committee 3.

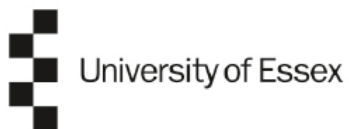
The Committee is content to give a favourable ethical opinion of the research. I am pleased, therefore, to tell you that your application has been granted ethical approval by the Committee.

Please note that the current Government guidelines in relation to Covid 19 must be adhered to and are subject to change and it is your responsibility to keep yourself informed and bear in mind the possibility of change when planning your research. We will keep you informed if there are any changes in the University guidelines.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information or have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

Beverley Pascoe



07/04/2022

Miss Carmen Silvestri

Language and Linguistics

University of Essex

Dear Carmen,

**Ethics Committee Decision**

Application: ETH2122-1081

We are writing to advise you that your research proposal entitled "European heritage languages: understanding identity and pedagogy in multilingual London" has been reviewed by the Ethics Sub Committee 3.

The Committee is content to give a favourable ethical opinion of the research. We are pleased, therefore, to inform you that your application has been granted ethical approval by the Committee.

Please note that the current Government guidelines in relation to Covid 19 must be adhered to and are subject to change and it is your responsibility to keep yourself informed and bear in mind the possibility of change when planning your research. We will keep you informed if there are any changes in the University guidelines.

Please do not hesitate to contact the REO Governance Team ([reo-governance@essex.ac.uk](mailto:reo-governance@essex.ac.uk)) if you require any further information or have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

REO Research Governance team

**Colchester Campus**  
Wivenhoe Park  
Colchester CO4 3SQ  
United Kingdom

T 01206 873333

**[www.essex.ac.uk](http://www.essex.ac.uk)**



@Uni\_of\_Essex



/uniofessex



/uniofessex

## Appendix B. Recruitment material

### Recruitment material (1) Email draft

Dear X,

[complementary school's name] is delighted to take part in a research project of the University of Essex and sponsored by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

The researcher, Carmen Silvestri, is collecting data on language background and multilingual practices in the Italian community of London. If you have children of primary school age, you can take part in this [online survey](#) that only requires 15 minutes of your time. Your contribution and support to the field of heritage language learning will be highly appreciated! Please, feel free to share the link with other community members and/or Italian speaking friends in London.

The researcher will also conduct an ethnographic study in our school to get an understanding of how primary school children with a migratory background develop a sense of self, and their experience of learning Italian as a heritage language in the UK during and after the Covid19 pandemic.

If one of your children is attending an Italian after-school club, you will be invited to a Zoom meeting to better discuss what the school's participation in this study means to you and your child. In this occasion, you will have the opportunity to ask more questions to the researcher and raise any doubt or concern that you may have. Please, be aware that participation is completely voluntary and you can still withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

If you and your child agree on taking part in this study, you will be asked to allow the researcher to observe some of your child's lessons. This includes taking notes, audio-recording and capturing images. All data will be anonymised and any document used in the findings of the study will not be identifiable. More details can be found on the Participant Information Sheet attached and you will be able to ask any question directly to the researcher. Please, use this [doodle poll](#) to communicate your availability for the Zoom meeting.

Please, don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions.

Best wishes,

[Headteacher/Community leader's name]

[Complementary school's name]





30 luglio 2021 · 🌐



Parli italiano ma tuo figlio continua a rispondere in inglese? Stai cercando di trasmettere a tuo figlio le tue origini italiane ma non è sempre così facile? Se hai figli in età da scuola primaria, potresti partecipare a questo studio e aiutare la ricerca a capire meglio come sostenere i tuoi piccoli nel loro percorso di formazione!

Mi chiamo Carmen e sto conducendo uno studio etnografico presso l'Università di Essex, sponsorizzato dal Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC / UK Research and Innovation). Al momento cerco partecipanti per un sondaggio online sul background etnolinguistico e le pratiche multilingue nella comunità italiana di Londra e avrei bisogno del vostro contributo.

I requisiti per partecipare allo studio sono:

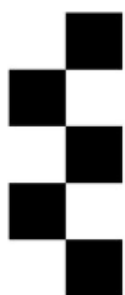
- far parte di una famiglia di origine italiana a Londra (almeno un genitore italiano)
- avere figli in età da scuola primaria (da Reception class a Year 6)

Questo progetto di dottorato su educazione, lingua e identità studia il ruolo del multilinguismo nell'Inghilterra post-Brexit, con un focus sulla comunità italiana. Lo scopo di questo studio è quello di comprendere il processo di **formazione identitaria** dei bambini che frequentano la **scuola primaria**, e la loro esperienza di apprendimento dell'**italiano come lingua d'origine**.

Se ti va di donare 15 minuti del tuo tempo alla ricerca, compila questo questionario online. Il tuo contributo sarà molto apprezzato! Grazie mille 😊

[https://essex.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_dostMF7sf1cDR8q](https://essex.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dostMF7sf1cDR8q)

Per saperne di più sul progetto: <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=studentship-2420884>



University  
of Essex



Arts and  
Humanities  
Research Co

👍 6

Commenti: 8

👍 Mi piace

💬 Commenta

📄 Invia

**Recruitment material (2) Email draft**

Dear X,

Thanks once again for participating in this study on multilingualism. Your contribution is highly appreciated!

The last phase of this study involves interviews with you and your children to collect information about your experience of multilingualism at the Italian complementary school [or your involvement in the activities of the complementary school]. As a reminder, the aim of the entire project is to get an understanding of how primary school children with a migratory background develop a sense of self and self-perception, and their experience of learning Italian as a heritage language at a complementary/community language school.

If one of your children is taking part in the study [or you are a teacher or a stakeholder at the complementary school] and you are interested in joining the last phase of it [this study], you will be invited to a Zoom meeting to better discuss what being interviewed means, and how the semi-structured interviews will be conducted. In this occasion, you will have the opportunity to ask more questions about the research and raise any doubt or concern that you may have. Please, be aware that participation is completely voluntary and you can still withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

Please, note that all data will be anonymised and any document used in the findings of the study will not be identifiable. More details can be found on the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form attached and you will be able to ask any question directly to the researcher. Please, use this [doodle poll](#) to communicate your availability for the Zoom meeting.

Please, don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions.

Best wishes,

Carmen Silvestri

## Appendix C. Information sheets and consent forms

### Participant Information Sheet

#### Education, language and identity in multilingual London

19/02/2021

You are being invited to take part in a research project on multilingualism. My name is Carmen Silvestri and I am a PhD research student in Applied Linguistics at the University of Essex. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

#### **What is the purpose of this study?**

This research is part of my Ph.D. at the University of Essex, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). This doctoral project on education, language and identity investigates the role of multilingualism in post-Brexit England, with a focus on the Italian community. The purpose of this ethnographic study is to get an understanding of how primary school children develop a sense of self and self-perception, and their experience of learning Italian as a heritage language in the UK.

