



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI PADOVA

Università degli Studi di Padova

Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Letterari

Corso di Laurea Magistrale in
Lingue e Letterature Europee e Americane
Classe LM-37

Tesi di Laurea

Perceptions of Self-Efficacy for Inclusive Classroom Practices: a Survey of Italian EFL Teachers

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Anno Accademico 2022 / 2023

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ABSTRACT

The study aims at investigating the perceptions of self-efficacy for inclusive practices of Italian EFL teachers, given the fact that teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy appear to be related to a higher probability that they implement inclusive practices in their teaching methods. For the purpose of the study, the Self-Efficacy in Inclusive English Teaching (SEIET) questionnaire has been developed and administered on a sample of Italian EFL teachers with three aims: first of all, to measure the sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices on a sample of Italian EFL teachers; secondly, to ask the respondents what they think they need in order to improve their sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices; thirdly, to explore which personal factors appear to be correlated to the sense of self-efficacy.

Concerning the first aim of the study, the results of the survey brought to light that Italian EFL teachers appear to have a medium-high sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices. Regarding the second aim of the study, the respondents suggested that the key factors to improve their sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices and to be more trained on how to cope with students with SEN. Concerning the third aim of the study, the results suggested that there could be a correlation between final score and the level of school where teachers work.

In conclusion, the current study has brought to light that even though students with SEN have been attending regular classes for almost 50 years now, the support that teachers receive in order to grant the full inclusion of pupils with SEN in regular classes still needs to be improved.

INTRODUCTION

The current thesis describes the development of an instrument to measure the perception of self-efficacy for inclusive practices on Italian EFL teachers.

In the first chapter, the concept of Inclusive Education (IE) will be introduced. In the last few decades, the advent of internet, massive migrations and the globalization, not to mention the latest COVID-19 pandemic, have brought a first time seen *superdiversity* in modern Western society, which has affected the school system, too. Teachers have then found themselves to cope with these radical changes in class, too.

In Italy, the presence of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in regular classes has been promoted by the law since the 70's, when special schools were abolished and students with SEN were admitted to regular classes; in the 90's, SEN teachers were introduced, and Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) with them, which are instruments through which SEN teachers can design individualized programs based on SEN students' abilities and needs.

The concept of IE refers to an extremely adaptable teaching approach, capable of accommodating the needs of all students, irrespective of the presence of a disability, but with the assumption that all students have their own special needs. The principles on which IE lays its foundations are mainly two: the assumption that all students should be granted equal opportunities and the assumption that all students can achieve their own goals. Inclusive teachers should customize the content of their lessons, the goals they set, the means through which they intend to reach those goals, according to their students' abilities, natural dispositions, or SEN.

Concerning the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, there appear to be some techniques and methodologies that can be specifically useful to implement IE in the EFL lesson, in addition to the aforementioned general principles and means through which IE operates. More precisely, providing accessible language learning material, supplying the language input through multiple channels designing activities based on mutual help, collaboration, exchange among students, seem to promote an inclusive environment.

It appears to be clear that the instruments that EFL teachers have at their disposal in order to implement inclusive practices in their teaching are several. What is more, inclusion in Italy is strongly supported by the law, therefore, Italian teachers would be

expected to be strongly supportive of the implementation of IE at school. In reference to this, in the last decades scholars have been trying to understand which personal factors seem to influence the way teachers feel about IE, as it seems reasonable to state that teachers' thoughts and feelings towards IE may influence their willingness to implement inclusive practices in their teaching and therefore the probability that they adopt inclusive practices in their lessons.

In the second chapter of the current thesis, a literature review about the instruments that have been developed to state how teachers feel about the implementation of IE at school and which personal factors may influence their disposition to adopt inclusive practices will be provided. In short, it appears that the key factors that can lead teachers to implement IE in their teaching are teachers' positive attitude towards IE and pupils with SEN and a high sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices. More precisely, a high level of preparation about IE and students with SEN appears to be related to a higher sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices, which leads to a positive attitude towards IE in turn. A positive attitude and a strong sense of self-efficacy both contribute together to increasing the probability that teachers actually implement inclusive practices in their teaching. Given these premises, the Self-Efficacy in Inclusive English Teaching (SEIET) scale was created.

The development and the structure of the SEIET scale will be described in chapter 3 of the current dissertation. The instrument has three aims: firstly, to measure the sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices on a sample of Italian EFL teachers; secondly, to ask the respondents what they think they need in order to improve their sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices; thirdly, to explore which personal factors appear to be related to the sense of self-efficacy. Consequently, the SEIET scale is made of three sections: the first one is meant to collect demographic data, the second one is meant to measure the sense of self-efficacy of the participants, the third one is meant to give the respondents to write what do they think they need to improve their sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices. With the purpose of capturing the construct of self-efficacy as theorized by Bandura (1986 in Pace et al., 2016; also: Hecht et al, 2017; Sharma et al, 2012) the instrument is task-oriented, context-specific and subject-specific, meaning that it is meant to measure the perception of EFL teachers of their ability to complete a series of tasks in the inclusive EFL classroom. The items of sections two of the questionnaire may be divided into 5 groups, according to the type of task they describe:

1. Tasks regarding the management of the environment where the learning process takes place;
2. Tasks regarding the principle of customization of means;
3. Tasks regarding the principle of customization of objectives;
4. Tasks regarding the principle of customization of contents;
5. Tasks regarding the ability of teachers to collaborate with other professionals.

The survey was conducted between March and April 2023, involving a sample of 105 Italian EFL teachers, who had worked either at primary, lower secondary or upper secondary school. The questionnaire was administered online.

The results will be presented and discussed in chapter 4 of the current thesis. Conclusions will be provided in chapter 5 of the current work.

CHAPTER 1. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

1.1 THE BIRTH OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

1.1.1 Disability in Western society

The need for Inclusive Education (IE) has arisen in the past decades as a consequence of the increased attention that the care of pupils with disability¹ has recently gained. In order to deeply understand the philosophy of inclusive education, a brief recap on the history of how the concept of disability has been considered through history in Western Society appears to be needed.

An overview of how the perception of pupils with disability has changed over the centuries may be found in the book by (Trisciuzzi, 1998), in which the author retraced the history of the relation between people with disability and society, as long as the process of the inclusion of people with disability in the community. According to the scholar, 4 different stages can be recognized:

In ancient history, having children with disability was considered as a divine punishment, and people with disability were mostly excluded by society, as they were considered unable to work and provide for themselves. For example, in the Greek or in the Roman societies, people with any kind of chronic illness, physical or mental, were negatively labelled and considered cursed by the gods, and for this reason they were usually banned from the community, if not killed if the condition was visible since they were born. The stigma against disability, along with a negative image of people with disability, was strong.

¹ The debate about language and disability, regarding which words should be used when talking about people with disability, is very lively nowadays. For the current dissertation, I have chosen to follow the People First Language Approach (PFL), an approach that has recently spread in Western society and that states that people should be considered before their diagnoses. In order to do so, when describing a person, according to PFL the verb “to have got” should be used instead of “to be” (for example, a person has a disability instead of a person is disabled). The PFL’s linguistic prescriptions are widely known for their role in defining what should be the best way of talking about disability, but they can be applied to any group of people that tends to be identified by a condition or trait.

With the advent of Christianity, the idea that people with disability should be reared and taken care of arrived, therefore the negative perception that characterized ancient history slightly improved. People with disability were more tolerated, even though still not included. However, an important step forward needs to be mentioned, that is, the criminalization of infanticide, introduced in the 4th century B.C.

With industrialization and the development of the natural sciences, another important change of attitude occurred: illnesses and disabilities were not seen as divine punishments or individual guilts anymore and started to be seen as natural accidents (Trisciuzzi, 1998).

With the advent of internet, the significant increase of massive migrations and the process of globalization, the modern era has its own peculiarities.

As noted by Laura Nota et al. (2015), in modern societies the aforementioned factors brought significant changes, considerably incrementing the number of people living in situations of social disadvantage. The latest COVID-19 pandemic has given its contribution in turn, sending many sectors into crisis, and broadening the gap between rich and poor people. All these factors together have brought modern Western societies to be heterogeneous contexts, where people with different characteristics find themselves to collaborate with each other. The authors adopted the term “superdiversity” to describe this heterogeneity. What is more, it appears to be clear that these radical changes of the last decade affected the school system, too, requiring an equally radical change of perspective. Here is where the revolutionary concept of Inclusive Education (IE) comes in. In this chapter, the history of the beginning of the process of implementation of IE in Italy will be presented; subsequently, the definition of IE will be provided, along with the description of the means and methods through which it operates; lastly, how IE can be applied to the context of language teaching, therefore English Language Teaching (ELT) will be discussed.

1.1.2 The Italian context

Given the fact that it was one of the first countries to introduce laws in support of pupils with disability attending regular schools, Italy may be considered one of the main leaders in Europe when it comes to inclusion. The first steps were taken in the 1970s

with the laws on “School Integration²”, more precisely law 118/1971³, which granted the right of pupils with disability to attend regular schools, and law 517/1977⁴, which abolished special schools (Ianes et al., 2020, p.250). No measures were initially taken to ensure adequate support for teachers to take care of pupils with disability. However, almost a decade later, with the law 104 of 1992⁵, it is established that all people with disability should be granted the conditions to achieve the maximum level of autonomy, participation in the life of the community and complete realization of their rights. With this law, the support teacher (or special needs teacher) was introduced, as resource to support the participation of students with disability in regular classes possible.

The teaching program for students with a certified disability is regulated by Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs)⁶, which are instruments that were introduced with the Ministerial Directive of 24th February 1994⁷, through which special needs teachers can design individualized programs based on the students’ abilities, starting from the teaching plans of the subjects the student should follow with the rest of the class. In addition, since 2010 some other steps have been made, in order to accommodate the needs of other categories of students, therefore the category of students with disability was put aside in favor of the more inclusive category of students with Special Educational Needs, which also comprises students experiencing socio-cultural disadvantages (Ministerial Directive of 27th December 2012⁸, Ministerial Circular n. 8 of 6th March 2013⁹) (Ianes et al., 2020, p.252). Since these laws came out, legislation have been recognizing three main categories with the right of an IEP: pupils with a certified disability, pupils with Specific Learning Disorders, pupils with other types of SEN.

² In Italian: *Integrazione Scolastica*

³ <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1971/04/02/071U0118/sg>

⁴ <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1977/08/18/077U0517/sg>

⁵ <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1992/02/17/092G0108/sg>

⁶ In Italian: *Piano Didattico Individualizzato (PEI)*

⁷ <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1994/04/06/094A2245/sg>

⁸ https://miur.gov.it/ricerca-tag/-/asset_publisher/oHKi7zkjLkW/document/id/368339

⁹ <https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/0/Alunni+con+bisogni+educativi+speciali+%28BES%29.+C+hiarimenti.pdf/11f6467c-ed40-d793-746a-f3b04a6d4906?version=1.0&t=1555667446450>

In parallel, another important step forward in Europe was made in 2006 thanks to the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities¹⁰, which Italy among the other United Nations took part to. The treaty has the purpose of finding international agreements on human rights of people with disability, that should be granted equality by the law. The Convention also had the purpose of promoting a shift on the way people with disability are seen, promoting the idea that people with disability should not be seen as the weak section of society, objects of charity, but equal members of society with human rights. Support to this idea can be find in the paper by Ianes et al. (2020). According to the authors, the individual-medical model of disability appears to be an obstacle towards IE, as it has been proven that focusing on the disability doesn't help teachers to find measures and solutions in order to guarantee the full inclusion of pupils with SEN. In other words, the necessity to categorize students tends to maintain the focus on the issues students are facing instead of their abilities and strengths, promoting a passive approach towards students with SEN, along with social labelling and stigmatization. Given the fact that it tends to slow down the process of innovation in the field of IE, it appears that the medical model of disability should be completely eradicated (Ianes et al., 2020).

The most recent step made by the Italian government in the journey towards the implementation of IE is the Legislative Decree n. 66 of 13th April 2017¹¹, which brought several clarifications regarding the means and procedures aimed at including the student with SEN in regular classes. The decree is also relevant because it made a first attempt of eradicating the medical model of disability in favor of the more inclusive biopsychosocial model of health. In short, according to the medical model, illnesses are caused only by biological factors such as viruses or genetics, and so are disabilities, which should be at the center of medical investigation in order to be cured. In contrast, the biopsychosocial model of health sees health as the result of the complex interrelation among biological factors, psychological factors and socioeconomical factors.¹² In agreement with this view, the Decree n. 66 of 13th April 2017 states that,

¹⁰ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities#:~:text=The%20purpose%20of%20the%20present,respect%20for%20their%20inherent%20dignity.>

¹¹ <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2017/05/16/17G00074/sg>

¹² https://www.dors.it/documentazione/testo/201303/OMS_Glossario%201998_Italiano.pdf

after the medical assessment of the disability, all the medical figures that contributed to the diagnosis should compile a Functional Profile based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), focusing not on the diagnosis, but on pupils' ability and capabilities. The document should provide the foundations in which the IEP would lay on. The IEP, in turn, should be designed by teachers in collaboration together and with all the other professionals involved in education. The aim of the document should be to find the best instruments, measures and techniques to guarantee the full inclusion of students with SEN in the class. A recap of the most important moments in the history of the process towards the implementation of IE in Italy is provided in figure 1.

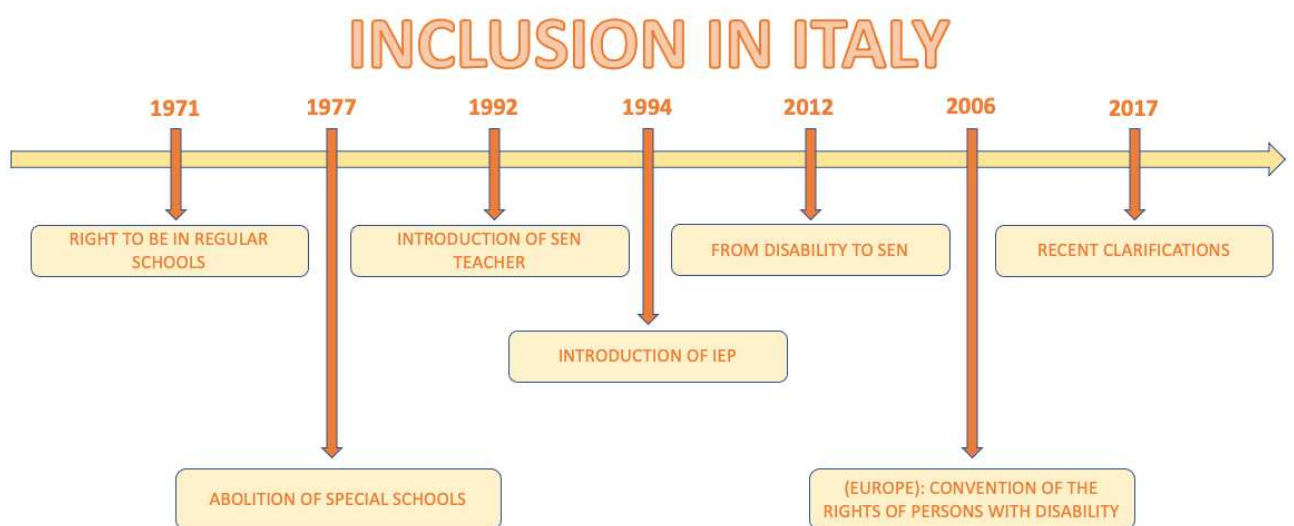


Figure 1. Most important moments for the implementation of IE in Italy.

To sum up, it appears that in Italy, the participation of pupils with SEN to regular classes is largely supported by the law. However, after pupils with a disability have been granted their spot in regular classes, the necessity to find a way to adapt teaching methods to the students' abilities has arisen, therefore, Inclusive Education made its appearance.

1.2 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: DEFINITION

The term Inclusive Education refers to an extremely adaptable teaching approach, capable of accommodating the needs of all students, no matter their personal inclinations, preferred learning styles, disability, Special Educational Needs (SEN), etc.

In order to completely understand the concept of inclusive education, it has to be considered that, as highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, modern societies are characterized by a first-time-seen superdiversity. This superdiversity was brought to school by all the aforementioned changes, along with the decision to admit students with disability in regular classes with the other students. In Italy, as it will be discussed further, special schools were closed in the seventies, but not all countries in Europe (not mentioning the world) have been moving forward at the same pace. The introduction of students with special needs in regular schools has brought to light the necessity to think about how to accommodate these students' needs, hence, the concept of integration was born, referring the set of interventions, means and modes of teaching useful to help students with SEN to attend regular schools.

The concept of inclusive education takes a step forward, and it triggers a fundamental change of perspective. It takes part in a broader discourse on human rights: inclusion suggests a radical reform of regular schooling, that should become able to accommodate every child's needs irrespective of disability, with the expectation that all students have "special needs" and thus need to be understood with their strength, flaws, experiences, learning styles, etc. The discussion is therefore brought in a social-ethical discourse which is strongly focused on values (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

As suggested by Nota, Ginevra e Soresi the term inclusion alludes to:

- The natural heterogeneity of every group of people or population;
- The refusal of any kind of standardization, even concerning students with the same disability;
- The ambition for an education capable of fulfilling every student's needs, not just the ones with SEN or any disability (Nota et al., 2015)

In other words, Inclusive Education is about treating all students equally with special care and attention. IE roots itself on two main principles (see figure 2):

- Equal opportunities: every student should be given the same opportunities to reach their personal goals, no matter their language, origin, social status, learning stile, disability, SEN;
- Presumption of competence: every student should be considered capable of reaching their goals, despite the obstacles they might find in their way.