#### **Why have I been invited to participate?**

You have been invited to participate in this study because you and your child are interested in a community language school taking part in this research project and your child attends one of their Italian language classes for heritage language learners.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Do I have to take part?**

Not if you don't want to – it is completely voluntary. If you and your child do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a consent. You can still withdraw at any time and you do not have to give a reason. If you choose to withdraw, your children will be excluded from observations and audio-recording and no images will be taken of them or their work. Data gathered up to that stage will still be subject to the rule of anonymity and confidentiality, and they may be used for the analysis of group activities at the complementary school.

If you have a question about the ethical nature of this study, please contact the researcher, Carmen Silvestri (XXX@essex.ac.uk).

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<sup>7</sup> This includes after-school clubs and home sessions.

### **What will happen to me if I take part?**

The first part of this research aims at collecting information about the children's linguistic background and multilingual practices. The study requires parents to take part in an online survey and it should take 15 minutes to complete. Your words may be quoted or summarised in the findings of the study. You will not be identifiable as your real names and any personal data will not appear in this study.

In the course of the next 12 months, I would like to observe the Italian lessons at the community language school where your child is enrolled/ you work. Observations will be done remotely when social distancing rules require remote learning.

I will take notes, pictures and make audio recording of some parts of the lessons. I can keep you up to date on my observations and audio transcripts involving you or your child (upon request). Also, I will collect some children's work such as drawings and writing pieces. Any document used in the findings of the study will not be identifiable and children personal data will not appear in my thesis or in any future publication.

### **What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

By participating in this study, the utmost care will be taken that no harm to you or your child's psychological wellbeing, physical health values or dignity will be affected. Taking part means that parents must give up some of their free time to complete the online survey.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

The benefit of this study is that it will further our understanding of multilingual education. This will allow the researcher to contribute to academic knowledge with up-to-date information on Italian as a heritage language in the UK and to identify teaching strategies that could better support heritage language learners in the future.

### **Will my information be kept confidential?**

Only the researcher and the researcher's supervisor (see name and contact details below) will have access to the data. Your privacy will be respected at all times and all information collected will be anonymous and remain completely confidential. Pseudonyms will be used to anonymise participants and images will be altered to protect the identity of the participants. A software will be used to selectively blur parts of the images to cover faces and any other identifiable information. All data will be treated as personal under the 2018 Data Protection Act, and they will be secured electronically in my own laptop protected by a secure password.

## **What is the legal basis for using the data and who is the Data Controller?**

Should you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form before the study commences. The GDPR states that consent must be freely-given, specific, informed and unambiguous – given by a statement or a clear affirmative action. The Data Controller will be the University Information Assurance Manager ([dpo@essex.ac.uk](mailto:dpo@essex.ac.uk)) at the University of Essex.

## **Ethical approval**

This project has been reviewed on behalf of the University of Essex Social Sciences Ethics Sub-Committee and has been given approval.

## **What will happen to the results of this study?**

The results of this study will form part of the report for my Ph.D. project at the University of Essex. Please remember that the results are anonymised and therefore participants will not be identifiable. If you choose to participate, a copy of this study can be sent to you upon request. When this research project will be completed, the fully anonymised data will be uploaded on the Research Data Repository of the University of Essex.

## **What should I do if I want to take part?**

If you wish to take part in this study, keep a copy of this information sheet, complete the attached consent form and email it to [XXX@essex.ac.uk](mailto:XXX@essex.ac.uk). You will receive a confirmation email with the link to the online survey.

## **Concerns and complaints**

If you have any concerns about any aspect of the study or you have a complaint, in the first instance please contact the researcher (see contact details below). If are still concerned or you think your complaint has not been addressed to your satisfaction, please contact the Departmental Ethics Officer (Dr Ella Jeffries, [XXX@essex.ac.uk](mailto:XXX@essex.ac.uk)). If you are still not satisfied, please contact the University's Research Governance and Planning Manager, Sarah Manning-Press ([XXX@essex.ac.uk](mailto:XXX@essex.ac.uk)).

## **Contact details**

### **Researcher**

Carmen Silvestri, Department of Languages and Linguistics, [XXX@essex.ac.uk](mailto:XXX@essex.ac.uk)

### **Supervisors**

Tracey Costley, Department of Languages and Linguistics, [XXX@essex.ac.uk](mailto:XXX@essex.ac.uk)

Hannah Gibson, Department of Languages and Linguistics, [XXX@essex.ac.uk](mailto:XXX@essex.ac.uk)

## CONSENT FORM (PARENTS)

Title of the Project: **Education, Language and Identity in Multilingual London**

Researcher: Carmen Silvestri (Department of Languages and Linguistics)

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Information Sheet dated 19/02/2021 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these questions answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving any reason and without penalty.

3. I agree to give consent for my child to be observed by the researcher during Italian classes at the complementary school during the school year 2021/2022. I agree for the researcher to join the group when the school runs classes face-to-face.

4. I agree to give consent for my child to be observed by the researcher during Italian classes at the complementary school during the school year 2021/2022. I understand that observation will take place on Zoom while teaching is happening online. I agree for the researcher to run observations online.

5. I give consent to the researcher for audiotaping and capturing images during Italian classes at the complementary school. I understand that the researcher may need to record parts of the Zoom session if remote learning is required and that this will be used to extrapolate audio-transcripts and images and that images will be altered through blurring faces to protect the identity of the participants.

6. I agree to give consent for my child's written work and worksheets to be used as part of the data collection, if necessary.
7. I understand that any identifiable data provided will be securely stored and accessible only to the researcher and supervisors, and that confidentiality will be maintained.
8. All participants, schools and local authorities will be given pseudonyms which means they will not be recognisable in publications, presentations or discussions. The data that will be used in the PhD thesis and other outputs will all be fully anonymised. However, there is a small chance that participants may be able to recognise themselves or other participants involved in the research and/or who attend the school where data were collected, given the size of the community. I understand that I can withdraw at any time if this is a cause for concern.
9. I agree to take part in the above study and will inform Carmen Silvestri ([XXX@essex.ac.uk](mailto:XXX@essex.ac.uk)) if my details change or if I wish to withdraw.

Participant's Parent Name

Date

Participant's Parent Signature

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Researcher Name

Date

Researcher Signature

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**CONSENT FORM (TEACHERS)**

Title of the Project: **Education, language and identity in multilingual London**

Researcher: Carmen Silvestri (Department of Language and Linguistics)

Please initial box

**10.** I confirm that I have read and understood the Information Sheet dated 19/02/2021 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these questions answered satisfactorily.

**11.** I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving any reason and without penalty.

**12.** I agree to give consent for classroom observation during my lessons at the complementary school during the school year 2021/2022. I agree for the researcher to join the group when the I run classes face.to-face.

**13.** I agree to give consent for classroom observation during my lessons at the complementary school during the school year 2021/2022. I understand that observation will take place on Zoom while teaching is happening online. I agree for the researcher to run observations online.

**14.** I give consent to the research for audiotaping and capturing images during my lessons at the complementary school. I understand that the researcher may need to record parts of the Zoom session that will be used to extrapolate audio-transcripts and images and that these will be altered to protect the identity of the participants

**15.** I understand that any identifiable data provided will be securely stored and accessible only to the researcher and supervisor, and that confidentiality will be maintained.



16. All participants, schools and local authorities will be given pseudonyms which means they will not be recognisable in publications, presentations or discussions. The data that will be used in the PhD thesis and other outputs will all be fully anonymised. However, there is a small chance that participants may be able to recognise themselves or other participants involved in the research and/or who attend the schools where data were collected, given the size of the community. I understand that I can withdraw at any time if this is a cause for concern.

17. I agree to take part in the above study and will inform Carmen Silvestri ([xxx@essex.ac.uk](mailto:xxx@essex.ac.uk)) if my details change or if I wish to withdraw.

Participant Name

Date

Participant Signature

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Researcher Name

Date

Researcher Signature

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**CONSENT FORM (SCHOOL)**

Title of the Project: **Education, language and identity in multilingual London**

Researcher: Carmen Silvestri (Department of Language and Linguistics)

Please initial box

**18.** I confirm that I have read, and I understand the Information Sheet dated 19/02/2021 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these questions answered satisfactorily.

**19.** I understand that the participation of the school, teachers, parents and children is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving any reason and without penalty.

**20.** I agree to give consent for classroom observation at our complementary school during the school year 2021/2022. I agree for the researcher to join the group when classes run face-to-face.

**21.** I agree to give consent for classroom observation at our complementary school during the school year 2021/2022. I understand that observation will take place on Zoom while teaching is happening online. I agree for the researcher to run observations online.

**22.** I give consent to the research for audiotaping and capturing images for ethnographic research at the complementary school. I understand that the researcher may need to record parts of the Zoom session that will be used to extrapolate audio-transcripts and images and that these will be altered to protect the identity of the participants

**23.** I understand that any identifiable data provided will be securely stored and accessible only to the researcher and supervisor, and that confidentiality will be maintained.

24. All participants, schools and local authorities will be given pseudonyms which means they will not be recognisable in publications, presentations or discussions. The data that will be used in the PhD thesis and other outputs such as publications will all be fully anonymised. However, there is a small chance that participants may be able to recognise themselves or other participants involved in the research and/or who attend the school where data were collected, given the size of the community. I understand that participants at our school can withdraw at any time if this is a cause for concern.

25. I agree for the complementary school to take part in the above study and will inform Carmen Silvestri ([XXX@essex.ac.uk](mailto:XXX@essex.ac.uk)) if our details change or if I consider a withdraw from the study.

**School name**

**Gatekeeper name**

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---

**Date**

**Signature**

---



---

**Researcher Name**

**Date**

**Researcher Signature**

---



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## CHILDREN CONSENT FORM



Hey! Did you know that now I am a student like you? I am learning to be a researcher. It is very exciting!

When researchers have a question, they have to find the right answer. They need to collect a lot of information to do so. I have a question on how children like you learn Italian, or how they improve it, but first of all, I need to explain *exactly* how Italian kids in London speak and what they do at the Italian club.

I thought I could take some notes on my diary. I may also take pictures of your drawings and writings, and sometimes I may audio record parts of the lesson. Do you think this can help me to describe what your Italian club really is? If you think this is a good idea, please tick the boxes below. I promise that I will never tell your parents or anyone else that a note was about you or that a picture was yours unless you authorise me to do so. I will make everything anonymous ;)

My name is ..... and I am a pupil from Year .....

### I am comfortable if



Carmen takes notes about my group during our Italian club	
Carmen takes pictures of my work (drawings, writing, etc.)	
Carmen records some conversations that I have with my teacher and classmates during the Italian club and takes pictures of <u>us</u>	

Grazie mille!

## Participant Information Sheet

### Education, language and identity in multilingual London (interviews)

03/03/2022

You are being invited to take part in a research project on multilingualism run by Carmen Silvestri, PhD candidate in Applied Linguistics at the University of Essex. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

#### What is the purpose of this study?

This research is part of Carmen Silvestri's research project at the University of Essex, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (CHASE/AHRC). This doctoral project on education, language and identity investigates the role of multilingualism in post-Brexit England, with a focus on the Italian community. The purpose of this ethnographic study is to get an understanding of how primary school children develop a sense of self and self-perception, and their experience of learning Italian as a heritage language in complementary/community language schools.

#### Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate in this study because your child(ren) is/are enrolled in the complementary school taking part in this study and you and your child already took part in this research project in its first and second phase of data collection. You are invited to take part in the last phase (interviews stage). You may also be invited because you are an adult involved in some capacity in the provision of Italian classes for heritage language learners at the complementary school (es. teacher, stakeholder, etc.).

#### Do I have to take part?

Not if you don't want to – it is completely voluntary. If you and your child do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a consent form. You can still withdraw at any time and you do not have to give a reason. If you choose to withdraw, your interviews will be excluded or removed from the analysis.

If you have a question about the ethical nature of this study, please contact the researcher, Carmen Silvestri ([XXX@essex.ac.uk](mailto:XXX@essex.ac.uk)).

#### What will happen to me if I take part?

This part of the research aims at collecting information about the children's sense of self and their experience of learning Italian as a heritage language in the complementary school.

The study requires children to take part in a semi-structured interview that should take 15 minutes to complete. The interview is child friendly, and it is designed based on visual methods. Pictures, videos and drawings will be used to discuss the theme of identity and Italian as a heritage language.

Parents and teachers or other stakeholders may be invited to a semi-structured interview following a similar approach. Adults' interviews would last between 30 minutes and one hour.

Interviews will be held at the premises where the children attend Italian classes. The room for interviews with the children has glass doors. Interviews with adults will also be held at the same venue or via Zoom.