On the other hand, the means by which IE seeks to achieve its goals are (see figure 3):

- customization of the modes: inclusive teachers try to adapt the studying materials and learning activities to the needs of all their students. This could mean, for example, bringing adapted, non-written material for students with dyslexia, but also trying to rotate the way studying material is provided, or providing audio/visual support, in order to accommodate the needs of students with different learning styles.
- customization of the objectives: inclusive teachers aim to set tailored goals to their students, based on their abilities and capabilities. This can mean that teachers could choose to lower the level of the goal expected of the student or that they can choose to divide the process to achieve the goal it into shorter, easier phases, in order to facilitate the learning process.
- customization of the content: inclusive teachers seek to provide accessible content, based on students' abilities and dispositions.

MAIN PRINCIPLES

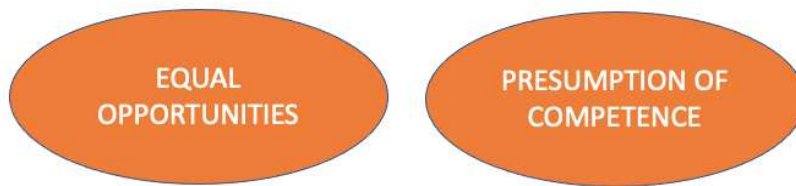


Figure 2. Main principles of IE.

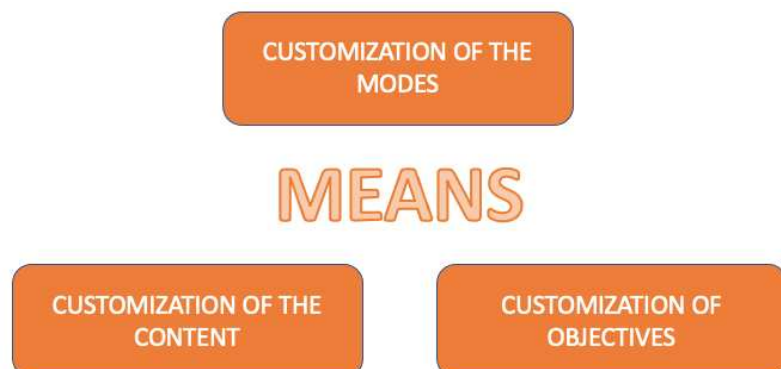


Figure 3. Means of IE.

However, as suggested by De Boer and colleagues (2011), many studies suggest that the attendance of students with disability in regular schools does not automatically bring to the establishment of relations of friendship with their peers (De Boer et al., 2011). What is more, in classes where different abilities have the possibility to meet and cooperate, there is a general improvement of pupils' competence on most of the subjects, along with an improvement of the level of social skills, both for students with or without special needs. This seems to be thanks to the fact that in a heterogeneous class, teachers naturally tend to customize their teaching methods on the students' needs with the aim of including them all in the activities (Nota et al., 2015, p.64-65). This idea is also supported by Ianes et al. (2020), who conducted a survey in 2014 on teachers, asking them to describe their teaching methods thinking about classes where students with disability were included. The results of the study shed light on the fact that in fully inclusive classes, the variety of methods used was largely wider, including a lot of student-centered activities such as cooperative learning or laboratories, while in the other classes teacher-centered activities were more frequent. Given these premises, it appears to be clear that teachers have a central role in the implementation of inclusive practices at school, and they should have the objective of understanding all their students as individuals, customizing with flexibility their teaching methods according to the students' needs, not focusing on their weaknesses, but, above all, on their abilities and dispositions (Tomlinson, 2006, p.15-17). In addition to the general cues provided by the principles on which IE lays its foundation and the support provided by the law, literature suggests that there are some techniques and methodologies that can be useful specifically to implement IE in the EFL lesson. In the next paragraphs, an overview of the means that appear to be effective for an inclusive EFL teaching will be presented.

1.3 INCLUSIVE EFL TEACHING

English teachers, as all the other teachers, need to be the protagonists of the process of the implementation of Inclusive Education at school, adapting their teaching methods to the necessity of the students and adopting inclusive practices, in order to guarantee the participation of all the pupils to all the activities of the class. In addition to the already cited means through which IE acts, there are some instruments which are peculiar for language teaching that English teachers could use in their classrooms in order to make their English lessons inclusive.

A starting point on the matter may be provided by Daloiso (2014), a book written as a result of the research of the DEAL¹³ group within the GloBES project, a project promoted by the university of Venice which aims at identifying the best practices and methodologies for language teaching. More precisely, it focuses on the struggles and difficulties that usually accompany students with Specific Learning Disorders in the study of a foreign language. In the third chapter of the book the scholar discusses some general considerations on language teaching and students with SEN, considering two principles as the chore of inclusive language teaching: accessibility in language teaching materials and the Universal Design of Learning. The first principle regards the fact that students should be provided with learning material that can be adapted to their needs. Language teachers should be able to design, or at least supply, accessible language learning material; this means, explains the author, making a succession of choices, based on scientific evidence, in order to provide equal language learning opportunities to all students, especially those with SEN (Daloiso, 2014, p.42). With the expression “Universal Design”, the author refers to a cultural movement, originated in the field of architecture, that advocates the idea that architectural barriers should be prevented by designing buildings that don’t have any architectural barrier to start with. This movement had its impact on pedagogy and teaching, thanks to the American research group CAST (Center for Applied Special Technology), that gave the idea that Universal Design could be applied to the context of education, giving birth to the expression Universal Design for Learning (UDL). In short, UDL is based on the idea that teaching material should be provided in different forms and modes, engaging different senses and diversified supports in order to activate the highest possible number of input channels, and organizing information in multiple ways, in order to accommodate the needs of different learning styles (Daloiso, 2014, p.45). It appears to be clear that the principles of UDL are in line with those of Inclusive Education.

Accessibility and language teaching was at the center of another work by Daloiso (2012), where the scholar explains that in order to provide students with accessible materials, teachers starting point should be students’ needs. Therefore, especially in the case of students with disability or SEN, teachers should focus on students’ abilities, what they are able to do and their language background, as long as their dispositions in order to be able to design a tailored language learning plan (Daloiso, 2012, p.503). In

¹³ In Italian: *Dislessia Evolutiva e Apprendimento delle Lingue*

addition, accessibility in language teaching should be rooted in three families of principles: principles addressed to the students, principles addressed to the language, principles addressed to the learning process. The first family of principles refers to the idea that all students should be guided by the language teacher to develop their personal goals, enhancing their abilities (and not their disabilities or needs) and following their own pace and favorite learning style. In other words, customizing the teaching process according to their dispositions.

The second family of principles regards the ability of teachers of providing in-context examples of language use, in order to facilitate the comprehension of the language inputs, along with teachers' ability to understand which area of learning should be strengthened (for example, oral abilities for students with reading issues). It also concerns teachers' ability to adapt learning materials to accommodate students' needs. In addition, Daloiso (2014) also explores more deeply the aforementioned second family of principles, as he provides some general suggestions and attentions that language teachers should bear in mind regarding the accessibility of language learning materials. The procedures that have been discussed may have a twofold aim: to adapt traditional materials and to design new ones. According to the author, teaching material should be accessible in terms of legibility, which depends on the type of chosen fonts, and readability, which depends on the way the contents are displayed in the page (layout). For example, concerning the issues that students with dyslexia may encounter, the British Dyslexia Association has published a guideline on how writing materials should be in order to accommodate students with dyslexia's needs, discussing more legible fonts, type of paper, more readable layouts, etc.¹⁴ What is more, the scholar adds that in order to be accessible, information should be organized in a way which enhance the comprehension of the content, taking also into account the necessity of accommodate the needs of different learning styles. In other words, students should be provided with diagrams, schemes and images, as long as audio-visual supports (Daloiso, 2014, p.52). In addition, it appears that organizing lists of new words (usually given by handbooks as long lists in alphabetical order) semantically can really enhance students' ability to learn their meaning and understand their use in-context. For this purpose, the

¹⁴ <https://cdn.bdadyslexia.org.uk/uploads/documents/Advice/style-guide/BDA-Style-Guide-2023.pdf?v=1680514568>

classic charts should be replaced by more catchy diagrams, flow charts, or bigger learning maps where words and expressions can be organized according to their semantic relation or communicative goals. The author concludes that the language exercises proposed should always take the students need into consideration. More precisely, He explains that in order to adapt an exercise, teachers could operate on either one or more of the following factors: the teaching focus of the exercise, the procedure required, the instructions, the use of different kinds of supports (Daloiso, 2014, p.59).

Concerning the third family of principles, they regard the means through which the learning process takes place. More precisely, according to Daloiso, highly structured learning units help students organize the learning process in easier and shorter stages, increasing their independence in the learning process, also in the case of students with SEN (Daloiso, 2012, p.511).

The relation among translanguaging, inter-comprehension and inclusive education is explored by Benucci (2021). The author claims that an approach based on a constant comparison between the native language (L1) and the language student are learning (L2), like translanguaging, can really enhance the learning process. In addition, inter-comprehension can be a strong ally for IE, as it is a language teaching approach that can combine more languages and cultures at the same time, without focusing on any L1, therefore it can help in classes where there is a great variety of L1. According to Benucci, the constant comparison brought by the two approaches has the power of facilitating the acceptance of diversity, cooperation, and therefore inclusion (Benucci, 2021).

In addition, in Daloiso and d'Annunzio (2021) the importance of offering inclusive learning materials is discussed. The scholars analyzed a sample of language learning handbooks, finding out that many categories of people that are actively present in the Western society are almost never represented. According to the authors, EFL teachers should select diversified handbooks and study materials in order to give the possibility to all students, with different origins but also different abilities, to feel represented (Daloiso & D'Annunzio, 2021). What is more, when selecting textbooks and studying materials, teachers should check them not only for the inclusive content, but also for the use of accessible and inclusive fonts and layouts, as suggested by Daloiso (2014), who described a survey that was conducted on students of different ages and origins, in order to explore what they thought about their foreign language handbooks. The study brought to light that 15% of the respondents rated their handbook really bad (from 1 to

3 out of 10 points), 23% rated it mediocre (4-5/10) and 36% sufficient (6-7/10) while only 26% thought their handbook to be good. What is more, the assigned score diminishes as the age of the respondents grows, suggesting that the attention dedicated to the matter appears to be lower for handbooks for secondary school students. The main issues that were cited by the respondents were that the fonts used in the book are too difficult to read, the words too small, and that key words are not highlighted or in bold type. In addition, the pages of the book are filled with too many words, while there are not any images to help understand and contextualize the language material. What is more, the respondents usually find the instructions of the exercises quite confusing. On the other hand, almost 90% of the participants of the study considered the audio-visual supports provided by the handbooks really useful (Daloiso, 2014, p.33).

The role of some other teaching techniques that can be used to make the English classroom an inclusive classroom is explored by Di Sabato (2021), who displayed a narrative writing workshop conducted in English, that was based on cooperative learning writing tasks. According to the author, the atmosphere generated from the assignments, that gave the students the opportunity to share their inner thoughts thanks to the narrative texts they had to create, along with the necessity to cooperate, generated an inclusive environment. The role of narration, or more precisely auto-narration, is also at the center of the work by Luise & Tardi (2021), where the benefits of an instrument called Language Biography¹⁵ are explained. The instrument allows students to take note of the phases and pace of their language learning process, forcing them to reflect on their own experiences. According to the authors, this can be a useful tool for English teachers, who can explore differences and similarities of the students' experience to promote mutual acceptance of their characteristics among the students.

In addition, Rezabala & Holguín (2019) promoted the role of technological audio-visual instruments, which can help teachers to offer a study material that can be catching and interesting on one hand, and accessible on the other hand. The importance of technology is also highlighted by Aiello et al. (2013), who explored the possibility of a multisensorial approach for language teaching, with the idea of conveying the message in the L2 through different sensorial channels. Through this approach, teachers should give the language input simultaneously as a visual, auditive and tactile inputs, in order to give students the possibility to decode the message through the different senses. This

¹⁵ In Italian: *Biografia Linguistica*.

approach has been proven to be effective for students with audio/visual impairment, as well as students with Specific Learning Disorders. The usefulness of a multi-sensory approach is also discussed in the already mentioned booklet by Daloiso (2014), where the author focused on the issues that students with specific learning disorders must face in their everyday life at school, especially in the EFL classroom. The scholar explained that if the language input is provided through just one channel (auditive or visual), the probability that the information would actually be processed by the brain reaching the long-term memory may be low. In addition, providing the language input through auditive and visual supports simultaneously, may engage at the same time the two parts of the brain which are responsible for the processing of both visual and auditive information, simplifying the process of decoding of the message (Daloiso, 2014, p.16). This might be considered true for all learners, however, the issues that students with Specific Learning Disorders have to face are larger, as they present greater difficulties, and may struggle recognizing similar sounds, reproducing sounds, pronouncing the words, spelling correctly, organizing and synthesizing information, memorizing new words and expressions. In addition, teachers should bear in mind that students may also show emotional difficulties related to the struggles they are coping with (Daloiso, 2014, p.22).

To sum up, the instruments and tools that EFL teachers have at their disposal in order to make their English classroom an inclusive classroom appear to be several. Given the fact that Italy was one of the first countries to close special schools and include students with disability or SEN in regular classes, and that in Italy full inclusion is strongly supported by law, the country might be considered nowadays one of the main leaders in Europe when it comes to IE. Therefore, Italian EFL teachers could be expected to be strongly supportive of inclusive practices and of full inclusion. In contrast, the training required to become a teacher in Italy is largely different depending on the school level it allows you to teach, and it does not always involve specific training on how to deal with students with SEN. More precisely, even though training programs on IE are usually included in the university courses to teach at a primary level, it is not compulsory to include specific training on IE in order to be able to teach in secondary schools. As a result, EFL teachers, especially in secondary schools, may not be prepared on the aforementioned set of inclusive practices that they should adopt to make their English classroom an inclusive English classroom, therefore they may experience some resistance towards IE. In the next chapter, a literature review on studies conducted to

understand how teachers feel about this complex set of inclusive practices will be displayed.

CHAPTER 2. TEACHERS' ATTITUDES, THOUGHTS, SENTIMENTS, INTENTIONS AND EFFICACY FOR INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE EDUCATION: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

As highlighted in the previous chapter, several means and techniques can be used by teachers to bring inclusion to the EFL classroom. However, it may be hard for the professionals involved in education to find the best way to always engage all the pupils of the class, without depriving them of the freedom to express themselves. This chapter aims to explore how scholars have been investigating how educators, especially teachers, feel about the complex set of inclusive practices presented in chapter one of the current thesis.

2.1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The first step scholars made to investigate the way teachers feel about IE was to try to understand which personal factors would influence the way teachers tend to act in their classrooms. In order to do that, some of the scholars (Avramidis et al., 2002; Smith, 2006; Cullen et al., 2010; De Boer et al., 2011; Kuyini et al., 2011; Pace et al., 2016; Cimermanová, 2017; Blume et al., 2019; Aldabas et al., 2020; Abdallah et al., 2021; Porsch et al., 2021) considered common concepts such as teachers' or educators' beliefs, values, sentiments, concerns or intentions, simply considering that people's beliefs, values, would have an impact on their teaching methods. On the other hand, some scholars (Loreman et al., 2007; Forlin et al., 2011; Sharma et al., 2012; Santos et al., 2013; Park et al., 2014; Hecht et al., 2017; Büssing et al., 2019; Miesera et al., 2019; Tan et al., 2019; Bassey et al., 2020; Raguindin et al., 2020; Aiello et al., 2021) turned to social psychology, bringing two fundamental constructs to the table: attitude and self-efficacy. The former may be defined as a person's viewpoint on a specific matter. As explained by Eagly & Chaiken, (1993), three components may be regarded as attitude's constituents. The first one is the cognitive component, that is, the individual's knowledge and beliefs about the object; in the case of teachers' attitude towards inclusive education, this component may be represented by their expertise on students with SEN or disability and inclusive practices. The second is the affective component, and in this case, it may be represented by educators' feelings about people with

disability and the possibility of their inclusion in regular classes. The last one is the behavioral component, which corresponds to the willingness to act in a certain way towards an object. (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). Concerning teachers and pupils with special needs, it may represent their willingness to adopt inclusive practices or include pupils in need in their classes (De Boer et al., 2011, p. 340). It must be said that not all of the studies that consider attitude as the best predictor for an effective implementation of inclusive practices actually lay a foundation on the beforementioned three-component model of attitude. This seems to be consistent with the findings of De Boer et al.(2011). More precisely, the scholars found that the majority of the 26 studies they reviewed had not addressed all the three components of attitude; what is more, they organized them according to which component the studies were focusing on, finding that the majority of them aimed at detecting only teachers' thoughts (De Boer et al., 2011, p. 343). The scholars concluded that the heterogeneity of the way attitude and its components are considered, makes the comparison among studies quite challenging.

On the other hand, efficacy may be defined as people's beliefs in their capabilities to organize and execute the actions required to complete a task (Bandura, 1997). It may depend on certain knowledge and skills, in addition to a sense of confidence on the matter, in order to make one's effort to complete a task successful. In addition, in the context of inclusive education, Bandura's theory of efficacy implies that a high sense of efficacy regarding inclusive practices and students with SEN or disability seems to be related to a greater effort from teachers to implement those practices in their teaching.