The researcher will take notes and make audio recording of the interviews or Zoom video recording in the case of interviews online. She will collect some children's drawings as part of their interview. Any document used in the findings of the study will not be identifiable and children's personal data will not appear in the thesis or in any future publication. Your words and your child's words may be quoted or summarised in the findings of the study. You will not be identifiable as your real names and any personal data will not appear in this study.

### **What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

By participating in this study, the utmost care will be taken that no harm to you or your child's psychological wellbeing, physical health values or dignity will be affected. Taking part means that parents and children must give up some of their free time for the interview.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

The benefit of this study is that it will further our understanding of multilingualism and multilingual education. This will allow the researcher to contribute to academic knowledge with up-to-date information on Italian as a heritage language in the UK and how to better support heritage language learners in the future.

### **Will my information be kept confidential?**

Only the researcher and the researcher's supervisor (see name and contact details below) will have access to the data. Your privacy will be respected at all times and all information collected will be anonymous and remain completely confidential. Pseudonyms will be used to anonymise participants. All data will be treated as personal under the 2018 Data Protection Act, and they will be secured electronically in the researcher's computer protected by a secure password.

### **What is the legal basis for using the data and who is the Data Controller?**

Should you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form before the study commences. The GDPR states that consent must be freely-given, specific, informed and unambiguous – given by a statement or a clear affirmative action. The Data Controller will be the University Information Assurance Manager ([XXX@essex.ac.uk](mailto:XXX@essex.ac.uk)) at the University of Essex.

### **Ethical approval**

This project has been reviewed on behalf of the University of Essex Social Sciences Ethics Sub-Committee and has been given approval.

### **What will happen to the results of this study?**

The results of this study will form part of the researcher's PhD at the University of Essex. Please remember that the results are anonymised and therefore participants will not be identifiable. If you choose to participate, a copy of this study's outputs can be sent to you upon request. When this research project will be completed, the fully anonymised data will be uploaded on the Research Data Repository of the University of Essex.

### **What should I do if I want to take part?**

If you wish to take part in this study, you can join an online meeting where you have the possibility to ask the researcher any questions you may have. You will be asked to keep a copy of this information sheet, complete a consent form and you can email it to [XXX@essex.ac.uk](mailto:XXX@essex.ac.uk) or hand it out on the day of the interview, if that is in-person.

### **Concerns and complaints**

If you have any concerns about any aspect of the study or you have a complaint, in the first instance please contact the researcher (see contact details below). If are still concerned or you think your complaint has not been addressed to your satisfaction, please contact the Departmental Ethics Officer (Dr Ella Jeffries, [XXX@essex.ac.uk](mailto:XXX@essex.ac.uk)). If you are still not satisfied, please contact the University's Research Governance and Planning Manager, Sarah Manning-Press ([XXX@essex.ac.uk](mailto:XXX@essex.ac.uk)).

#### **Contact details**

##### **Researcher**

Carmen Silvestri, Department of Languages and Linguistics, [XXX@essex.ac.uk](mailto:XXX@essex.ac.uk)

##### **Supervisors**

Tracey Costley, Department of Languages and Linguistics, [XXX@essex.ac.uk](mailto:XXX@essex.ac.uk)

Hannah Gibson, Department of Languages and Linguistics, [XXX@essex.ac.uk](mailto:XXX@essex.ac.uk)

**CONSENT FORM (PARENTS- INTERVIEWS)**

Title of the Project: *Education, Language and Identity in Multilingual London*

Researcher: Carmen Silvestri (Department of Languages and Linguistics, University of Essex)

**Please initial box**

**26.** I confirm that I have read and understood the Information Sheet dated 03/03/2022 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these questions answered satisfactorily.

**27.** I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving any reason and without penalty.

**28.** I give consent for my child to be interviewed by the researcher at the complementary school. I understand that the conversation will be audio-recorded.

**29.** I agree to take part in the study and be interviewed by the researcher. I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded. Should it take place on Zoom, I agree for the researcher to record the videocall.

**30.** I agree to give consent for my child's drawings and/or my drawings done during the interview to be used as part of the data collection

**31.** I understand that any identifiable data provided will be securely stored and accessible only to the researcher and supervisors, and that confidentiality will be maintained.

**32.** All participants, schools and local authorities will be given pseudonyms which means they will not be recognisable in publications, presentations or discussions. The data that will be used in the PhD thesis and other outputs will all be fully anonymised. However, there is a small chance that participants may be able to recognise themselves or other participants



involved in the research and/or who attend the school where data were collected, given the size of the community. I understand that I can withdraw at any time if this is a cause for concern.

- 33.** I agree to take part in the above study and will inform Carmen Silvestri ([XXX@essex.ac.uk](mailto:XXX@essex.ac.uk)) if my details change or if I wish to withdraw.

Participant's Name (Parent 1)

Date

Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Name (Parent 2)

Date

Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Name

Date

Researcher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_


## CHILDREN CONSENT FORM



Ciao! Last time, I wanted to describe what your Italian club really is and observing your classes has been very helpful! Thank you for giving me permission. I have learnt a lot of things but I still have some questions. I was curious about how children like you learn/improve Italian. Today, I would like to understand how they feel about speaking Italian and having Italian origins.

I thought I could ask you some questions and take some notes on my diary. I may also take pictures of your drawings and I may audio record our conversation. Do you think this could help me to describe what it means for you to be Italian and speak Italian? If you think this is a good idea, please tick the boxes below. I promise that I will not tell anyone that a note was about you or that a picture was yours unless you authorise me. I will make everything anonymous, promised!

Mi chiamo ....., ho ..... anni e sono in Year .....

I am comfortable if	
Carmen interviews me and audio records what we say	
Carmen takes pictures of my drawings	

Grazie mille!

## Appendix D. Questionnaire

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### CONSENT FORM

By submitting a completed version of this questionnaire you are consenting to the following:

- I agree to participate in the research project "European heritage languages: understanding identity and pedagogy in multilingual London" carried out by Carmen Silvestri.
- This agreement has been given voluntarily and without coercion.
- I have been given full information about the study and contact details of the researchers.
- I have read and understood the information provided above.
- I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these questions answered satisfactorily.
- I agree to take part in the above study and will inform Carmen Silvestri (cs20842@essex.ac.uk) if I wish to withdraw.

I agree to take part in the survey

I do not wish to participate

### Parent 1

You will be asked questions about your background. The section is repeated for Parent 1 and Parent 2 or a parental figure that is important for your child or children. If the family includes only one parent who has an Italian background, this would be Parent 1. This section will be followed by a section with questions about your children (one list of questions for each child). The last set of questions relates to your children's use of Italian as a heritage language.