Pace and Aiello (2016) further investigated how efficacy may influence teachers' actions in the field. More precisely, they discussed Bandura's findings and manage to define not only efficacy but more precisely self-efficacy, which not only depends on the competences one's possess, but it refers to "what someone think could do, with the resources they have under a variety of circumstances" (Bandura, 1986 in Pace et al., 2016). The studies in the field, according to the scholars, led to the development of the more precise construct of teachers' efficacy, which appears to be a context-specific construct, and it encapsulates two components: the teachers' belief in their ability to bring change in their students and the teachers' belief that environmental influences can be controlled by them (Pace & Aiello, 2016, p. 142). As a result, teachers' efficacy should be measured in relation to specific tasks in specific contexts, because professionals' high sense of efficacy of their own ability to teach a specific subject

doesn't necessarily imply a high sense of efficacy to teach another subject or the same subject in a different context. (Pace & Aiello, 2016, p. 143)

However, the studies on teachers' efficacy appear to present the same issue as the ones which considered attitude, that is, not all of them lay their foundation on social psychology. For instance, Aldabas et al (2020) in their study set in Saudi Arabia simply refers to teachers' "perception of preparedness"; similarly, Abdallah et al. (2021) just mention teachers' "preparation". Once more, the lack of a scientific common ground among the selected studies may lead to a problematic interpretation of the results. However, all the selected studies still provide some important elements for the current research, therefore they have not been excluded.

To sum up, it appears that the elements that have been considered so far by scholars as capable of influencing the implementation of inclusive practices at school by teachers may be the common concepts of teachers' thoughts/beliefs, sentiments/concerns, and willingness/intentions on one side, and the social-psychology constructs of attitude and efficacy on the other side. For the purpose of the current thesis, a total of 25 articles have been selected, all of them published between 1998 and 2022, 4 of which are literature reviews, while the remaining 20 concern the development of questionnaires about attitude or efficacy. The literature reviews presented below have provided some useful suggestions of how studies on these elements should be organized and considered, while the articles on surveys present essential cues on how an instrument to measure one or more of the aforementioned personal factors should be developed. The articles selected for the current research will be presented below. In order to bring some clarity, they will be divided in groups: firstly, literature reviews will be presented; secondly, articles on surveys on attitude, thoughts/beliefs, sentiments/concerns, and willingness/intentions will be discussed; lastly, articles referring to studies on the measurement of efficacy will be taken into consideration.

2.1.1 Literature reviews on studies on attitude or efficacy

The four literature reviews selected for the purpose of this research (Abdallah et al., 2021; Avramidis et al., 2002; De Boer et al., 2011; Pace et al, 2016) has provided an useful overview of some of the instruments that have been developed over the years in order to measure one or more of the aforementioned elements on teachers (or student teachers), and therefore of some of the surveys that have been conducted around the

world with this purpose. In addition, the literature reviews highlighted how these factors seem to be interrelated and which teachers' personal characteristics (age, gender, level of education) they seem to be influenced by. Only one of them (Abdallah et al., 2021) refers to studies conducted specifically on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers; Avramidis et al. (2002) and Pace et al.'s works concern studies on teachers in general, while De Boer et al.'s sample is only composed by primary school teachers.

From integration to inclusion. All the reviews have been published between 2002 and 2021, and a comparison between the oldest one (Avramidis et al., 2002) and the most recent one (Abdallah et al., 2021) seem to bring to light that a radical change on how inclusive education is seen by practitioners has occurred during these twenty years. More precisely, in Avramidis (2002) it appears to be clear that at the time of publication the discourse about inclusion was slightly different from now, and the focus was still on the concept of integration as synonym of inclusion, while nowadays the term is considered to indicate the pure and simple act of including students with special needs in the common classes. However, the article provides some interesting starting points that have prepared the ground for the successive research on the field. First of all, the key point of the article is that teachers (instead of parents or other educational figures in schools, such as headteachers', psychologists, etc.) should be at the center of the research on how to promote inclusive practices, given the fact that they are the people in charge of the teaching methods used in class. Therefore, according to the scholars, their attitude towards inclusive practices should be considered the key factor for the promotion of inclusive education at school (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002, p. 5). In support of this idea the scholars reviewed studies not only on teachers' attitude, but also headteachers', psychologists' and pre-school administrators' attitude towards inclusive education. The article seems to suggest that all the school employees who normally don't work among students (headteachers, administrators...) tend to have a more positive attitude to integration. Teachers from the Education Support Centers (centers where pupils with SEN were taken care of) may have been considered an exception, being more accepting of children with SEN students in regular classes than their mainstream counterparts. What is more, thanks to the observation of a number of studies that compared teachers' attitudes in different countries, the review shed light on the fact that teachers from countries where integration was supported by the law seem to have a more positive attitude towards it. Finally, the scholars suggest that a negative view of integration seem to be often accompanied by teachers' lack of confidence in

their ability to take care of pupils with disability, a suggestion which will influence all the subsequent research on teachers' efficacy towards inclusive education (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002, p. 6). Secondly, the review has proved to be of interest thanks to the fact that it considered studies undertaken between in the 1980's and 200's, showing that research on attitudes towards inclusive education is almost 40 years old.

Factors that may influence attitude and efficacy. The work by Avramidis and Norwich (2002) has helped to define that from the 1980's to the early 2000's, some significant steps forward had been made in the way inclusive education is perceived, and even though in the early 2000's there still were no studies that measured a completely positive attitude on teachers towards inclusive education, teachers were beginning to consider the factors that could lead to a successful full inclusion of pupils with special needs, and that were therefore related to a more positive attitude towards IE (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002, p. 9). The scholars continue claiming that these factors that seem to be related to a more positive attitude towards inclusion, are various. First of all, the nature of the disability, as the more severe the disability, the more challenging the integration of the pupil was perceived; moreover, teachers seemed, generally, to accept the integration of children with physical and sensory disability better than that of pupils with learning difficulties or emotional-behavioral difficulties (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002, p. 7). In addition, educational environment-related variables (as level of teachers' education) seemed to have an important role. On the other hand, the role of teachers- related variables appear to be inconsistent across countries, therefore the scholars concluded that they may not be regarded as predictors of educators' attitudes. Similarly, De Boer et al. (2011) shed light on the fact that the elements that accompany a positive attitude towards inclusive practices appear to be: having previous experience with pupils with SEN or disability, proper training in special needs education, a perceived low degree of disability of the pupil, the physical nature of disability (in contrast with behavioral and learning problems), and small class sizes (De Boer et al., 2011, p. 347). De Boer's review was published some years later than Avramidis and Norwich, and it shed light on the fact that, in 2011, teachers still had negative or neutral beliefs on inclusive education, and this seemed to be mostly due to their low sense of self-efficacy on the matter. In other words, they did not feel competent enough to face the challenges of the inclusion of students with special needs in the regular classrooms. In addition, teachers seemed to have a resistance on the intentions to change their way

of teaching in favor of the adoption of inclusive practices at school (De Boer et al., 2011, p. 343).

Relation between attitude and efficacy. Pace and Aiello (2016) shed light on the situation in Italy and provide some additional relevant cues concerning the relation among teachers' demographic factors, attitude and efficacy. The scholars focused on the fact that Italian educational system is considered (still nowadays) a model for other nations worldwide, since in the 90s nearly all pupils with disability were already integrated into mainstream schools and most of special schools had already been closed, but on a practical level, issues regarding full inclusion remained. However, the added value of Pace and Aiello's review to the current research is that they started to explore the relation between efficacy and attitude. More precisely, the review revealed that a high sense of efficacy seems to be accompanied by a more positive attitude towards inclusive education, that leads, in turn, to a higher probability that teachers actually implement inclusive measures in their teaching. What is more, the scholars focused on self- efficacy as a context and subject-specific construct: as already mentioned, having a high sense of self-efficacy in teaching one subject in one situation doesn't mean having a high sense of self-efficacy in general. Therefore, all instruments made to measure self-efficacy should be task and situation oriented. In contrast to this, the research conducted for the current dissertation has brought to light that even though a lot of instruments to measure either attitude, one of its components, or efficacy, have been developed, the surveys considered were rarely addressed to teachers of one specific subject or area of learning, or to a specific context. In fact, as already mentioned, among the reviews selected for the current research, only the work of Abdallah et al. (2021) makes specific reference to the context of foreign language education. What is more, the article is one of the few that provides a non-European point of view. Teaching SEN students in Arab-speaking countries, explained the authors, is twice as challenging compared to the situation in European countries, due to the lack of a support system and of adequate resources. Consistently with the other reviews considered for the current research, Abdallah et al. acknowledged that there are a set of factors that are capable to influence the actual implementation of inclusive practices in the foreign language classroom (Abdallah et al., 2021, p. 3). These factors have been broadly analyzed in Western countries, and they seem to be, first of all, teachers' good knowledge about the characteristics of students with disability or special needs and the practices needed in order to make the language classroom an inclusive classroom; secondly, a high sense of

self- efficacy, or better, a high sense of self-efficacy specifically for inclusive practices in the language classroom, being teachers' efficacy a context-specific and subject-specific construct, as already mentioned by Pace and Aiello (2016);thirdly, a positive attitude towards inclusive education and pupils with disability or SEN. However, concluded the scholars, Arab countries seem to have escaped the attention of scholars investigating the matter of inclusive education, in particular related to the area of foreign language teaching (Abdallah et al., 2021, p. 4).

As already mentioned, in addition to the background references discussed so far, these literature reviews have helped provide a rationale to classify and analyze all the articles selected regarding instruments developed with the aim of measuring either attitude, one of its components, or efficacy. These studies will be discussed below. Following the example of De Boer and colleagues, the studies have been classified according to which of the aforementioned personal factor(s) the scholars were trying to measure. Firstly, studies regarding attitude or one of its components will be examined; secondly, articles regarding efficacy will be taken into consideration.

2.1.2 Teachers' attitude towards IE

As already anticipated, accordingly to De Boer et al.'s findings (2011), literature regarding teachers' attitude towards inclusive education displays a noticeable heterogeneity in the ways the construct is considered. As a result, the comparison of the results across different studies has been problematic. The studies that consider attitude or some of its elements are thirteen in total, all published between 2006 and 2021. Eight of them considered attitude as the three-component construct developed by Eagly and Chaiken (Loreman et al., 2007; Forlin et al., 2011; Santos & Hamido, 2013; Cimermanová, 2017; Büssing et al., 2019; Bassey et al., 2020; Aiello et al., 2021; Porsch & Wilden, 2021) while the others (Smith, 2006; Cullen et al. 2010; Kuyini & Mangope, 2011; Blume et al., 2019; Raguindin et al., 2020) don't take social psychology into consideration, and therefore consider either attitude as a general term or choose to observe just thoughts, sentiments or intentions separately.

As explained by Bassey et al. (2020), grounding the study on the three-dimensional theory of attitude necessarily implies that the instrument should have items which address each dimension separately (Bassey et al., 2020, p.521). All the instruments presented in the current section follow this rule.

Among the instruments based on the three-component model of attitude, one instrument in particular appears to have gained a widespread approval, as it has been used to measure attitude in a considerable number of different contexts and situations and has been statistically validated more than once in its multiple versions, that is, the Sentiments, Attitudes and Concerns about Inclusive Education scale (SACIE). The questionnaire made its first appearance in Loreman et al. (2007), with a group of scholars who had a huge impact on the field, and that will be referred to as the Loreman group from now on in the current dissertation. In their 2007 article they described the development of the SACIE instrument, based on pre-existing questionnaires, the principal component analyses, a critique on content and format and conceptual judgements made by the research team and a group of experts (Loreman et al., 2007). The SACIE scale has been largely used since 2007, especially in its revised version, developed by the Loreman group in 2011, when the scholars explained the means and reasons that brought them to the development of the SACIE-R scale for measuring teachers' attitudes, explaining that although previous studies highlighted the negative effects of negative attitudes and concerns about inclusion on teachers' compliance to inclusive practices, an accurate instrument to measure professionals' attitude hadn't been developed yet (Forlin et al., 2011, p. 52). The instrument was initially developed to evaluate attitude on pre-service teachers, with the idea that improving preparation on inclusive education and SEN students at a pre-service level could reduce the need for in-service teacher training (Forlin et al., 2011, p.52). As already anticipated, the SACIE-R scale appeared more than once in the studies selected for the current research, being largely used in different contexts, with different means and in different ways, alone or in combination with other scales. Concerning the context, the surveys conducted with the SACIE-R scale seem to have been mostly used in studies addressed to teachers in general; some of them were set in Europe, while others were set in non-European countries. First of all, the members of the Loreman group themselves conducted two pilot surveys on pre-service teachers: one in 2007 and one in 2011 with the revised version, covering Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Singapore. Some years later, in 2013, Santos and colleagues used the tool for their research set in Portugal, with the aim of studying how the sentiments, attitudes and concerns of teachers and other educational figures may change after attending a course which included curricular units regarding IE (Santos & Hamido, 2013, p 161). The respondents submitted the questionnaire in two moments, at the beginning and at the end of the curricular units regarding IE

included in the course. The study showed that on one hand, a large majority of the respondents had an inclusive attitude towards students with SEN, with a small increase after attending the course, while on the other hand teachers seemed to have a high level of concern towards IE, feeling that they didn't have adequate resources to support the inclusion of pupils with special needs in the mainstream classes (Santos & Hamido, 2013, p. 163). As a consequence, this study highlighted that, in general, the respondents appeared to have a non-inclusive attitude towards students with SEN, inferring the need for more teacher-training on IE in Portugal.

The SACIE-R scale also appears in Büssing (2019). The study was set in Germany, where even though full inclusion should have been guaranteed according to the German law, many schools were still unable to truly provide equal chances for all students. The study investigated the role of values, beliefs, sentiments and attitudes, laying its foundation on social psychology, and supporting the idea that deep personality variables like the aforementioned could influence teachers' behavior in class and, as a consequence, the possibility that they actually implement inclusive measures in their practice (Büssing et al., 2019, p.8). Therefore, in this particular case, the SACIE-R scale took part in a larger investigation which involved different scales to detect also teachers' values, beliefs and sentiments as well as attitude. The results of the study shed light on the fact that values and beliefs appear to have a central role in determining teachers' enjoyment to teach in inclusive settings, along with attitude, while sentiments alone seem to have no significant role (Büssing et al., 2019, p.19).

Cimermanová (2017) provides another example of use of the SACIE-R scale. What is more, the scholar is one of the few who focused on ESL teaching. The study was set in Slovakia, where pupils with disability or SEN are included in the mainstream classes, and they had the right to participate in special educational programs which differs according to the type of disability and which subject were to be adapted to the necessities of the learner. Following the example of the Loreman group and of Santos and colleagues, Cimermanová chose to include pre-service (students) teachers in their investigation, agreeing on the fact that in order to spread knowledge about IE, teachers should be addressed since they are studying to become educators. However, in-service teachers were involved in the study, too (Cimermanová, 2017, p.20-23). The author explained that In Slovakia, primary level teacher education provides (still nowadays) courses on SEN and IE, but secondary level teacher training programs don't. An added value of Cimermanová survey compared to the others that used the SACIE-R scale and

were selected for the current research is that they chose to combine the scale to another instrument, in order to also evaluate the sense of efficacy of the respondents. This is consistent with the widespread idea, already suggested in the current research, that the possibility of implementation of inclusive practices appear to be determined by a positive attitude towards IE, which is influenced in turn by a high sense of efficacy (or in other words, competence, knowledge) for inclusive practices. Therefore, in Cimermanová study the SACIE-R scale was translated and adapted in order to measure the respondents' attitude, while the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages was used to evaluate the respondents' sense of self-efficacy (Cimermanová, 2017, p.30). Consistently with the results of the other studies considered in the current research, the results of the Slovakian survey with the SACIE-R scale highlighted that both in-service and pre-service teachers seemed to be quite confident about their ability to teach to students with disability or SEN, although they were concerned about the high number of students in the classes and the presence of learners with different degrees of difficulties, all elements that can expand the time spent for planning the lessons. In addition, pre-service teachers appeared to think that students with SEN or disability may enrich all students' learning process (Cimermanová, 2017, p.33-35).

An example of an Italian survey in which the SACIE-R scale was used is provided by Paola Aiello et al. (2017). The sample of the study included teachers from nursery to higher secondary schools, which attended a course specifically on SEN students and submitted the questionnaire before and after the course, and were mainly teachers who had years of experience working with children with disability or SEN. For the purpose of the study, the SACIE-R scale was translated into Italian. The results of the survey showed that most of the respondents had a positive attitude towards pupils with disability or SEN, as long as a low level of discomfort, fear and concerns. However, explained the authors, the results may have been influenced by the fact that the questionnaire was administered mainly to teachers who were taking part in a course on SENs, and they were either learning support teachers or mainstream teachers who had years of experience with SEN students (Aiello et al., 2017, p.17). The results of this study (opposites to that of Santos) seem to confirm the widespread idea that a high level of knowledge about disability and SEN, along with experience of contact with impaired learners, seems to be accompanied by a more positive attitude towards IE. What is more, added the scholars:

“This is in line with claims in the scientific literature on this specific issue that the culture of inclusion cannot be solved only in the internalization of inclusive values and principles, but it requires the acquisition of methodological and didactic competencies that can make teachers strategic agents within the processes of school inclusion.” (Aiello et al., 2017, p.17.)

During the same year another relevant survey was conducted using the SACIE-R scale with similar aims by Hecht et al. (2017). As the study conducted by Hecht may be considered the study which better describes the strict interrelation between the two constructs of attitude and efficacy, this study will be presented later in the current review, introducing articles on teachers’ efficacy.

Therefore, Aiello e al., Cimermanová, Santos et al., and Hecht et al.’s studies provide essential cues about the strict interrelation between attitude and the sense of self-efficacy, as it will be discussed further in the current research. Support to this idea of a correlation between attitude and efficacy can be found also in the work of Porsch et al. (2021). Although it did not involve the use of the widespread SACIE-R instrument, the study was grounded on the three-component theory of attitude, and it presents the added value of being referred to the context of ELT. It had the aim of comparing the attitude of specialist and non-specialist teachers in Germany, with the hypothesis that fully qualified EFL teachers could possess more positive attitudes towards teaching English in inclusive classes (Porsch & Wilden, 2021, p.203). In other words, the study supports the idea that a positive attitude towards inclusive education may be influenced by a high sense of efficacy in teaching a specific subject in an inclusive setting.