Parent 1's pseudonym (please, choose a nickname/ a name that is not your real one)

---

Q2\_a Where did you grow up?

UK (1)

Italy (2)

Another European country (please, specify) (3)

---

None of the above (please, specify) (4)

---

Prefer not to say (999)

---

Q3\_a When did you move to London?

I grew up in London (1)

Before 2008 (2)

Between 2008 and 2016 (3)

After 2016 (4)

Other (5) \_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to say (999)

---

Q4\_a Your nationality (citizenship)

---

Q5\_a Your ethnicity

---

Q6\_a Your national identity

---

Q7\_a How do you usually answer when asked “where are you from”?

\_\_\_\_\_

---

Q8\_a What do you consider your *native* language?

English (1)

Italian (2)

Another European language (please, specify) (3)

\_\_\_\_\_

Other (please, specify) (4) \_\_\_\_\_

Q9\_a What do you consider your *main* language?

English (1)

Italian (2)

Another European language (please, specify) (3)

\_\_\_\_\_

Other (please, specify) (4) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Q10\_a What do you consider your *second* language?

English (1)

Italian (2)

Other (please, specify) (3) \_\_\_\_\_

I don't speak a second language (4)

---

Q11\_a Do you speak additional languages? If yes, which one(s)?

A third language (please, specify) (3)

\_\_\_\_\_

A third and fourth language (please, specify) (4)

\_\_\_\_\_

A third, fourth and fifth language or more (please, specify) (5)

\_\_\_\_\_

---

Q12\_a How would you rate your language proficiency in English?

None (0)

Poor (A1/A2) (0.25)

Medium (B1) (0.50)

Good (B2) (0.75)

Very good or native (C1/C2) (1)

Prefer not to say (999)

---

Q13\_a How would you rate your language proficiency in Italian?

None (0)

Poor (A1/A2) (0.25)

Medium (B1) (0.50)

Good (B2) (0.75)

Very good or native (C1/C2) (1)

Prefer not to say (999)

---



Q15\_a The following question relates to which language or languages you use in different contexts. With how many friends and colleagues you use only one language (Italian or English) and with how many friends and colleagues you use both languages in your conversations?

	Italian only			English only			English and Italian		
	with very few or none (0)	with some (0.5)	with most (1)	with very few or none (0)	with some (0.5)	with most (1)	with very few or none (0)	with some (0.5)	with most (1)
Friends (Q15_Friends)									
Colleagues (Q15_Colleagues)									

Q16\_a Please, rate your sense of belonging to the Italian community/communities of London with 1 being low and 5 being high

5 (5)

4 (4)

3 (3)

2 (2)

1 (1)

Q17\_a How do you think your children understand their sense of belonging to the Italian community in London?

---



Q18\_a What is your level of education?

- No qualifications (1)
  - GCSE/A level or equivalent (Diploma) (2)
  - Undergraduate (Laurea Triennale) (3)
  - Master (Laurea Magistrale) (4)
  - PhD (Dottorato) (5)
  - Prefer not to say (999)
- 

Q-FLOW1 Could the section for the other parent be completed?

- Yes (1)
- No (2) \_\_\_\_\_

End of Block: Parent 1

---

Start of Block: Parent 2

End of Block: Parent 2

---

Start of Block: Child 1

Q19\_a Child's pseudonym (please, ask your child to pick a name)

\_\_\_\_\_

---

Q20\_a Child's school year

- Reception class (0)
- Year 1 (1)
- Year 2 (2)
- Year 3 (3)
- Year 4 (4)
- Year 5 (5)
- Year 6 (6)

## Q21\_a Child's year of birth

2010 (0)

2011 (1)

2012 (2)

2013 (3)

2014 (4)

2015 (5)

2016 (6)

2017 (7)

## Q22\_a Child's nationality (citizenship)

Only British (1)

Only Italian/EU (2)

Both (British and EU) (3)

Other (4) \_\_\_\_\_

## Q23\_a Child's ethnicity

\_\_\_\_\_

## Q24\_a What languages does your child speak?

Only Italian (0)

Only English (1)

Italian and English (2)

Italian, English, and a third language (3)

Other (please, specify) (4) \_\_\_\_\_

Q25\_a How would you rate her/his language proficiency in Italian?

None (1)

Poor (2)

Medium (3)

Good (4)

Very good (5)

---

Q26\_a What do you consider being your child's *main* language?

Italian (1)

English (2)

Other (3) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Q27\_a What is the language (or languages) spoken at school as a medium of instruction?

English (1)

English and one more language (2) \_\_\_\_\_

Other (3) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Q28\_a Is your child considered a speaker of English as Additional Language (EAL) at school?

Yes (1)

No (2)

I don't know (3)

---

Q29\_a What is the language (or languages) mainly spoken at home?

Italian (0)

English (1)

Italian and English (2)

Italian, English and one more language (3)

Other (4) \_\_\_\_\_

Q30\_a The following question relates to which language or languages your child uses in different contexts. In general, what languages does your child use to communicate with...?

	Languages					
	English only (0)	Both, but mostly English (0.25)	As much English as Italian (0.50)	Both, but mostly Italian (0.75)	Italian only (1)	Other (999)
Parent 1 (Q30_a_Parent1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent 2 (Q30_a_Parent2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Siblings (if applicable) (Q30_a_Siblings)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nanny (if applicable) (Q30_a_Nanny)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friends (Q30_a_Friends)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q31\_a How would your child answer if asked "where are you from"? (please, ask your child)

\_\_\_\_\_

Q\_FLOW2 Do you have other children in primary school?

Yes (1)

No (2)

---

End of Block: Child 1

---

Start of Block: Child 2

---

End of Block: Child 2

---

Start of Block: Child 3

---

End of Block: Child 3

---

Start of Block: Language and education

Well done! Here's is the very last set of questions :)

---

Q32 Are there activities at your children's school that support and promote multilingualism?

Yes (1)

No (2)

I don't know (3)

---

Q33 If yes, what activities at your child's school promote multilingualism?

---

---

Q34 What do you consider being the challenge(s) in the maintenance of the home/heritage language(s)?