Coming from the restricted group of non-European studies, the one conducted by Ahmed Bawa Kuyini and Boitumelo Mangope in Ghana and Botswana in 2011 may be considered another relevant example of survey run following the footsteps of the Loreman group. Even though they did not use the SACIE scale directly, they rooted their study on one of the scales the SACIE was built on, that is, the Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education Scale (ATIES) developed by Wilczenski in 1992. The participants of Kuyini et al.’s study had to submit the ATIES questionnaire, along with a section of background information and the Concerns About Inclusive Education scale, developed by Sharma and Desai in 2002 for detecting concerns towards IE. The study brought to light that on the whole, student teachers in both countries tended to have a high level of concerns about the inclusion of pupils with disability of SEN in the mainstream classes,

even though the respondents from Ghana seemed to have a slightly more positive attitude towards IE than their counterparts in Botswana. However, according to Kuyini, coherently with the findings of the other studies selected for the current research, training on inclusive education appears to be a crucial factor to positively influence attitude towards students with disability or SEN (Kuyini & Mangope, 2011, p.31).

As already mentioned, some of the selected studies chose to simply refer to attitude or one of its components in their every-day language meanings. Among these studies, Smith (2006) provides another look specifically focused on the ELT context. The research represents a huge work investigating different aspects of inclusion and language education, with a specific chapter focused on teachers' attitude towards inclusion. Smith recruited over 200 professionals to answer to a questionnaire measuring teachers' attitude towards inclusion and exploring which factors it may be influenced by. The study introduces some news to the current research: the results have led to the conclusion that educators from the state sector on the whole seemed to have a more positive attitude towards IE, as they feel they would be provided with an adequate support. On the other hand, Smith's findings are consistent with the other studies considered so far, as they suggest that previous experience (i.e. expertise) with learners with Special Needs may be a significant element in shaping a positive attitude towards inclusion, supporting once more the idea that the level of expertise appear to be related to attitude. What is more, continued the scholar, specific experience or training in the field with a specific kind of learning difficulty seems to be the key factor to reduce the stigma that affects pupils with that exact special need, especially in case of severe impairments (Smith, 2006, p.160-170). Another instrument that was meant to detect attitude in its every-day meaning is the questionnaire developed in 2010 by Cullen et al., the Teacher Attitudes Towards Inclusion Scale (TATIS). The instrument was created with the idea of detecting three kinds of attitudes and beliefs, that according to the scholars have been proven to be critical factors to the success of inclusive education. These three factors are: attitudes towards students with disability in inclusive settings; beliefs about professional roles and responsibilities; beliefs about the efficacy of inclusion. According to Cullen et al., the instrument has been proved to be valuable and reliable in measuring teachers' attitude on large scale (Cullen et al., 2010, p.10). Another example of survey conducted with the aim of measuring general ideas of attitudes, beliefs and reflective competence is that of Blume et al. (2019). The study was set in Germany and its aim

was to measure the change of pre-service teachers' attitudes, beliefs and reflective competencies pre and post the attendance to a training course on IE, and it was addressed to foreign language teachers only. The results seem to suggest that the respondent's attitudes did not change over the course of the seminar, staying relatively neutral, while their beliefs became more inclusive. In addition, their reflective competence improved (Blume et al., 2019, p.7-12).

Another significant contribution is provided by Salleh et al. (2019), which shed light on the situation of inclusion in a country where the school system is different from Italy and, more generally, Europe. The Malaysian study aimed to bring a better understanding of primary teachers' views of inclusive education in the country. The participants were employed in 5 different schools, three of which with a Special Education Integration Programme (SEIP) and 2 without SEIP. The colonial history of the country, suggested the authors, still leaves its traces. At the time of the study, in Malaysia there were three main types of schools, each one with its different primary language (Malay, Chinese, Tamil) (Salleh & Woollard, 2019, p.73). For the purpose of the study, a survey was conducted among Malaysian teachers to explore their views on inclusion. Teachers participated in either individual interviews of 60 minutes or focus group interviews of 90 minutes. The study revealed that the system of segregation of schools made inclusive education impossible to be implemented and went against the very concept of educational equality. At the same time, the lack of resources, facilities, and teacher training programmes, made the possibility of inclusion still more challenging. The scholar concluded that in Malaysia there is a strong need to review the policy about inclusive education (Salleh & Woollard, 2019, p.80). These results appear to be coherent with the idea that a positive attitude may be found when and where teachers are adequately prepared to cope with the challenges that inclusive education brings. In this respect, among the studies that do not lay their foundation on social psychology and simply refer to general everyday concepts of attitudes, sentiments/concerns, or thoughts/values, there are some that managed to refer to the association between positive thoughts, sentiments, attitudes towards IE and a high sense of competence or preparation on inclusive practices, despite their lack of references to a common scientific background. Two quite recent studies have been selected with these requirements, that are, the works by Miesera et al. (2019) and Raguindin et al. (2020). As these articles provide essential cues about the measurement of teachers' efficacy

more than attitude they will be discussed in the following section, along with the articles regarding teachers' efficacy for inclusive practices.

2.1.3 Teachers' efficacy for inclusive practices

As already anticipated, the current research has brought to light that, similarly to attitude, also the construct of efficacy has been considered in different ways: In fact, among the articles that have been selected for the current research that make references to efficacy, some scholars (Sharma et al., 2012; Park et al., 2014; Hecht et al., 2017; Miesera et al., 2019; Tan et al., 2019; Raguindin et al., 2020) refer to efficacy as theorized by Bandura (as explained at the beginning of the current chapter), while the others (Cimermanová, 2017; Aldabas et al., 2020; Bassey et al., 2020) refer to a general idea of efficacy or a synonym (for example, Aldabas et al. refer to perception of preparedness).

It appears to be clear that the literature research conducted so far seems to suggest a close relation between teachers' attitude and teachers' self-perceived efficacy for inclusive practices. Among the selected articles, as already anticipated, the work of Hecht and colleagues (2017) has proved to be of interest because it provides relevant cues on the strict connection between the two constructs, and it represents a unique example of the combined use of the two most acknowledged scales in the field: the already mentioned SACIE-R scale and the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) scale, developed by part of the Loreman group (Sharma, U.; Loreman, T.; Forlin, C.) in 2012, as described in the article "Measuring Teacher Efficacy to Implement Inclusive Practices" published in the *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*. For the creation of the TEIP instrument, the Loreman group grounded their foundation on social psychology once more. More precisely, they refer to the already mentioned Bandura, who suggested that teachers' self-perceived efficacy influences, along with attitude, their willingness to create an inclusive environment in their classes as long as their willingness to complete all the tasks required to achieve the goal of an inclusive classroom. According to the scholars, the series of studies selected for the review conducted for the development of the TEIP instrument agree on the fact that a high sense of efficacy to implement inclusive practices appear to lead to a positive attitude towards them, and they may be considered both key ingredients for the actual application of inclusive practices at school (Sharma et al., 2012, p.12). The article

continues explaining that researchers appear to have acknowledged that teachers' efficacy is a context-specific and a task-specific construct, as already speculated by Bandura, therefore they recommend that every instrument with the aim of measuring teachers' efficacy should be addressed to efficacy in a specific context (for example, the inclusive classroom) and for specific tasks (for example, teaching a specific subject). Given these premises, the TEIP instrument was developed, relying also on the fact that, in order to teach effectively in an inclusive classroom, teachers' should have certain knowledge about general pedagogy, how to teach a specific subject, classroom management, and the disposition to collaborate with other professionals. In addition, teachers need to have the ability to design lessons where the needs of all students can be met (Sharma et al., 2012, p.13). The 2012-article also describes a pilot study conducted by the Loreman group with a sample of 609 pre-service teachers from Canada, Australia, Hong Kong and India, which proved the scale to be a suitable instrument for the measurement of teachers' efficacy.

As anticipated, basing their study on the Loreman group findings, in 2017 Hecht and colleagues tried to direct a combined study using the SACIE-R and the TEIP scales combined. In their review, Hecht and colleagues explained Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior, according to which behavior appear to be influenced by three factors: attitude, subjective norms (such as one's beliefs), and Perceived Behavioral Control (Hecht et al., 2017, p.271). The latter may be defined as how able people feel to perform in a certain way in a specific context. According to this model, the PBC can have a direct influence on behavior, therefore in the context of inclusive education it might mean that if teachers feel able to cope with the challenges that inclusive education brings, they have a higher probability to actually implement inclusive practices in their teaching methods. More broadly, continue the scholars, self-efficacy refers to peoples' perception of their ability to complete a task not only thanks to their knowledge on the subject, but also thanks to external factors and resources provided by the context. In this view, both PBC and self-perceived efficacy may be acknowledged as strong and effective predictors of behavior, therefore, making reference to the context of inclusive education, of the actual implementation of inclusive practices by teachers (Hecht et al., 2017, p.271-272). Given this theoretical background, Hecht and colleagues conducted a study administering both the SACIE-R questionnaire and the TEIP questionnaire to two samples of student teachers, one in Italy (Campania) and one in Austria (Voralberg). The study highlighted a general positive attitude towards IE in both countries and a

general high sense of efficacy for inclusive practices, with the Italian part of the sample slightly higher. The scholars confer this difference to the fact that in Italy, IE is almost totally established, while in Austria special educational schools persist (Hecht et al., 2017, p.279).

As anticipated, the literature review conducted for the current research has brought to light that the TEIP scale appears to be the most acknowledged instrument for the measurement of teachers' efficacy, therefore other studies concerning the application of the TEIP scale have been selected. Among them, an approach which is really similar to that of Hecht and colleagues may be found in the only non-European application of the TEIP scale, described in Raguindin (2020). The scholars considered an idea of efficacy resulted from the combined theories of Bandura and Ajzen, claiming that, in the context of inclusive education, a positive attitude towards IE, a high sense of efficacy for inclusive practices, along with strong intentions to implement inclusive practices, should be considered the key factors which could lead teachers to teach successfully in inclusive classrooms (Raguindin et al., 2020, 788). The study represents an example of a comparative study among teachers from Philippines and Thailand. The TEIP scales was used as a part of a larger investigation, along with the Attitudes to Inclusion Scale (Sharma and Jacobs, 2016 as cited in Raguindin et al., 2020) and the Intentions to Teach in Inclusive Settings (Sharma et. al., 2016 as cited in Raguindin et al., 2020). The results of the survey revealed that the levels of efficacy of the participants of both countries are high or medium high, and that teachers appear to have a positive attitude for inclusive practices, as well as a good level of intentions. However, the Thai participants seem to have slightly lower scores than their Filipino counterparts (Raguindin et al., 2020, p.791).

In addition, the work of Park and colleagues appears to be of interest, because it brings some new considerations about the fact that, as suggested by literature, teachers' high self-perceived confidence on teaching a subject rises the probability that the knowledge attained during a training is then applied to their everyday practice. In the context of inclusive education, this may support the already discussed idea that a high sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices may lead to a higher probability of the implementation on inclusive practices at school. In addition, the scholars analyzed the TEIP instrument developed by the Loreman group, highlighting that an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) has brought to light that the 18 items of the scale may be divided in three groups, according to three different aspects of efficacy they are addressed to:

efficacy to use inclusive instructions, efficacy in collaboration, efficacy in managing behavior (Park et al., 2016, p.3). In addition, the scholars also described another study conducted by the Loreman group with the TEIP scale in 2013 in Bangladesh, with a twofold aim: on one hand, they wanted to analyze the differences in self-efficacy to implement inclusive practices across demographic factors, on the other hand, they wanted to identify which variables could impact the sense of self-efficacy of pre-service teachers towards inclusive education. Parks et al.'s study had the purpose of cross validating the structure of the scale, which has proved to be a valuable and reliable instrument for the measurement of teachers' self-efficacy (Park et al., 2016, p.7).

As already anticipated, also the TEIP scale (as the SACIE-R scale) has been used both alone and as part of larger investigations concerning other personal factors. For example, in 2019 Susanne Miesera and colleagues conducted a study with the aim of measuring attitudes, intentions, concerns and self-efficacy on German pre-service teachers. More precisely, among other goals, they wanted to validate the idea, suggested by previous studies, that (student) teachers with more greater concerns appear to have lower levels of self-efficacy (Miesera et al., 2019, p.107). The study involved 909 students in either bachelor level or master level's teacher training programmes in a large university in Germany. Among these, 191 were students who received a training in their course to teach in special schools, while 696 did not. The TEIP scale was employed to measure self-efficacy, while the other factors were measured through The Attitudes Towards Inclusion Scale (Sharma and Jacobs, 2016, as cited in Miesera et al. 2019), the Intention to Teacher in Inclusive Classroom scale (Sharma and Jacobs, 2016, as cited in Miesera et al. 2019), the Concerns about Inclusive Education scale (Sharma and Desai, 2002, as cited in Miesera et al., 2019). The four scales have proved to function well in this combined model, that was able to shed light on the fact that teachers' concerns about inclusion can have a negative effect on attitudes, efficacy, and the intentions to implement inclusive practices (Miesera et al., 2019, p.111).

In addition, Tan and Amrhein (2019) conducted a study where they used the TEIP scale for the measurement of the impact of the attendance of a seminar on Inclusive Education on the sense of self-efficacy on a group of pre-service secondary teachers. For the purpose of their study, the scholars administered the TEIP questionnaire to the participants before and after the development of the course, along with some open-ended questions in the form of an interview. The course was divided in three parts: part one, the theoretical framework of inclusive education and inclusive pedagogy; part two,

inclusive lesson plan approaches; part three, presentation of examples of inclusive English lessons.

What is relevant of Tan et al.'s work is that, among the studies selected for the current research, it is the only study on teachers' efficacy that focuses on the context of English language education. The results of the study showed that the TEIP scale measured an overall increase on the participants' sense of self-efficacy at the end of the course, while, similarly, the interviews brought to light that the seminar helped them to improve their sense of confidence (Tan & Amrhein, 2019, p.370). These results seem to support the already mentioned widespread idea that improving teachers' knowledge about IE, will increase their sense of efficacy. Along with a positive attitude towards inclusive education, a high sense of efficacy will increment the probability of the actual implementation of inclusive practices. These findings are also supported by the already mentioned works of Cimermanová (2017), Aldabas et al. (2020), Porsch et al. (2021), who do not refer to efficacy as a social psychology construct but managed to reach the same conclusions as the ones explained so far regarding the relation between attitude and efficacy, and their role in the implementation of inclusive practices.

To sum up, the literature review conducted for the current research has shed light on the fact that teachers' self-efficacy appears to have a decisive role influencing teachers' attitude, and at the same time the two constructs can be considered as strong predictors of teachers' behavior in class. Teachers' efficacy can be influenced in turn by teachers' knowledge and preparation on the context in which they teach and the subject they are teaching, as summarized by the scheme n.1. Concerning the topic of the current thesis, that is, inclusive education and EFL teaching, it can be said that a high sense of self-efficacy in teaching English in an inclusive setting may bring a positive attitude towards IE, resulting in a higher probability that teachers adopt inclusive practices in their language teaching. Given the fact that efficacy has been proved to be a context-specific and subject specific construct, this means that it can be in turn influenced by teachers' knowledge about inclusive practices, how to deal with students with SEN or disability, and the resources they have to cope with the challenges that the inclusive classroom brings.

Given this theoretical background, the Self-Efficacy in Inclusive English Teaching (SEIET) scale was developed for the purpose of the current study. The development of the instrument and its structure will be presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3. THE SELF-EFFICACY IN INCLUSIVE ENGLISH TEACHING SCALE

3.1 THE SELF-EFFICACY IN INCLUSIVE ENGLISH TEACHING SCALE: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

As discussed in the second chapter of the current thesis, the literature review conducted for the purpose of this research highlighted that teachers' self-efficacy appears to be the first link in the chain that leads to the implementation of inclusive practices at school (see figure 4).

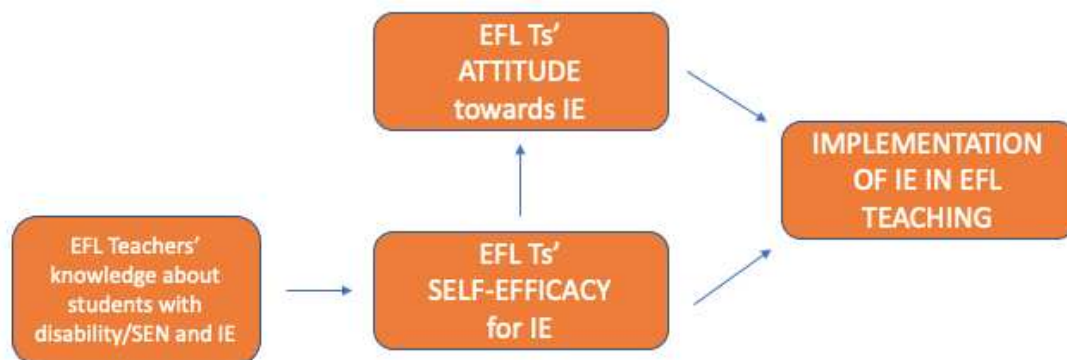


Figure 4. Relation between attitude and self-efficacy in inclusive EFL teaching

In short, a higher level of preparation and expertise towards Inclusive Education and disabilities appears to be related to a higher perception of self-efficacy for inclusive practices. In other words, teachers seem to feel more confident about their ability to complete the tasks required to create an inclusive environment in class, if they had received adequate training about IE and how to deal with students with SEN. More precisely, in the context of EFL teaching, whether or not they have been trained on how to guide students with SEN in the language learning process. A strong sense of self-efficacy for IE, in turn, seems to contribute to a positive attitude, seen as the complex set of views/beliefs, feelings/sentiments and intentions to implement inclusive practices at school. They appear to be strictly interrelated to each other, and a positive attitude and a high perception of self-efficacy seem to contribute together to increasing the probability that professionals actually implement inclusive practices in their teaching.