---

Q35 How do you support the maintenance of Italian as a home/heritage language? (Please, tick all that used to apply *before* the pandemic)

	Rarely / never (0)	Sometimes (0.5)	Often / always (1)
We speak Italian at home (Q35_Speak)			
We watch movies in Italian/Italian TV (Q35_TV)			
We listen to Italian music/ Italian radio (Q35_Radio)			
We read books/comics/magazines in Italian (Q35_Read)			
The children play videogames in Italian/ with their Italian friends (Q35_Game)			
We spend our holidays in Italy (Q35_Holiday)			
The children spend their holidays in Italy with our relatives (Q35_REL_Holiday)			
The Italian relatives come to visit us in the UK (Q35_REL_Visit)			
The children speak with our Italian relatives over the phone/videocall (Q35_REL_Call)			
We have an Italian speaking nanny (Q35_Nanny)			
We spend time with our Italian speaking friends in London (Q35_Friends)			
We attend Italian community events (Q35_Events)			
The children attend Italian classes/ after-school clubs (Q35_Classes)			
Other (Q35_Other)			

Q36 How do you support the maintenance of Italian as a home/heritage language? (Please, tick all that apply *during* the pandemic)

	Rarely / never (0)	Sometimes (0.5)	Often / always (1)
We speak Italian at home (Q36_Speak)			
We watch movies in Italian/Italian TV (Q36_TV)			
We listen to Italian music/ Italian radio (Q36_Radio)			
We read books/comics/magazines in Italian (Q36_Read)			
The children play videogames in Italian/ with their Italian friends (Q36_Game)			
We spend our holidays in Italy (Q36_Holiday)			
The children spend their holidays in Italy with our relatives (Q36_REL_Holiday)			
The Italian relatives come to visit us in the UK (Q36_REL_Visit)			
The children speak with our Italian relatives over the phone/videocall (Q36_REL_Call)			
We have an Italian speaking nanny (Q36_Nanny)			
We spend time with our Italian speaking friends in London (Q36_Friends)			
We attend Italian community events (Q36_Events)			
The children attend Italian classes/ after-school clubs (Q36_Classes)			
Other (Q36_Other)			

---

Q37 During the pandemic, your child's ability to speak Italian has

Improved (1)

Diminished (2)

Not changed (3)

---

Q38 Have you noticed any impact of the pandemic on your children's language development overall? If yes, what has been the impact so far?

---

---

Q39 Do your children attend or attended classes for the maintenance of Italian as home/heritage language?

Yes (1)

No (2)

---

Q40 Why did you sign them up?

---

---

Q41 How do you think that your child's Italian classes support her/his/their language development?

---

---

Q42 How do you think that your child's Italian classes support her/his/their identity development?

---

End of Block: Language and education

---



Start of Block: Register interest

**Thank you so much for your contribution!**

Please, download the PDF with your answers (in the next page) and/or take note of the pseudonyms that you have chosen. If you decide to withdraw, you will be asked to provide them. If you are interested in taking part in the next phase of this research, please leave your email address below to register your interest.

---

End of Block: Register interest

---

## Appendix E. Interviews guidelines

### Interview schedule/guidelines

**CHILDREN** (approx. 15 minutes, 1to1, in-person only)

- 1) Part one: I would ask the child to choose between Euros 2020, Olympics or Eurovision 2021 and will show them a short videoclip to open the conversation. Some of the questions may be:

Do you remember watching this? Where were you? Who were you with? In what language/on what TV channel did you watch it? How did you feel about it? Why were you supporting/not supporting this team/athlete/singer? Were you supporting other teams/athletes/singers? What do you hope for the next competition?

Videoclips selected:

Euros 2020 (2021) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W83tvTlzuzE> [00-00:36]

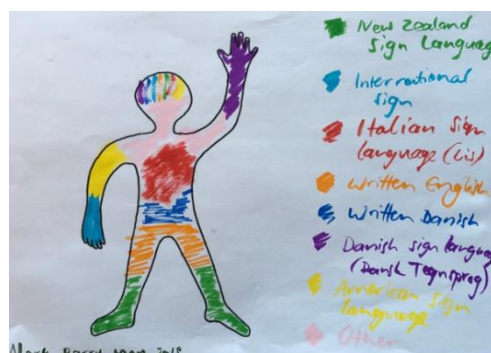
Olympics 2020 (2021) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDcfGL7jFfk> [00:25-00:44]

Eurovision 2021 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeaaoZSJksY> [14:25-15:32]

- 2) Part two: guided conversation about multilingualism and their experience at the complementary school. Prompting questions would be:

Do you attend a complementary school/Italian club? What do you do there? Why do you attend it or why do you think your parents signed you up? What do you like the most/the least? Did you make friends? What did you learn this year? How different is the Italian school from your morning school? Do you like/not like that?

- 3) Part three (visual method): I would invite the child to draw and colour the Language Portrait Silhouette (LPS)- image below. LPS are empty whole-body silhouettes in which research participants colour or draw languages, language variants or other aspects or modalities of communication (Kusters and De Meulder, 2019). LPS will be followed by a short verbal narrative explaining and commenting on the portrait.



EXAMPLE OF LANGUAGE PORTRAIT

**PARENTS** (approx. 30-45 minutes, 1to1 or 2to1, in-person or via Zoom)

- 1) Part one: I would ask the parents to choose between Euros 2020, Olympics or Eurovision 2021 and I show a short videoclip to open the conversation. Some of the questions may be:

Do you remember watching this? Where were you? Who were you with? In what language/on what TV channel did you watch it? How did you feel about it? How do you think your child felt about it? Can you expand on that? Why were you and your child supporting/not supporting this team/athlete/singer? Were you supporting other teams/athletes/singers?

Videoclips selected: *see children section*

- 2) Part two: follow-up questions on the questionnaire that parents completed in the first phase on data collection. Questions may be:

*Identity:* Could you tell me a little about you? Where did you grow up? When did you move to London and why? How do you answer when asked 'where are you from' (in different situations)? How and why does your answer change? How do you think your children feel about their Italian heritage? Can you give examples of situations in which you noticed your children expressing a sense of being Italian or English or X?

*Language:* What language(s) do you speak at work? What language(s) do you speak with most of your friends? Do you have many Italian speaking friends? Do you attend events of the Italian community and/or do you feel part of an Italian community in London? What language(s) do you speak at home? Do you think you have a 'family language policy'? How would you define/describe it? What do you think are the challenges of maintaining the heritage language(s)?

*Complementary school:* Does your child attend a complementary school/Italian club? Why did you sign them up? Why do you think it is important for your children to study Italian? Do you find that your child wants to attend the classes? What do they do/what do you expect that they do in class? What would you say that they learnt this year? Do you think that attending the complementary school can support your child's identity development and if so, how?

- 3) Part three (if applicable): I would ask the parents to share a diary entry. Some of the participants' parents offered to keep a diary to write their reflections on their children's experience of complementary schooling. Questions would be prompted by the words that the parent(s) decide to share.
- 4) Part four (if time allows it): I would invite the parent(s) to draw and colour the Language Portrait Silhouette (LPS) representing their family linguistic identity. LSP are empty whole-

body silhouettes in which research participants colour or draw languages, language variants or other aspects or modalities of communication (Kusters and De Meulder, 2019). LPS will be followed by a written narrative explaining and commenting on the portrait.



## Appendix F. Syllabus

MFL – Italian Syllabus Overview						
Rationale	Enable pupils to express their ideas and thoughts in another language and understand and respond to its speakers. Provide opportunities to learn new ways of thinking. Provide the foundation for learning further languages. A wide range of happy and rich memories in Italian formed through interesting and exciting experiences driven through vehicles that enhance children's awareness of their own abilities and strengths as a learner.					
Approach	CLIL = Content and Language Integrated Learning, it means doing subjects with a different language, Italian. TPR= Total Physical Response, a language teaching method developed by James Asher. It is based on the coordination of language and physical movement. In TPR, instructors give students commands in the target language with body movements, and students respond with whole-body actions. STORYTELLING - ROLE PLAY - CROSS CURRICULAR APPROACH					
EYFS						
Pupils in EYFS learn Italian colours, numbers and greetings through songs, games and storytelling. Children are involved in an emotional environment and they are engaged in kinesthetic learning activities. The pupil centre approach is based on a participative, active and communicative teaching, including non-verbal expressions.						
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
<b>Autumn</b>	Greetings Introducing yourself Colours Numbers up to 10 Seasons: Autumn The School objects Food Christmas in Italy	Greetings Introducing yourself Colours Numbers up to 10 Seasons: Autumn The alphabet The School objects Food Christmas in Italy	Greetings Introducing yourself Colours Numbers up to 20 Seasons: Autumn The alphabet The School objects Food Christmas in Italy	Greetings Introducing yourself Parts of the day and the related greeting The 4 seasons Italian alphabet Numbers up to 100 The School types of furniture School subjects Classroom language Food Days of the week Months of the year Ask and say the age Greetings about Birthday Christmas in Italy	Greetings Introducing yourself Days of the week Months of the year Questions about personal and general information The places of the holidays The 4 seasons The Italian alphabet The Family Classroom language Restaurant menu Numbers up to 100 Christmas in Italy	Greetings Introducing yourself Questions about personal and general information The Geography of holidays The weather The four Seasons Classroom language School subjects and timetable The family Daily routine Big Numbers over 1000 The clock reading Christmas in Italy

<b>Spring</b>	Italian culture: La Befana Seasons: Winter - Spring Revise the colours Animal Farm Carnival Revise Numbers Easter	Italian culture: La Befana Seasons: Winter Days of the week Revise the colours Animal Farm St. Valentine Carnival Numbers up to 10 Easter	Italian culture: La Befana Seasons: Winter Days of the week The house and its rooms Carnival Numbers up to 20 Easter	Italian culture: La Befana Seasons: Winter Days of the week Months of the Year My Birthdays The weather The house and its rooms Prepositions Carnival The numbers up to 100 The shops The jobs Easter	Italian culture: La Befana Seasons: Winter My Birthday The house and its rooms Prepositions Carnival The shops Numbers up to 1000 Euro The jobs Weather forecast Easter	Italian culture: La Befana Seasons Months of the Year My Birthdays Favourite games and hobbies Carnival- favourite clothes Famous people description Different types of houses Euro The shops The jobs Easter
<b>Summer</b>	Classroom language Main Parts of the body Family Sport Italian Fairy tales	Classroom language Season: Summer Parts of the body The sports Wild animals Italian Fairy tales	Parts of the body Describe yourself Sports To know some of the main countries The Italian cities and the most important sightseeing Italian Fairy tales	The main public building of a city Parts of the body Describe yourself Sports To know some of the main countries The actions The Italian cities and the most important sightseeings. Italian famous people	Clothes Telling the time The main public building of a city: city map and webquest Describe yourself and people The actions Sports The Italian geography To know some of the main nationalities Italian famous artists	The main public building of a city: city map and webquest Telling the time: hours and minute Television broadcast Describe yourself and people The Italian geography To know some of the main nationalities Houses around the World Italian famous authors and inventors

Core Content  
Cross Content

Documento elaborato dalle docenti ministeriali: 

## Appendix G. Example of coding

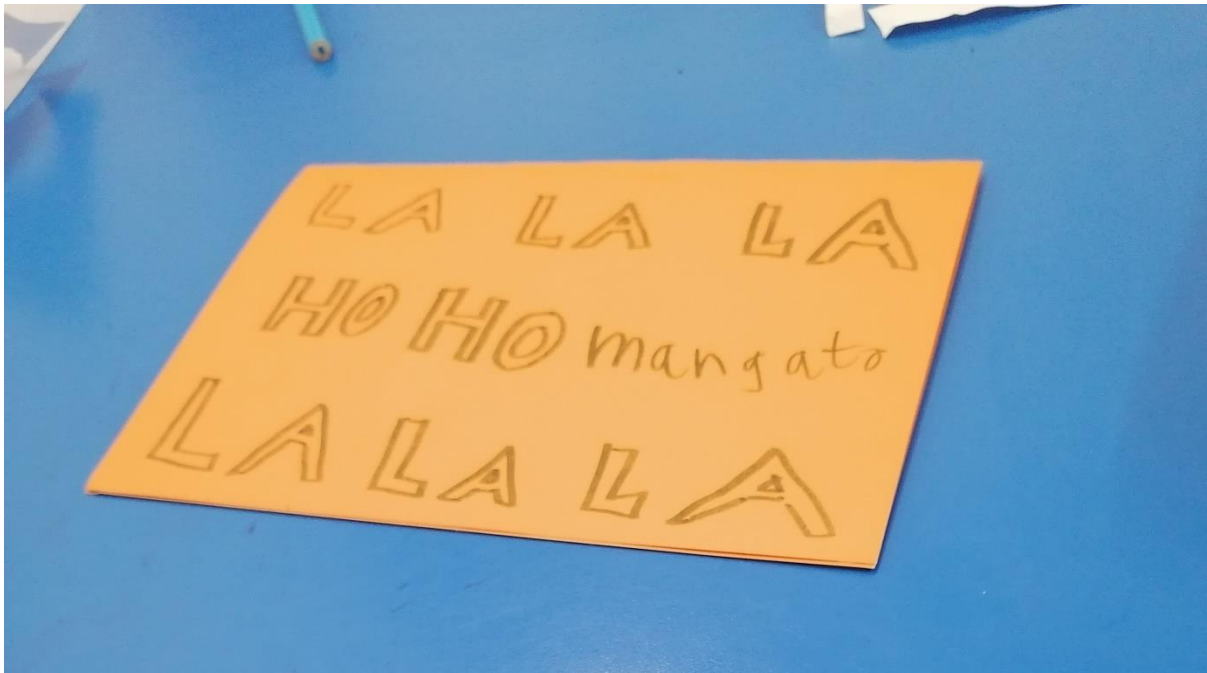
School year	Pseudonym	Why attending CS	Open codes	Topical themes	Emerging themes	
Y1	Chiara	<p>“perchè vai alla scuola di italiano?” A non lo so</p> <p>R and why do you go there? A e io vado lì perchè i miei genitori vogliono che parlo più italiano visto che non sono così brava a parlare in italiano. vuol dire che le mie professores- eh voglio dire che i miei genitori vogliono che imparo meglio per quando vado alla spiaggia con la mia cugina non mi prendono in giro cisto che non so così di tanto R ti prendono in gi:::or? chi ti prende in giro sulla spiaggia? (sad voice) A cugina R e cosa ti dice? A dice ‘dai amie puoi almeno provare di parlare bene in italiano?’</p>	Don't know	Don't know	<p>family connection; intra-generational relations; proficiency (to improve); parents' decision</p> <p>Parents want- to speak with family</p>	<p>reflecting on reasons while participating in research</p> <p>achieving language proficiency for connection (with family); language as a tool of power</p>
Y2	Rosa	<p>R che cosa- “perchè vieni alla scuola di italiano visto che già lo parli l'italiano?” B boh? R boh@ secondo te perchè ti hanno [ti mandano alla scuola di italiano B [così che B sono un esperto di italiano?</p>	Both (not know)	Don't know- become an expert	<p>reflecting on reasons while participating in research</p>	
Y2	Giuliano	<p>R alla scuola di italiano ma perchè andate alla scuola di italiano? O ehm perchè vojo studiare più italiano? L cosa lui hai ha detto R but is there a specific reason why you're [there? who decided O [it's because O my daddy is italian like i learn his language? L a bit mo:::re O so i can understand what he says [without L [ye:::s O repeat asking and we could say more [often L [ye::: instead of L continuing saying the word that you don't know because you'll know them R “so you can speak only [italian at some point L sì!</p>	<p>to learn parent's language; to improve; family connection</p>	<p>To learn parent's language</p>	<p>achieving language proficiency for connection (with family)</p>	
Y2	Artanna					