As explained in chapter two, self-efficacy has been proven to be a context-specific and subject-specific construct, therefore every study aimed at measuring the sense of efficacy should regard a specific context, like the inclusive classroom, and a specific subject. The research conducted for the purpose of the current study has brought to light that even though all the selected studies were addressed to the context of Inclusive Education, only a few studies provided a look focused on Language Teaching or, more precisely, EFL teaching, which is the subject the current study is focusing on. In particular, only one literature review (Abdallah et al., 2021) explored the preparation of EFL teachers on Arab-speaking countries, one study looked at EFL teachers' attitude (Smith, 2006), while only two studies (Blume et al., 2019; Cimermanovà, 2017) looked at EFL teachers' perceptions of efficacy.

Given these premises, for the survey conducted for the current research it has been decided to focus on EFL teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy only, in order to have the possibility to explore deeply the construct on one hand, and to keep the questionnaire short on the other hand, in an effort to promote the voluntary participation to the study. Given the fact that, as explained in chapter two of the current thesis, efficacy may be defined as people's perception of their ability to perform the actions that are necessary to complete a task, it seems reasonable to state that an instrument aimed at measuring the sense of self-efficacy should be task-oriented. Therefore, the Self-Efficacy in Inclusive English Teaching (SEIET) scale was developed, with three fundamental aims: First of all, to measure Italian EFL teachers' perception of self-efficacy for inclusive practices; secondly, to give teachers the possibility to express their opinion about what they feel they need in order to improve their ability to complete the tasks described in the questionnaire; thirdly, to explore which demographic factors can influence their sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices. The development of the scale will be described in the section below.

3.2 DEVELOPMENT AND DESCRIPTION OF THE SCALE

Given the triple aim of the current study, the SEIET scale has been developed into three different sections (see figure 5)

1. A first section collecting demographic data, composed by 14 questions;

2. The main section that consists of items that represent tasks that teachers should be able to complete in order to include students with SEN in their EFL classroom, composed by 23 questions;
3. A last section where the respondents could give suggestions for the future of IE, composed by one question.



Figure 5. Structure of the SEIET scale.

In the following paragraphs, the three sections of the questionnaire will be presented.

3.2.1 Section n.1 – demographic data

In the first section of the questionnaire the respondents have been asked to give, anonymously, some personal information. The questions were either closed, open-ended or in mixed form, according to which information was being collected. First of all, respondents were asked to state their gender. With the aim of making the questionnaire as inclusive as possible, a non-binary model of gender has been adopted, asking the respondents which gender they identify as, and giving them the possibility to openly add other options.

The respondents were then asked to state their age. Subsequently, some questions were included with the aim of assessing the expected level of expertise of the respondents, either thanks to their experience as teachers, their general level of education or their specific preparation on IE and students with SEN. More precisely, the respondents have been asked since how many years they have been teaching, at which level of education they have been teaching over the years and at which they are currently working, which

is their highest level of education and how many years ago they have got their highest degree. In addition, given the fact that in Italy, in order to become teachers, it is not compulsory to attend any course on IE, the questionnaire asked whether they had ever attended a specific course on IE and/or how to deal with students with SEN, and which kind of course it was (university course, updating course for teachers...). Lastly, the participants have been asked whether they had never met with people with disability, known or suspected, either at school as teachers or in their personal life, and which one. For this purpose, a choice among 9 types of disabilities was offered:

1. Light physical disability
2. Severe physical disability
3. Light cognitive disability
4. Severe cognitive disability
5. Mild forms of autism
6. Severe forms of autism
7. ADHD
8. Specific Learning Disorders
9. Visual or hearing impairment.

In addition, the respondents had the possibility to freely add some conditions that they didn't think could be included on one of the families of disabilities of the list. The list was developed following the example of the already cited Smith (2006), who also included in their questionnaire, that was aimed at measuring teachers' attitude towards inclusive education, a whole section on the respondents' past experience with students with SEN.

These two last questions on the participants' past experience with students with SEN have been included also based on the assumption that even though it may not be considered a sufficient element to ensure a successful inclusion of pupils with disability in regular classroom, the social contact with people with disability has been proved to be an essential element for the reduction of the social stigma against disability (Nota et al., 2015, ch.1). Therefore, as already anticipated in chapter 2 of the current dissertation, it seems reasonable to expect a more positive attitude and a higher sense of self efficacy in people that already had experience with people with disabilities, either in their personal or professional life.

3.2.2 Section n.2 – sense of self-efficacy

The items that make up the second section of the questionnaire were developed in two phases (see figure 7). They have been created based on the complex set of attentions, methodologies and techniques that EFL teachers should adopt in order to include students with SEN in their classroom, and which have been described in chapter one of the current thesis. What is more, according to Bandura's definition of efficacy, the construct refers to the perception of the ability to perform the actions that are necessary to complete a given task. Therefore, the respondents have been asked to state to what extent they think they would be able to complete a series of tasks, in a scale from 1 (not at all) to 4 (completely sure), considering not only their level of preparation, but also the resources they have at their disposal. References to this methodology for the development of an instrument aimed at measuring the sense of self-efficacy may be found in the already mentioned studies of Sharma et al. (2012) and Aldabas (2020), that were described in chapter 2 of the current dissertation.

In order to identify the tasks that should have been included in the questionnaire, five different macro-groups of tasks that EFL teachers need to be able to complete in order to make their English classroom an inclusive classroom were identified (see figure 6):

6. Tasks regarding the general principle of IE according to which the needs of the students should have the possibility to be accommodated, therefore the management of the classroom environment should be adaptable and flexible (group 1, 8 tasks);
7. Tasks regarding the principle of customization of means (group 2, 4 tasks);
8. Tasks regarding the principle of customization of objectives (group 3, 4 tasks);
9. Tasks regarding the principle of customization of contents (group 4, 5 tasks);
10. Tasks regarding the ability of teachers to collaborate with each other or with other professionals involved in the process of inclusion (group 5, 2 tasks).

NUMBER OF ITEMS AND THEMES

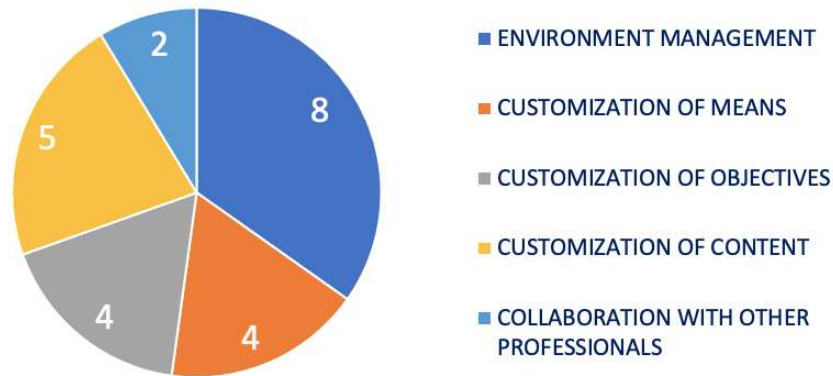


Figure 6. Thematic macro-groups of items in the SEIET scale.

Secondly, for every group, as many necessary tasks as possible were identified, not only thinking about the examples of inclusive practices already discussed in chapter one, but also thinking about the tasks that Italian EFL teachers should be able to complete in their everyday life. Therefore, a total of 23 items have been developed. All of them were written in Italian in order to make the questionnaire more accessible, as the survey was addressed to Italian teachers. However, in the section below they will be presented along with the translation into English. During the survey, the items were presented randomly mixed, trying to avoid bias in the answers, due to the fact that the participants knew in advance the type of task described in the items. However, they will be presented divided in the five macro-groups that have been identified.

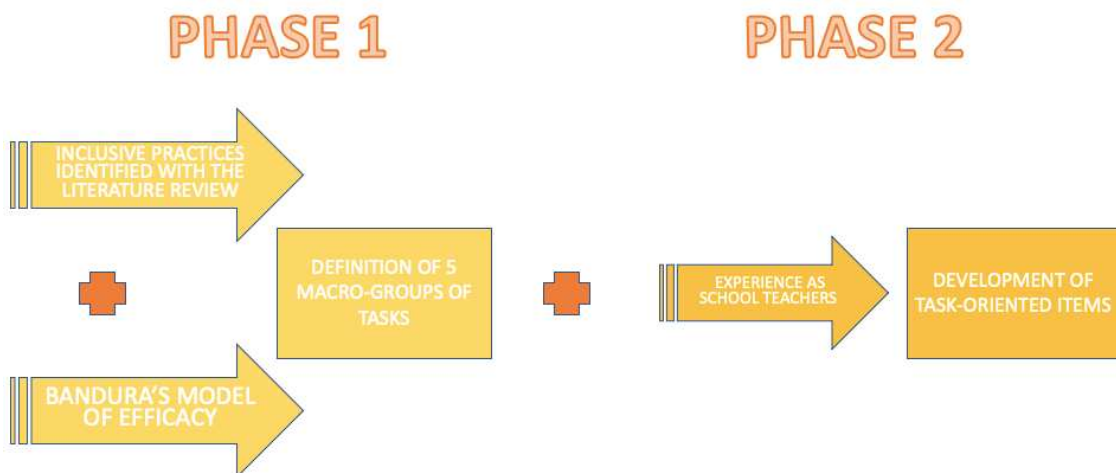


Figure 7. Phases of the development of the SEIET scale

Items of group 1: tasks regarding environment management.

The items of group 1 are illustrated in table n.1.

Table 1. Items regarding environment management.

1	Encourage students to integrate the English language in their everyday life. <i>Stimolare gli studenti a integrare la lingua inglese nella loro vita quotidiana.</i>
2	Organize the classroom environment according to the students' needs. <i>Organizzare l'ambiente della classe in base alle necessità degli studenti.</i>
3	Establish an atmosphere that guarantees optimal learning conditions to all students. <i>Instaurare in classe un ambiente che garantisca le condizioni ottimali di lavoro per tutti gli studenti.</i>
4	Encourage social interactions among all students, facilitating the creation of an inclusive environment. <i>Favorire l'interazione tra tutti gli studenti, agevolando l'instaurazione di un clima di inclusione scolastica.</i>
5	Guarantee an adequate number of breaks, encouraging all students to be focused on the lesson and to be actively involved in the lesson. <i>Fornire un numero adeguato di pause per favorire l'attenzione degli studenti, motivandoli e coinvolgendoli allo stesso tempo a partecipare attivamente alla lezione di lingua inglese.</i>
6	Foresee and prevent disruptive behaviors. <i>Individuare e quindi prevenire comportamenti disadattivi. (es. reazioni emotive eccessive).</i>
7	Identify the appropriate strategy to guide students coping with frustration and anger. <i>Individuare la strategia (o le parole) più adatta per aiutare gli studenti nei momenti di frustrazione.</i>
8	Design cooperative learning activities, granting the active participation of all students. <i>Progettare attività di cooperative learning che permettano la partecipazione di tutti gli studenti con le loro differenti abilità o attitudini.</i>

The tasks that take part in group 1 are general tasks regarding the management of the environment where students learn and assimilate the language. The majority of them regard the classroom environment, however one item (n.1) refers to other contexts of students' life, as it asks teachers whether they feel they're able to encourage students to integrate the English language in their everyday life. This ability that appears to be useful for the aims of IE, as it has been proved that the more ways the language input arrives, the higher the probability that the signal is processed and stored by the brain is (Daloiso, 2014, p.16). Therefore, it appears to be reasonable to state that watching tv series and films in English, reading books or setting the phone language in English (in other words, integrate the English language in students' everyday life) can be a useful strategy to improve language skills. As already anticipated, the other items (2-7) regard the classroom environment. Item n. 2 regards the ability to organize the layout of the class in order to accommodate the students' needs. It can pertain physical necessities of all kinds, such as having enough space to move around the class with walking aids or having a quiet corner to isolate from excessive noise in case of auditory overload, or emotional/behavioral necessities, such as having the possibility to move around sometimes to be able to focus or having a corner to take a break in case of work overload. Item n. 3. is strictly connected to the number 2, however, it concerns the ability to create an adequate environment for learning not only considering the physical space in which the lesson takes place but considering the atmosphere in the classroom as well. The absence of disturbing noises, an adequate silence, providing the language input through multiple channels, are all key elements to enhance the language learning process for all the students in the class with their different predispositions, learning styles, and needs. Item number 4 concerns the ability to mediate interactions among students. This could mean to be able to moderate conflicts, fostering the mutual acceptance of differences, but also to encourage the acknowledgment of each other's strengths and qualities. Item n. 5 makes specific reference to the ability to find balance between an appropriate number of pauses and the necessity to keep the focus of the students on the lesson. This could mean to allow students to take small breaks, giving them the possibility to get out of the chair sometimes, maybe even go for a little walk, and be able to bring back their focus on the tasks planned for the lesson. Empathy is the key ingredient to complete the tasks described by items n. 6 and 7, which both refer to the fact that an IE teacher should be able to guide students to cope with the anger and

frustration that could sometimes accompany the learning process. In particular, item n. 6 regards the ability to foresee emotional distress that could bring to outbursts and disruptive behavior, along with the ability to prevent them by avoiding trigger events. This could include the talent to adapt the way students are talked to according to their expected reaction, as long as the capacity to understand when the teacher can insist on a goal and when it would be better to let go. The last item makes specific reference to students' moments of emotional distress, and the ability to find the right words in order to defuse emotional escalations. Guiding students deal with their emotions can help them find ways to let go of negative feelings, become independent in coping with difficulties and bring positive feelings back to the classroom group, therefore generating an inclusive environment. Item n. 8 regards the ability to design cooperative learning activities, capable of guaranteeing the full participation of all the students of the class, despite their different needs and learning styles.

Items of group 2: tasks regarding the customization of means.

Items of group 2 are illustrated in table n. 2.

Table 2. Tasks regarding the customization of means.

9	<p>Suggest instruments or tools to support the process of learning of reading and writing.</p> <p><i>Suggerire e/o fornire strumenti compensativi per il supporto dell'apprendimento del processo di letto-scrittura.</i></p>
10	<p>Identify strategies or suggest instruments to enhance the ability to solve problems.</p> <p><i>Suggerire e/o adottare strategie per il potenziamento dell'abilità di problem solving.</i></p>
11	<p>Provide explanations through different channels, also thanks to differentiated tools such as visual, auditive, tactile aids.</p> <p><i>Fornire la spiegazione attraverso canali di comunicazione differenziati in base alle necessità degli studenti (supporti visivi e/o uditivi, tattili...)</i></p>
12	<p>Suggest or provide technological tools to support the EFL learning process.</p> <p><i>Suggerire e/o fornire strumenti tecnologici di supporto all'apprendimento della lingua inglese per far fronte alle necessità degli studenti.</i></p>

The items in group 2 all regard the customization of the means by which the EFL teaching happens. More precisely, item n. 9 refers to the ability to identify compensating tools that can help students learning how to read and write, both abilities that can be very challenging for all the students that already have troubles with the learning process of their L1. For example, as suggested by Daloiso (2014), students with Specific Learning Disorders are usually afraid of the challenges that learning another language could bring, as they don't feel they would be provided with an adequate support. What is more, supporting students with additional tools and instruments to ease the learning process would benefit all students, not only the ones with difficulties or SEN. Item n. 10 concerns the ability to provide tools or instruments to enhance the ability to find the solution to problematic situations. It can be referred to problematic situations encountered in the language learning process, like understanding the instructions of an exercise or activity, or encountered in their everyday life, like finding the correct way to communicate in a real-life situation or organize the study. Items n. 11 and 12 are also rooted in Daloiso (2014) findings. As already explained, providing the language input through multiple channels can highly enhance the probability that the information is actually processed and stored by the brain. Therefore, item n. 11 asks the respondents whether they feel prepared to provide the explanation through different channels, also implying the use of visual, auditive or tactile aids; item n. 12, in addition, makes a specific reference to the ability to identify and suggest technological tools to support the language learning process. Explanatory videos, text readers, podcasts, online instruments, can be entertaining tools that can help teachers engage the attention not only of students with SEN but also with different learning styles.

Items of group 3: tasks regarding the customization of objectives.

Items of group 3 are illustrated in table n.3.

Table 3. Items regarding the customization of objectives.

13	Understand situations where students need to be relieved from certain activities, according to their abilities.
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	<i>Individuare le situazioni che richiedono di dispensare gli studenti da alcuni compiti, in base alle loro capacità.</i>
14	Assess students' progress on EFL writing and reading skills. <i>Valutare i progressi degli studenti nell'apprendimento dei processi di letto-scrittura della lingua inglese.</i>
15	Set customized goals/objectives according to students' abilities. <i>Prevedere obiettivi personalizzati in base alle capacità degli studenti.</i>
16	Design an individualized educational program for EFL learning. <i>Creare un piano didattico personalizzato per la lingua inglese (PDP)</i>

All the items belonging to group 3 concern tasks necessary to customize the objectives that teachers set for their students. This could mean deciding to lower the level of difficulty of the goal expected by certain students, or dividing the journey towards the goal into shorter, easier phases. In particular, item n. 13 refers to the ability to understand all the circumstances in which teachers should decrease the workload expected from students who may need to be relieved from certain activities. The reason behind this kind of choices may be that the teacher evaluates that some students are not ready for a type of assignment, or that the teacher chooses to help them strengthen some other aspects of language learning, on the basis of their abilities and dispositions. For example, as highlighted by Dalouis (2014), it is reasonable to state that that students with Specific Learning Disorders should be guided to improve their oral skills, while they should be trained to use supports to work on their writing and reading skills. The task described in item n. 13 require a complex set of abilities and qualities: simply relieving students from certain tasks may lead to them thinking they are not good enough to complete the task. On the contrary, teachers should be able to recognize the situations in which students should be relieved from a given activity, supporting them at the same time in the recognitions of their strengths and acceptance of their weaknesses. Item n. 14, in turn, makes specific reference to the evaluation of the progress of writing and reading skills. Evaluation and assessment are essential tools, as they allow teachers to measure students' improvements in the language learning progress and see if the objectives that had been set have been achieved. Once a specific skill and ability is consolidated, teachers can go on and set new goals and objectives. Item number 15 refers to the ability to set differentiated goals according to the students' abilities. Concerning students with SEN, in Italy they are usually in charge of medical teams. As

already anticipated in chapter one of the current dissertation, in agreement with the biopsychosocial model of health, in addition to the diagnosis the medical professionals should compile an International Functioning Profile, (IFC), a document that describes all the abilities and capabilities of the student. Guided by the ICF and by the empirical data collected during the school activities, teachers should be able to set realistically achievable goals. This item imply the ability to assist the special educational teacher (if there is one) who has to design an Individualized Educational Program for the students with SEN that are included in the EFL classroom with the other students. Item 16, in turn, makes specific reference to the ability to actually design a *Piano Didattico Personalizzato*¹⁶, a document that in Italian schools is compiled for SEN students that do not need the presence of a special educational teacher but still have some needs that have to be accommodated. It is compiled by all the teachers involved in the education of the pupil with SEN, on the basis of the student’s qualities and in collaboration with the health professionals that compiled the ICF.