School year	Pseudonym	Why attending CS	Open codes	Topical themes	Emerging themes
Y2	Viola	<p>M:ehm perchè la mamma voleva che:: io imparassi l'italiano a leggere e scrivere</p> <p>R:quindi ti ha iscritto la mamma per imparare meglio l'italiano?</p> <p>M:si</p> <p>R:seconde perchè vuole che scrivi e leggi in italiano</p> <p>M:perchè ehm quando sono grande voglio andare a italia::no per vivere allora la mamma vuole che io faccio R:ti piacerebbe? se se vuoi scegliere di vivere in Italia puoi anche leggere e scrivere meglio no?</p> <p>M:si</p>	to read and write; future Italy; mum wants	Parents want- to read and write	achieving language proficiency for connection (with family)
Y2	Alessandro	<p>R: e ehm e secondo te perchè i tuoi genitori ti hanno iscritto alla scuola di italiano?</p> <p>N: "così posso imparare italiano meglio</p> <p>R: e cosa ci fai? poi quando lo hai imparato benissimo cosa fai con questo italiano?</p> <p>N: non lo so</p> <p>R: @pensaci un attimo</p> <p>N: "non lo so</p> <p>R: non lo so. ma sei contento di andare di an- cioè di imparare meglio l'italiano?</p> <p>N: si!</p>	to improve; parents want; don't know	Parents want- to improve	reflecting on reasons while participating in research
Y5	Violetta	<p>R: mi sembra che tu lo stia parlando l e perchè dobbiamo F: lo so</p> <p>R: stare qua?</p> <p>F: perchè posso scrivere in italia::no?</p> <p>R: così puoi scrivere e per perchè pensi che la mamma ti ha ti ha iscritto alla scuola di italiano?</p> <p>F: boh@@@</p> <p>R: non c'hai mai pensato</p> <p>F: mai</p>	<p>mum wants</p> <p>to read and write; mum wants</p>	<p>Parents want</p> <p>Don't know- to write</p>	<p>reflecting on reasons while participating in research</p>
Y4	Ludovico	<p>G: [perchè mio mamma G dice che io devo farla R: o::k</p> <p>G: e poi sono più bravo a parlare l'italiano se voglio andare a vivere in Italia</p> <p>R: mm certo pensi è possibile che nel futuro tu voglia vivere in Italia?</p> <p>G: no! (very close to the microphone)</p>	mum wants; future Italy; to improve	Parents want- to live in Italy	language as a tool of power

School year	Pseudonym	Why attending CS	Open codes	Topical themes	Emerging themes
Y3	Alex	R e quindi co- come perchè vieni alla scuola di italiano? L perchè vuole la padre@ R Il tuo papà vuole che vai [alla scuola di italiano L [si:: e L poi la prima volta l'ho piaciuta e quindi resto R ok ti è piaciuta e quindi sei rimasto nella scuola di italiano L si?	dad wants; I liked and I stayed	Parents want- then I liked it	n/a
Y3	Alex	M m ma la mia mamma dice che noi dobbiamo parlare italiano più e learn italiano più R ok quindi per migliorare [più che M [si	mum wants; to improve	Parents want- to improve	n/a
Y4	Maria	R alla scuola di italiano ma perchè andate alla scuola di italiano? O ehm perchè voio studiare più italiano? L cosa lui hai ha detto R but is there a specific reason why you're [here? who decided O [it's because O my daddy is Italian like I learn his language? L a bit mo::re O so I can understand what he says [without L [ye::s O repeat askinz and we could sav more [often	to learn parent's language; to improve; family connection	To learn parent's language	achieving language proficiency for connection (with family)
Y4	Guido	R e perchè fai una scuola di italiano il pomeriggio dopo la scuola inglese? S perchè ehm nella scuola inglese è una scuola e non è questo posto qua e poi c'ho e impariamo le cose e non cabbiamo tanto tempo per venire qua quindi veniamo dopo	"we don't have much time to come here and we come later"	it's just school?	
Y3	Amelia				



Appendix H. Bloopers



1 FA LA LA LA, HO HO, MANGIATO. HAPPY ITALIAN CHRISTMAS



3 I THOUGHT IT WAS A PAREO (SARONG)



2 NAH, IT'S NONNA'S HEADSCARF