Items of group 4: tasks regarding the customization of contents.

Items of group 4 are illustrated in table n.4.

Table 4. Items regarding the customization of contents.

17	<p>Provide or find simplified material based on students’ English writing and reading skills.</p> <p><i>Fornire e/o reperire materiale semplificato tarato sulle capacità di letto-scrittura in lingua inglese degli studenti.</i></p>
18	<p>Adapt or create highly readable written material.</p> <p><i>Adattare o creare materiale scritto che sia ad alta leggibilità.</i></p>
19	<p>Adapt or create graphically engaging learning material, promoting longer attention spans.</p> <p><i>Adattare o creare materiale per l'apprendimento della lingua inglese graficamente coinvolgente e che favorisca una finestra attentiva più lunga possibile.</i></p>

¹⁶ Personalized teaching plan.

20	Design activities that are adaptable to the students' individual needs. <i>Progettare attività adattabili alle necessità individuali degli studenti.</i>
21	Teach how to (or suggest instruments to learn how to) communicate in English with alternative communicative techniques (AAC¹⁷, sign language, Braille). <i>Insegnare a (o fornire gli strumenti per apprendere a) comunicare in lingua inglese utilizzando tecniche di comunicazione alternative alla lingua orale o scritta (es. CAA, lingua dei segni, braille...)</i>

The items of group 4 all regard tasks required to adapt the content of the EFL lesson to the students' necessities. Different needs but also different learning styles and multiple intelligences can make the EFL class a highly heterogeneous context. This is a fundamental assumption that teachers should bear in mind when designing their lessons. More precisely, item n. 17 makes reference to the fact that educators should provide students differentiated material based on their level of preparation and abilities, considering the issues that many can have to face in the learning process of a foreign language. However, it could be hard to find already-made simplified material. What is more, as highlighted in chapter one of the current thesis, all students have different needs, and IE rejects all kinds of standardization, even for students with the same medical diagnosis. Therefore, teachers should be able to adapt themselves worksheets and study material in order to make it accessible to their students. In this respect, Item n. 18 concerns the ability to create and provide highly legible written texts. As anticipated in chapter 1 of the current work, the British Dyslexia Association has provided some guidelines on how a written text should be in order to be accessible for students who struggle with written documents (Daloiso, 2014, p.52). On the other hand, dyslexia is not the only condition that could bring challenges for students that try develop writing and reading skills. In fact, item n. 19 refers to the ability to design highly engaging written sheets or posters, in order to promote the longest possible attention window. On the other hand, item number 20 regards the ability to design activities, like games or group works, that are flexible enough to accommodate all students' needs. As already

¹⁷ Augmentative and alternative communication is a set of communication techniques which can replace speech or writing for people with impairments in the production or comprehension of spoken or written language.

mentioned in chapter 1 of the current dissertation, cooperative learning activities, exercises involving the use of technologies, tasks that require sharing people's experiences, are all types of projects that have been proved to be IE's allies. The last item of this group refers to the ability to teach, or at least suggest the instruments to learn, how to communicate in English using alternative communication techniques, such as the Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), the sign language, Braille, etc. Even though these methods can seem highly specific and most probably require the intervention of a specialist, English teachers should bear in mind that communication appears to be the ultimate goal of language education, therefore they should aim to help pupils with hearing or visual impairments to find their own way to communicate in a foreign context.

Items of group 5: tasks regarding the ability to collaborate with other professionals.

Items of group 5 are illustrated in table n.5.

Table 5. Items regarding the ability to collaborate with other professionals.

22	<p>Work together with the other teachers in order to design an IEP which also involves EFL teaching.</p> <p><i>Collaborare con gli altri insegnanti per la stesura di un piano didattico personalizzato (PEI) che coinvolga anche l'insegnamento della lingua inglese.</i></p>
23	<p>Work together with health professionals to define the best instruments and methodologies to promote EFL learning, based on the students' abilities and needs.</p> <p><i>Collaborare con professionisti dell'area sanitaria per l'individuazione delle misure adeguate da attuare per favorire l'apprendimento della lingua inglese in base alle capacità e necessità degli studenti.</i></p>

The two items of group 5 concern the need to find the way to collaborate among professionals. As highlighted by Nota, Ginevra and Soresi (2015), teachers may be considered some of the key protagonists of the process of implementation of IE at school; however, it is necessary that all the participants of education aim at the same

goals in order to IE to be successful. This is the reason why teachers should be able to collaborate, firstly among themselves (item n. 22), and secondly with ~~the~~ health professionals involved in the education of the pupil with SEN (item n. 23).

3.2.3 Section n.3 – Suggestions for improvement

At the end of the task-oriented section of the questionnaire, a question has been added, which asked the respondents to write what would they suggest to improve their ability to complete the tasks presented in the questionnaire, or in other words, to improve their perception of self-efficacy. The question offered 5 options:

- Attend a course on IE and/or students with SEN;
- Read books on IE and/or students with SEN;
- Have the support of another teacher or of a special education teacher during the lessons;
- Have at disposal more ready-made diversified/adapted material;
- Have fewer hours for teaching and have more time, included in the work schedule, for the preparation of the lessons¹⁸.

In addition, the respondents had the possibility to write freely some more suggestions and to indicate which factors they think they need in order to make the implementation of IE in EFL teaching in Italy successful.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

The survey was conducted between March and April 2023, and involved a sample of teachers working from primary to secondary school, all of them with teaching experience in Italy. Some of the respondents may teach or have taught other subjects in

¹⁸ Original text in Italian:

- *Seguire corsi su studenti con disabilità/BES/didattica inclusiva*
- *Leggere libri su studenti con disabilità/BES/didattica inclusiva*
- *Avere altri insegnanti in compresenza durante le ore di lezione (di sostegno o in potenziamento alla didattica)*
- *Avere a disposizione materiale scolastico più vario/materiale adattato e semplificato da fornire agli studenti con disabilità/BES*
- *Avere meno ore frontali di didattica e più tempo a disposizione per reperire o creare materiale*

addition to EFL, especially the respondents from the primary schools, given the fact that currently in public schools in Italy there is not often a specialist teacher for EFL teaching. On the other hand, the secondary school teachers that participated in the survey may have had other experiences teaching other languages. However, the respondents were explicitly asked to think about their practice as EFL teachers in the Italian school system and answer to the questions consequently.

The questionnaire was prepared on Google Forms, and the link was sent through the aid of social media such as Facebook and Whatsapp in order to reach as many teachers as possible. Some teachers received the link to the questionnaire via email.

The survey was closed on the 20th of April 2023 with a collection of 105 answers. The collected data will be described and analyzed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

4.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE RESULTS

The survey conducted for the current study involved a sample of 105 Italian EFL teachers. The results will be displayed below, divided into the sections of the Self-Efficacy in Inclusive English Teaching questionnaire.

4.1.1 Demographic data

As already discussed, the first section of the questionnaire had the purpose of collecting anonymously some general demographic data of the respondents.

The study involved a sample of 105 respondents, the large majority of whom are female (96.2%) while the remaining are male (3.8%). No respondent chose the non-binary option for gender. The average age of the participants was 41.9: at the time when the survey was conducted, 23.8% of them were less than 30 years old, 46.6% were between 30 and 49 years old, while the remaining 29.5% were more than 50 years old. Regarding years of experience, 46.6% of the participants had less than 5 years of experience working at school, 18.1% of them had from 5 to 10 years of experience, while the remaining 35.3% had been working in class for more than 10 years. On the other hand, 33.3% of the respondents claimed to have got their higher degree in the previous 5 years, 21.9% of them between 5 and 10 years before, and 44.8% more than 10 years before (see figures n. 8, 9 and 10)

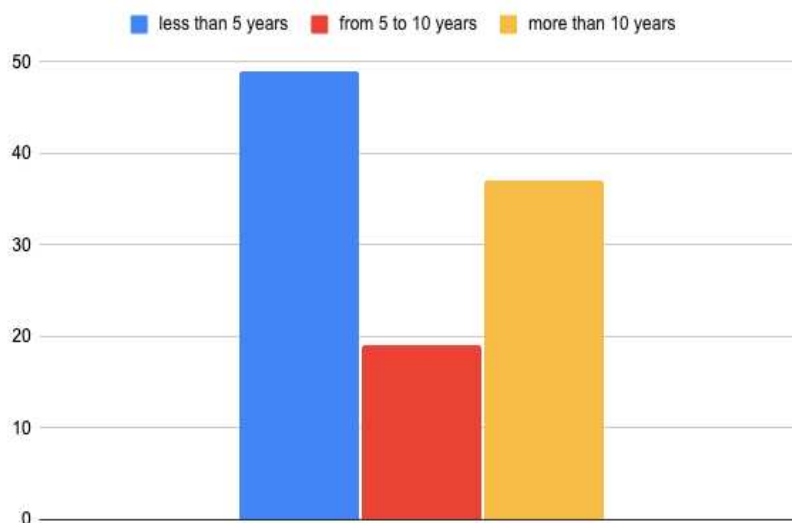


Figure 8. Distribution of the participants' years of experience.

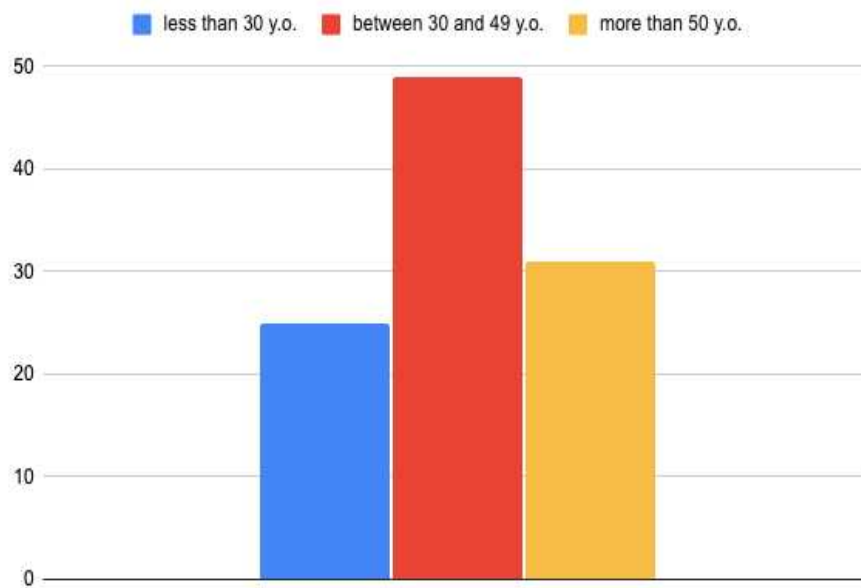


Figure 9. Distribution of the participants' age.

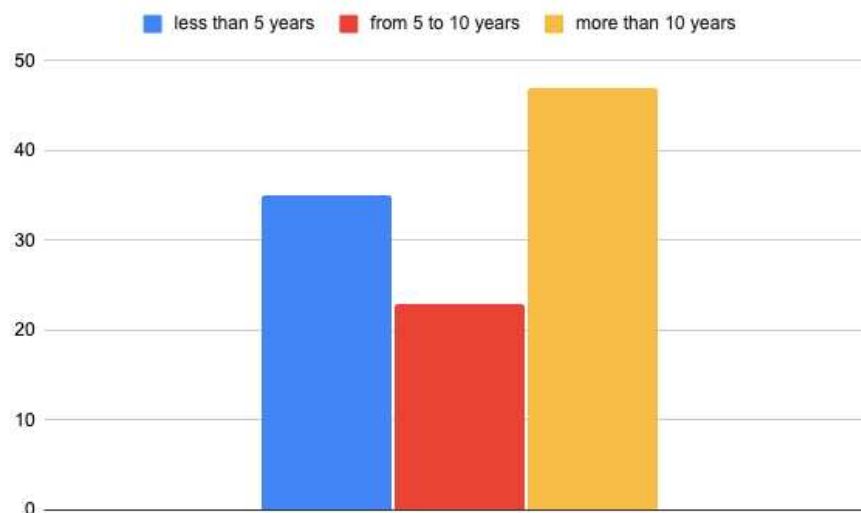


Figure 10. Distribution of how many years before the survey the respondents got their latest degree.

The participants were then asked where they were currently working and at which level of education they had worked in the past. Considering that in Italy, teachers have the possibility to work at different level of education, especially as supply teachers, the respondents could give multiple answers.

The results highlighted that 29.5% of them had experience working at primary school, 66.7% had worked at lower secondary school and 59% at upper secondary school.

Concerning their current occupations at the time of the survey, 15.2% of the sample were currently working at primary school, 35.2% at lower secondary school, 39% at upper secondary school, and 10.5% of them were not working, some of them were between jobs while some others had already retired (see figures 11 and 12).

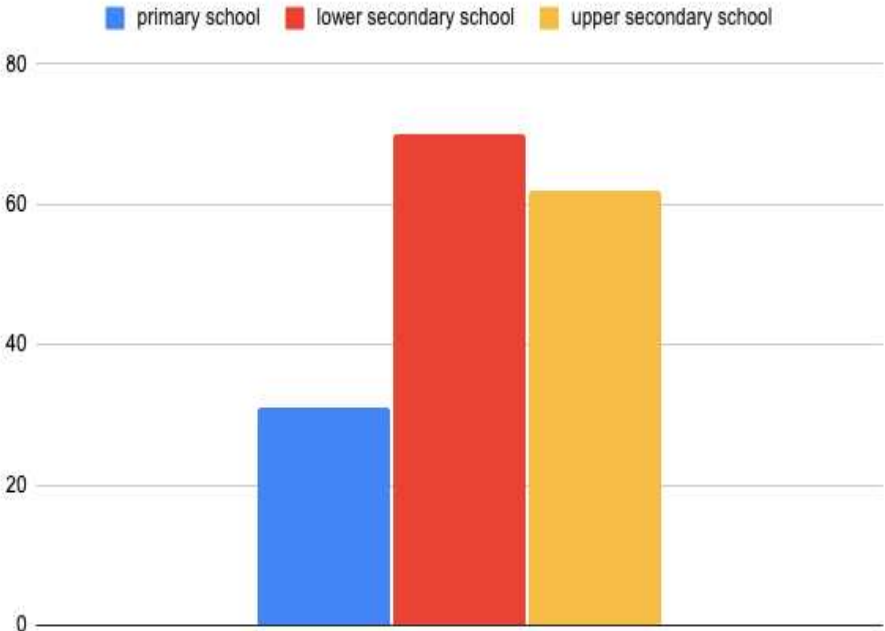


Figure 11. Participants' previous occupations.

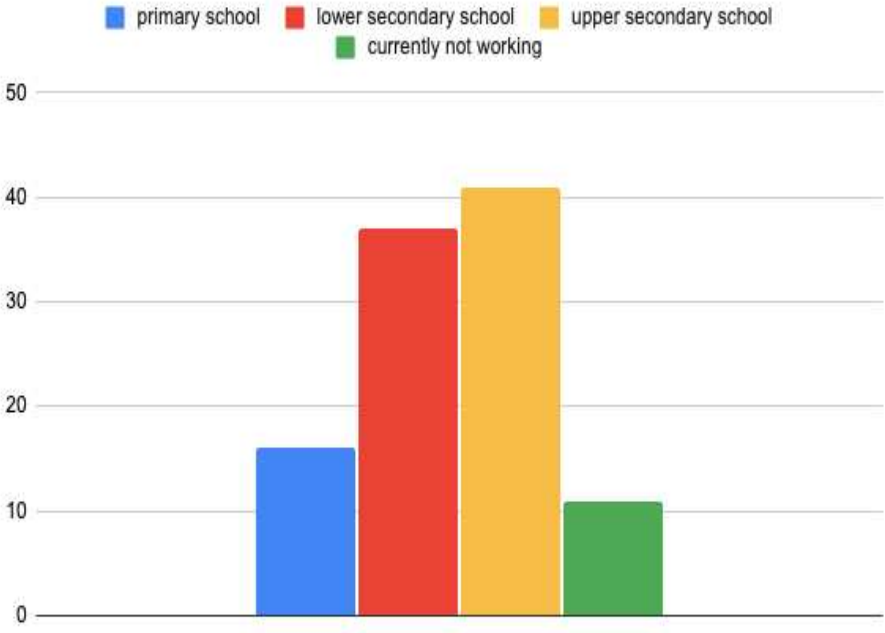


Figure 12. Participants' current occupation.

Concerning their level of education, it appears to be quite high: the majority of the participants (71.7%) had a second-cycle degree, and 14.2% also attended post-graduation courses, either of one or two years¹⁹; 1.9% of the sample completed the Special Educational Needs teacher training, which is necessary in Italy to be a SEN teacher. In addition, 3.8% of the respondents had a doctorate. Only 1.9% of the respondents had a high school diploma (which was sufficient to teach in primary school before 2002) and 6.6% of them had a bachelor's degree (see figure 13).

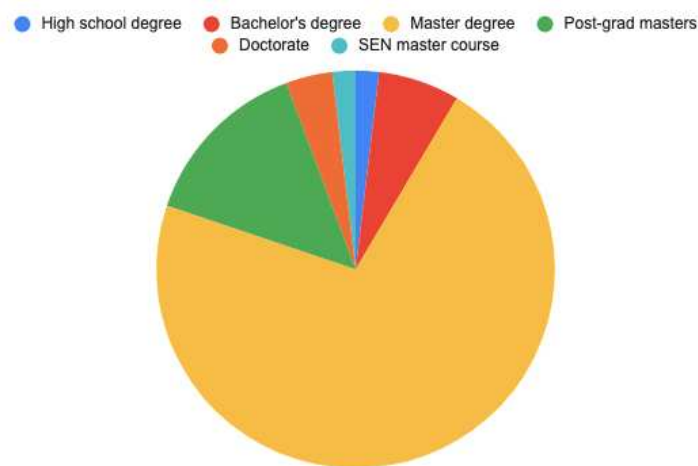


Figure 13. Participants' level of education.

Concerning specific training about IE, 77.1% of the respondents claimed to have participated at least once in a course about inclusive education or students with SEN, while 22.9% of them claimed they did not. According to the collected qualitative data, the courses were either teacher training courses offered by their place of work, post-graduation masters or university modules. When asked about the content of the courses on IE they had attended, the participants mentioned the general principles of IE, inclusive language teaching, or teaching techniques for students with SEN.

Lastly, teachers were asked to state if they had ever had any social contact with people with SEN or disability, either as teachers or in their personal life. The answers to these

¹⁹ In Italy, students have the possibility to complete a first cycle of 3 years (*Laurea di primo livello*) and then choose whether they want to stop there or go on with a second cycle of 2 years (*Laurea di secondo livello*). With a three-year degree they can access to post-graduation courses called first level masters (*master di primo livello*), while with the 5-year degree they can access to post-graduation courses called second level masters (*master di secondo livello*).

last two questions brought to light that in their professional life, 98.1% of the respondents had worked with students with SEN in the past. More precisely, 87.4% had worked with students with a Specific Learning Disorder, 80.6% with students with mild cognitive disabilities, 67% with students with ADHD, 44.7% with students with mild autism, 42.7% with students with severe cognitive disabilities, 33% with students with mild physical disabilities, 30.1% with students with any sort of speech disorders, 26.2% with students with severe physical disabilities, 24.3% with students with blindness or deafness, 21.4% with students with severe autism. In addition, some respondents added: Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Asperger's Syndrome. Concerning their contacts outside their job as teachers, 72% of the respondents had met people with SEN or disability, 22.4% of them stated they had never met someone with SEN or disability and 4.8% of them answered that they didn't know if they had. Concerning the type of SEN or disability encountered, 43.6% has met people with Specific Learning Disorders, 42.3% with people with mild cognitive disabilities, 32.1% with people with mild physical disabilities, 29.5% with people with mild autism, 28.2% with people with severe physical disabilities, 26.9% with people with severe cognitive disabilities, 24.4% with people with ADHD, 20.5% with people with any kind of speech disorder, 19.2% with people with blindness or deafness. In addition, one of them added: people with trisomy 21.

4.1.2 Perceptions of self-efficacy

As already anticipated, the survey asked the respondents to state the extent to which, on a scale from one to four (where 1 means not at all and 4 means completely), they felt they could complete the tasks described in the items. Therefore, the respondents could obtain a maximum of 92 points in this section; the higher the score obtained by each respondent is, the higher appears to be their sense of self-efficacy. For the current analysis, it has been chosen to consider high sense of self-efficacy a final score between 75 and 92 points, medium high sense of self efficacy between 58 and 74 points, medium low between 41 and 57 points, low below 40 points. The average of the total score among the respondents is 68.1, with a standard deviation of ± 11.5 . The results showed that only one participant (less than 1%) has a low sense of self-efficacy, 16.2% of them have a medium-low sense of self-efficacy, 52.4% has a medium-high sense of self-efficacy, 31.4% has a high sense of self-efficacy, as illustrated by figure 14.

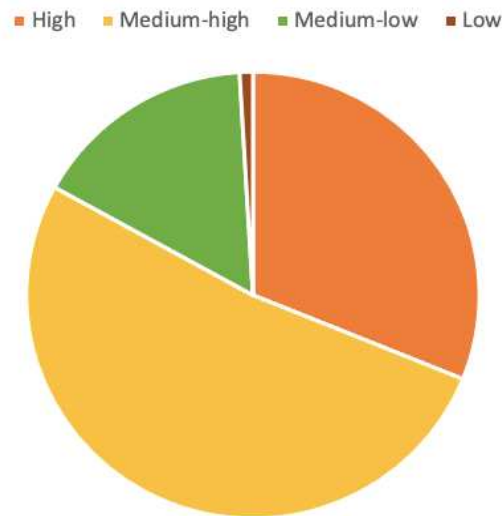


Figure 14. Respondents' sense of self-efficacy.

The results of each item will be presented in the current section. For the current analysis it has been chosen to approximate the decimals at the first decimal of the percentages, according to the following conventions: by default, with decimals from 1 to 4, by excess with decimals greater or equal to 5. The rates of the perception of self-efficacy will be considered as follows: from 3.1 to 4=high sense of self-efficacy; from 2.1 to 3=medium-high sense of self efficacy; from 1.1 to 2=medium-low sense of self-efficacy; from 0.1 to 1=low sense of self-efficacy.

The first step of the analysis conducted on the collected data has been to verify whether the thematic division of the items proposed in chapter 3 of the current dissertation makes sense from a statistic point of view, too. In order to do so, the average score and standard deviation of the answers of all participants among the items of the same group has been calculated. Overall, the standard deviation appears to be quite low, therefore the average score of the points within the items of the same group appear to be a good representation of the answers of the group. In conclusion, analyzing the items divided into the five thematic groups presented in chapter 3 of the current thesis appears to be a valid strategy, which has been chosen for the description of the results of section 2 of the survey. The distribution of the average score and standard deviation of the answers of the items within the same thematic group will be available in each group's section below. Graphs regarding the distribution of answers for each item are available in appendix B.

Group 1. Answers to items 1-8, regarding environment management.

The answers to the items of group 1 highlighted an overall medium-high sense of self-efficacy concerning environment management, given the fact that in all the items, the majority of the respondents rated their sense of efficacy greater than 3, even if in different measures, as will be explained in detail below. The distribution of the average score and standard deviation (std) of the items in group 1 is represented by figures 15 and 16.

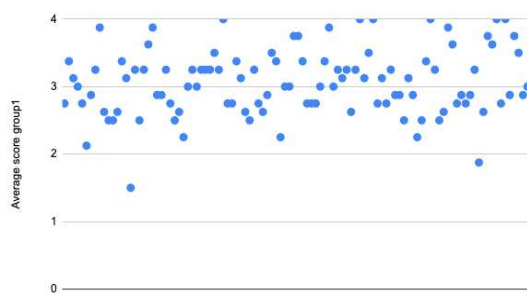


Figure 15. Distribution of average score, items 1-8.

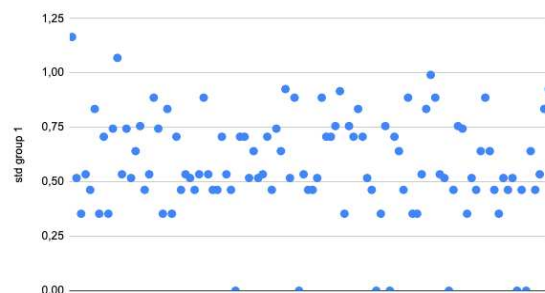


Figure 16. Distribution of std, items 1-8.

More precisely, the task in which more respondents appear to feel confident appear to be n. 4 (encourage social interactions among all students, facilitating the creation of an inclusive environment) since approximately 92% of the participants rated their efficacy between 3 and four, only around 8% rated it two, and nobody rated it 1. The average score of the answers of item n. 4 is 3.3, with a standard deviation of ± 0.6 . Quite high scores may be found also in the answers to items n. 3 (establish an atmosphere that guarantees optimal learning conditions to all students), 7 (identify the appropriate strategy to guide students coping with frustration and anger) and 8 (design cooperative learning activities, granting the active participation of all students). In particular, items n. 3 and 7 shares the same average scores (3.1) and std (± 0.7), even if the distribution of the answers is quite different: concerning item n. 3, almost 87% of the respondents rated their sense of efficacy 3 or 4, while in item n. 7 the two highest points of the scale were rated by 81% of the participants. Concerning item n. 8, the average score also appears to be 3.1, but with a std of ± 0.8 : 79% of the respondents felt that their level of confidence to complete the task is higher than 3, while the remaining 21% rated their efficacy level

1 or 2. Items 5 (Guarantee an adequate number of breaks, encouraging all students to be focused on the lesson and to be actively involved in the lesson) and 1 (Encourage students to integrate the English language in their everyday life) come immediately after, both with an average score of 3,0 and a std of $\pm 0,8$, as they share an almost identical distribution of answers: 76% people stated their sense of efficacy to be between 3 and 4, and 24% between 1 and 2. The answers to the last two items have an average score lower than 3, however, a perceived level of efficacy higher than 2 may still be considered medium-high. More precisely, for item n. 2 (organize the classroom environment according to the students' needs) the average score is 2.9 with a std of $\pm 0,8$. 73.4% of the respondents rated their ability to complete task n. 2 more than 3, while 26.7% rated it less than 3. Lastly, the answers to item n.6 (foresee and prevent disruptive behaviors) have an average score of 2.7 (std $\pm 0,8$), the lowest of the group: 59% chose to vote 3 or 4, while 41% voted 1 or 2.

Group 2. Answers to items 9-12, regarding the customization of means.

The sense of self-efficacy for practices concerning the customization of the means for language teaching appears to be medium-high, since the majority of the respondents self-evaluated their ability to complete tasks n. 8-12 from 3 to 4. The distribution of the average scores and std of the items of group 2 is available in figures 17 and 18.

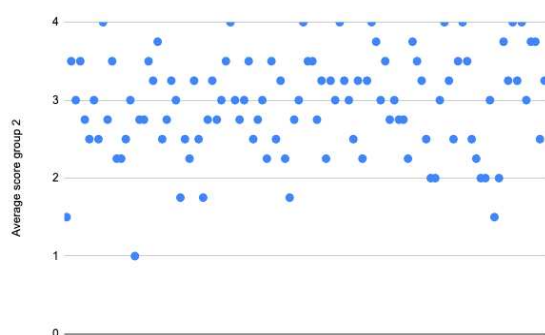


Figure 17. Distribution of average score, items 9-12.

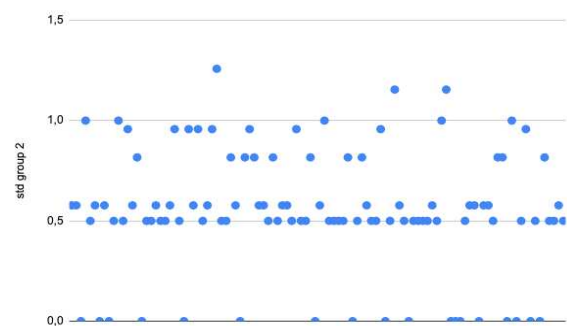


Figure 18. Distribution of std, items 9-12.

The results for group 2 of items shed light on the fact that the task more respondents appear to feel confident about is item n. 12 (suggest or provide technological tools to support the EFL learning process), which has an average score of 3.1 (std $\pm 0,8$); more

precisely, approximately 76% of the respondents rated their sense of self-efficacy 3 or 4, while 24% of them voted 1 or 2. Items n. 9 (suggest instruments or tools to support the process of learning of reading and writing) and 11 (provide explanations through different channels, also thanks to differentiated tools such as visual, auditive or tactile aids) come right after, and share the same average score, 2.9, with a std of ± 0.8 and ± 0.9 respectively. Concerning item n.9, around 75% of the respondents chose to vote high or medium-high, while about 25% considered their ability to complete the task as low or medium-low.

70.4% of the participants rated their efficacy for task n.11 either 3 or 4, but 29.6% of them voted one of the two lower levels of efficacy. More precisely, 21% of them chose to vote 2, while 8.6% of the teachers involved chose to rate the possibility to complete task n. 11 just 1. Lastly, item n. 10 (identify strategies or suggest instruments to enhance the ability to solve problems) has the lowest average score of the group (2.7, std ± 0.8), and the answers are distributed as follows: 67.6% considered their self-efficacy high or medium-high, while 32.4% considered it low or medium-low.

Group 3. Answers to items 13-16, regarding the customization of objectives.

The answers to items 13-16 highlighted an overall high sense of self-efficacy concerning tasks that regard the customization of the objectives that teachers set for their students. The distribution of the average scores and std of the respondents for items of group 3 is represented by figures 19 and 20.

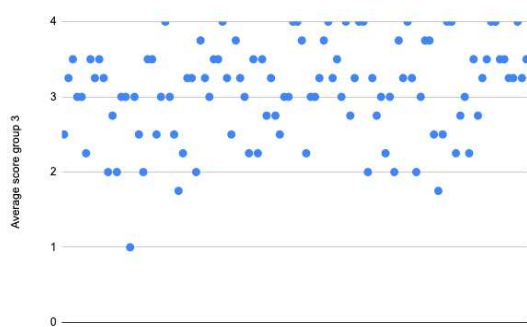


Figure 19. Distribution of average score, items 13-16.

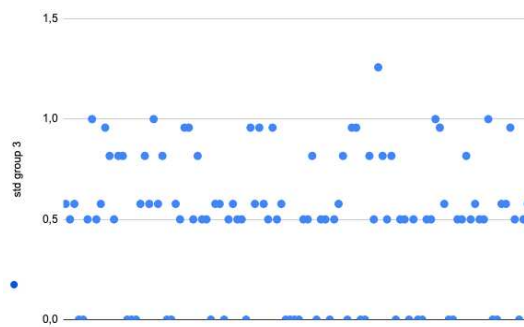


Figure 20. Distribution of std, items 13-16.

The task of group 3 which more teachers seem to feel confident about appears to be n. 15 (set customized goals according to the students' abilities), in which almost 82% of the respondents voted for 3 or 4, while the remaining 18% voted for 1 or 2, with an average score of 3.1 and a std of ± 0.8 . Item n. 13 (understand the situations that require to relieve students from certain activities according to their abilities) comes right after, with the same average score and std. However, the percentage of the participants who considered their ability to complete task n. 13 to be high or medium high is 78%, which is lower than that of item n.15. 22% of the respondents considered their sense of self-efficacy for task n. 13 low or medium low. Around 78% of the respondents rated their sense of self-efficacy for task n. 14 (assess students' progresses on EFL writing and reading skills) either 3 or 4, and almost 22% of them rated it either 1 or 2, with an average score of 3 and a standard deviation of ± 0.8 . Lastly, item n. 16 (design an individualized educational program for EFL learning) has the lowest percentage of teachers rating their sense of self-efficacy high or medium-high (75,2%) among the tasks of group three. However, the average score remains quite high, since it appears to be 3, with a std of ± 1 .

Group 4. Answers to items 17-21, regarding the customization of the content of teaching.

The answers to items n. 17-21 highlighted an overall medium-high sense of self-efficacy concerning the customization of the content of the English lesson. The distribution of average score and std is graphically represented by figures 21 and 22.

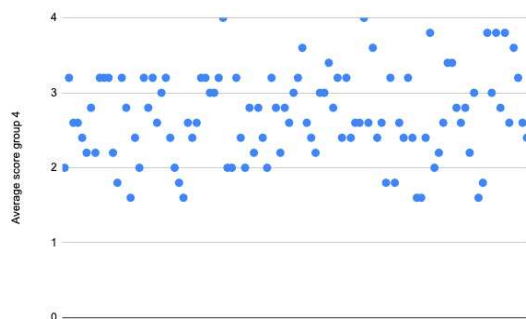


Figure 21. Distribution of average score items 17-21.

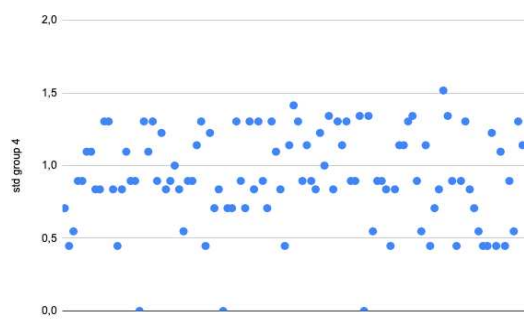


Figure 22. Distribution of std items 17-21.

More precisely, the task of group 4 which the respondents appear to be more confident about is task n.17 (provide or find simplified material based on students' EFL writing and reading skills), in which 78.1% of the participants rated their sense of self-efficacy between 3 and 4, while the remaining 21.9% rated it between 1 and 2. The average score is 3.1, with a std of ± 0.8 . Item n. 18 (adapt or create highly readable written material) comes after, with an average score of 3.1 and a std of ± 0.8 . The respondents who considered their sense of self-efficacy high or medium high are 71.4%, and the ones who considered it low or medium low are 28.6%. Even though the average score of the answers to item n. 20 (design activities that are adaptable to the students' individual needs) is lower (2.9, std ± 0.7) than the one of item n.18, the percentage of the respondents who rated their sense of self-efficacy for task n. 20 high or medium-high is actually higher (74.3). Item n. 19 (adapt or create graphically engaging learning material, promoting the longer attention spans) shares item n. 20 average score, with a std of ± 0.9 . 69% of the respondents rated their sense of self-efficacy for task n. 19 either 3 or 4, while the remaining rated it 1 or 2.

Lastly, with the lowest average score of the whole questionnaire (1.4, std ± 0.8), comes item n. 21 (teach how to, or suggest instruments to learn how to, communicate in English with alternative communicative techniques), to which only around 12% of the respondents voted 3 or 4, while 88% of the respondents rated their sense of self-efficacy low or medium-low.

Group 5. Answers to items regarding the collaboration with other professionals.

The distribution of the answers to items n. 22 (work together with the other teachers in order to design an IEP which also involves EFL teaching) and 23 (work together with health professionals to define the best instruments and methodologies to promote EFL learning, based on the students' abilities and needs) are quite different. The distribution of the average score and std of the answers to the items of group 5 is illustrated by figures 23 and 24.

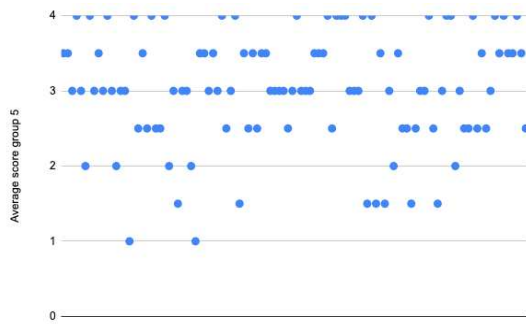


Figure 23. Distribution of average score items 22-23.

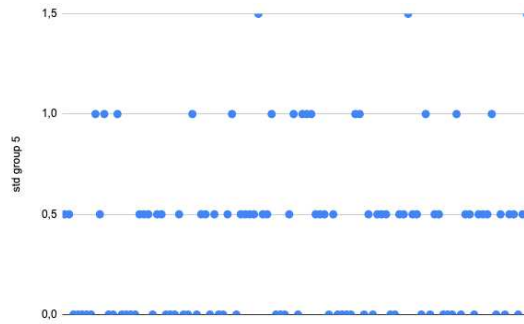


Figure 24. Distribution of std items 22-23.

More precisely, 85,7% of the teachers involved in the survey appear to consider their ability to complete task n. 22 high or medium high, while only 14,3 % of them consider it low or medium-low. The average score of the answers to the item is 3.4, with a std of ± 0.7 . On the other hand, only 60% of the respondents rated their efficacy to complete task n. 23 either 3 or 4, while 40% voted 1 or 2. Answers to item 23 have an average score of 2.7, with a std of ± 1 .

4.1.3 Suggestions for the future

In the last section of the questionnaire the respondents were asked what they think they need to improve their sense of self-efficacy, and they were given both a series of options (among which they could chose more than one) plus the possibility to write something freely. The option that achieved the greatest success, since it was voted by 83% of the respondents, is to have access to ready-made simplified material to be used with students with SEN. What is more, 78.3% of the participants think that it could be useful to have the support of another teacher or a special education teacher during their lessons. The option “attend courses on IE and/or students with SEN” was also quite popular, voted by 71.7% of the respondents. 32.1% of the teachers involved in the survey think that having more time to plan the classes would be useful, while 31.1% of them think that reading books on IE and students with SEN would help. In addition, some respondents suggested that key ingredients for successful IE would be more collaboration, either among professionals and among the other people involved in the pupils’ education, such as parents and home teachers; other participants suggested that smaller class sizes would be useful, as would having some time alone to spend with the

pupils with SEN; lastly, some respondents suggested that the key is experience in the field.

4.2 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.2.1 First aim

The first aim of the current research was to measure the sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices in a sample of Italian EFL teachers. The results of the study highlighted that, overall, the EFL teachers involved in the survey have a medium-high sense of self-efficacy, since the average of the scores of all the participants is 68.1 (std \pm 11.5). However, the large majority of the respondents (83.8%) have a high or medium-high sense of self-efficacy, while only 16.2% of them have a medium low sense of self-efficacy. Only one respondent appears to have a low sense of self-efficacy.

Concerning the analysis of the answers to the items, the distribution of the participants' answers to some of the items appears to be of interest for the purpose of the current dissertation, as they highlight both the tasks the respondents felt confident in and which less confident in.

The first two tasks where the highest number of teachers of the sample appear to have a high sense of self-efficacy are both tasks regarding the management of the environment where the learning process occurs. More precisely, item n. 4 (guarantee an adequate number of breaks, encouraging all students to be focused on the lesson and to be actively involved in the lesson) appears to be the item of the questionnaire where the number of participants who considered their sense of self-efficacy high or medium-high is higher (92.4%), suggesting that the task in which ELF teachers feel more competent is encouraging students to have positive interactions with each other, promoting the creation of an inclusive environment in class. Task n. 4 is followed by item n.3 (establish an atmosphere that guarantees optimal learning conditions to all students), in which 87% of the respondents considered their sense of self-efficacy for establishing optimal working conditions for all students high or medium-high. In addition, teachers appear to be quite confident about task n. 22 of group 5 (work together with the other teachers in order to design an IEP which also involves EFL teaching), since 85.7% of them rated their ability to collaborate with the other teachers while designing IEPs 3 or 4. Two more items deserve to be mentioned among the tasks which more respondents

felt confident about. The first one belongs to the group of items regarding the customization of the goals set for students: almost 82% of the respondents rated their ability to complete task n. 15 (set customized goals/objectives according to students' abilities) 3 or 4, suggesting that a large portion of the teachers in the sample feel quite confident about their ability to adapt the objectives of their teaching to their students' needs. Lastly, another task that a lot of respondents felt confident about appears to be task n. 5 (guarantee an adequate number of breaks, encouraging all students to be focused on the lesson and to be actively involved in the lesson), since 81% of the respondents consider their ability to help students through moments of frustration or anger high or medium-high.

On the other hand, the survey brought to light the tasks in which more participants feel weaker. More precisely, item n. 21 (teach how to (or suggest instruments to learn how to) communicate in English with alternative communicative techniques) appears to be the one where more participants considered their sense of self-efficacy low, as 88% of the teachers considered their ability to teach alternative ways to communicate in English low or medium low. What is more, item n. 21 is the only item in which the majority of the respondents rated their sense of self-efficacy low or medium-low. In addition, another task that a large portion of participants did not feel confident about is foreseeing and preventing disruptive behaviors, since 41% of them considered their ability to complete task n. 6 low or medium low. Similar results can be found in the answers to item n.23: 40% of the respondents rated their sense of self-efficacy for collaboration with health professionals for the design of IEPs low or medium-low, suggesting that while a vast majority of teachers of the sample felt quite confident about working together with other teachers, only 60% of them feel the same about working with health professionals.

4.2.2 Second aim

The second aim of the current study was to give teachers the possibility to give suggestions concerning their training needs on IE. The results shed light on the fact that the majority of the respondents consider that having more diversified, adapted or adaptable ready-made teaching materials, having the support of other (non SEN) teachers during their lessons, and attending courses on IE and pupils with disabilities are key elements for the improvement of teachers' sense of self-efficacy for inclusive

practices. What is more, some of them also consider reading books on IE and having more time included in the work schedule to prepare the lessons important. Some participants also added other suggestions, such as the reduction of class sizes, more collaboration-among teachers and between teachers and families, more opportunities to have experience in the field and the possibility to have some alone time with the pupils with SEN.

4.2.3 Third aim

In order to achieve the third aim of the current study, to explore which demographic factors can influence their sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices, an additional analysis appears to be needed, to understand whether some demographic factors seem to influence the sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices. For the current study, it has been chosen to explore whether the sense of self-efficacy appears be correlated to the respondents' age, their years of experience, the to level of school were they were teaching at the time of the study, and whether they had ever participated in teacher training on IE or not. In order to do so, the correlation between the final score variable (which corresponds to the total of the points collected by the respondents in section 2 of the questionnaire, and which measures the respondents' sense of self-efficacy; a higher final score corresponds to a higher sense of self-efficacy) and each one of the aforementioned factors has been explored.

The hypothesis of a correlation between age or years of experience and final result has been investigated through the analysis of scatter diagrams. In figure 25 the x axis represents the variable age, while the y axis represents the variable final score. Looking at the diagram, it appears that the variable age is not correlated to the variable final score. In addition, this is supported by the value of the Pearson correlation coefficient R^2 , which is 0.007.

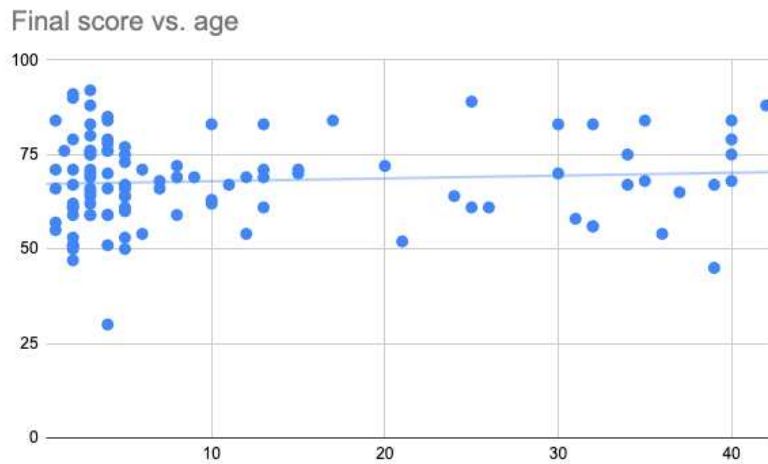


Figure 25. Correlation between final score and age.

The hypothesis of a correlation between years of experience and final score has also been examined through a scatter diagram (see figure 26) where the x axis represents years of experience, while the y axis represents final scores.

The distribution of data in the scatter diagram seem to suggest that there is not a correlation between final score and years of experience, since it appears that the variable final score is distributed quite evenly. In addition, the Pearson correlation coefficient R^2 is 0.007, supporting the aforementioned observation. However, the study was conducted on a small sample, therefore the results may not be considered statistically significant.

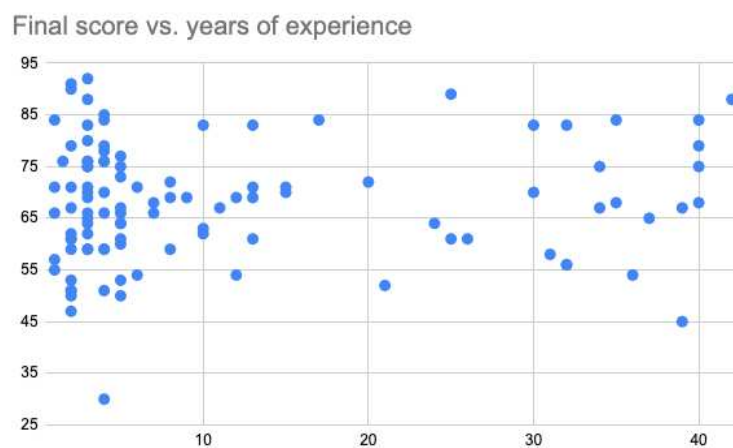


Figure 26. Correlation between final score and years of experience.

The correlation between the variable “level of school where the respondents were working at the time of the survey” and final score has been investigated mainly because

nowadays in Italy, primary school teachers need to attend a 5-years university course specifically meant for teaching at primary schools, which usually includes some modules on IE, while there are not compulsory courses on IE for students who want to be secondary school teachers. Therefore, it would be expected to find a higher sense of self-efficacy among primary school teachers.

In order to explore the possibility of a correlation between the level of school where they are employed and teachers' sense of self-efficacy, the average score of the participants that teach at every level of school has been calculated and then compared with the average score of the other groups of respondents. Therefore, the respondents have been divided into 4 groups: group 1, primary school teachers, group 2, lower secondary school teachers, group 3, upper secondary school teachers, group 4, unemployed teachers (mostly former teachers).

More precisely, the average score of group 1 resulted to be 62.8 (standard deviation ± 9.1), that of group 2 is 69.9 (standard deviation ± 12.9), that of group 3 is 68.4 (standard deviation ± 10.2) and that of group 4 is 69 (standard deviation ± 13). From a comparison of the average scores of the four groups, the sense of self-efficacy of primary school teachers could appear to be lower than the sense of self-efficacy of the other groups of teachers. This result appears to be in contrast with the hypothesis that primary school teachers, receiving more training on IE during their university course, should have a higher sense of self-efficacy. In order to find further support to this finding, the results have been tested through the Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon test, a test through which it is possible to compare two distributions, assuming that:

1. All the observations from both groups are independent of each other;
2. The null hypothesis is that both populations are identical;
3. The alternative hypothesis is that the distributions are not identical.

The test aims at refusing the null hypothesis, which happens in the cases where the P-value is less than 0.05. Therefore, every distribution has been compared in couples with one another. The results shed light on the fact that the final scores of the respondents of group 1, primary school teachers, are significantly lower only compared to group 2, lower secondary school teachers (P-value = 0.01) and to group 3, upper secondary school teachers (P-value = 0.04). The other comparisons can be considered similar.

Lastly, the correlation between whether the respondents have ever attended a course on IE or not and the final score variable was investigated with the same method. Once more, the average score and standard deviation of the participants of the two groups

were calculated and compared. The average score of the group of participants who claimed that they had never attended a course on IE is 61.6, with a standard deviation of ± 12.2 , while the average score of the group of participants who claimed to have received at least one form of training on IE is 69.9, with standard deviation ± 10.6 . Therefore, it appears that the section of the sample that claimed to have been trained on IE reached higher final scores, which corresponds to a higher sense of self-efficacy. This final finding appears to be consistent with what has been highlighted in chapter 2 of the current dissertation, as there appears to be a correlation between a high level of knowledge about IE and a high sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices. With these values of standard deviation, the results appear to be similar, therefore, the Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon test was submitted once more, highlighting that it is not possible to refuse the null hypothesis that the two distributions are similar. However, the P-value resulted to be 0.054, which is close to the threshold. This may suggest that the reason why the null hypothesis can not be refused may probably be the fact that the numerosity of the sample of respondents who claimed to have never attended a course on IE is too low.

To sum up, it appears that the three aims of the current study have been reached: first of all, the sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices of a sample of Italian EFL teachers has been measured and it appears to be medium-high. Secondly, most of the respondents have suggested that in order to improve their sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices, they would need more ready-made adapted material, more training on IE and SEN students, the support of other teachers during their lessons. Thirdly, there does not seem to be any correlation between the respondents' final score and their age or years of experience. On the other hand, the results of the current study seem to suggest that primary school teachers have a lower sense of self-efficacy compared to that of lower or upper secondary school teachers. In addition, there seems to be a correlation between training on IE and sense of self-efficacy. In fact, the average score of the group of respondents who claimed to have participated at least once in teacher training on IE or SEN students is slightly higher, and the lack of statistical significance for the correlation between the two variables may probably be due to the fact that the group of respondents who claimed they haven't received any form of training on IE is small.

CONCLUSION

The current thesis describes the development of an instrument to measure the perception of self-efficacy of Italian EFL teachers to implement Inclusive Education at school and the results of a first pilot study conducted with the Self-Efficacy in Inclusive English Teaching scale.

In the first chapter, Inclusive Education has been presented, as a teaching approach that aims at accommodating all students' needs, according to their learning style, natural dispositions or SEN. In Italy, IE was born in the 70's, when special schools were closed and students with SEN were included in regular schools. Almost 20 years later, in the 90's, SEN teachers were introduced, and with them the possibility to design Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs), with the purpose of facilitating the inclusion of SEN students in regular classes. However, the interest in IE has risen sharply in the last decades, due to the fact that the modern era has brought significant changes in the Western society, increasing heterogeneity in society and consequently in the educational context.

Refusing all kinds of standardization, the means through which IE operates are the customization of contents, objectives, and modes of teaching, according to the students' needs or dispositions (Nota et al., 2015). The cornerstones on which IE lays its foundations are the idea that all students should be given equal opportunities to learn, and that all students should be considered capable to learn. What is more, with special reference to EFL learning, there are some additional instruments that have been proven to be effective for the creation of an inclusive environment, like for example taking certain precautions when proposing written documents to make them readable and accessible to all students, design activities where students can interact and cooperate, or provide the language input through different channels simultaneously to enhance the probability that the information is actually processed by the students' brain (Daloiso, 2014).

As highlighted in chapter 1 of the current thesis, the Italian legislation has made significant steps forwards during these 50 years for the promotion of IE at school, introducing special educational teachers and Individualized Educational Programs (90's) and acknowledging the right of all students to have their own needs, going beyond the concept of disability and introducing that of Special Educational Needs

(2010's). However, teachers still struggle to guarantee the full inclusion of pupils with SEN in regular classes. It seems reasonable to state that teachers are key protagonists of the process of the implementation of IE at school, therefore, scholars have been trying to identify which personal factors appear to influence the probability that they adopt inclusive practices in their teaching. As explained in chapter 2 of the current thesis, it seems that a positive attitude towards IE and a high sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices for a specific subject may lead to a higher probability that teachers adopt inclusive measures in class.

In chapter 2 of the current work, attitude has been defined as a person's viewpoint on a specific matter, while efficacy has been defined as people's belief in their ability to complete a task. For the current study, it has been chosen to develop an instrument with the aim of measuring EFL teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy for inclusive practices, the Self-Efficacy in Inclusive English Teaching (SEIET) scale. In agreement with the aforementioned definition of efficacy, the SEIET scale is a task-oriented instrument; in addition, in an attempt to capture the construct of self-efficacy as theorized by Bandura, who describes it as a context-specific and subject-specific construct (Bandura, 1986 in Pace et al., 2016; also: Hecht et al, 2017; Sharma et al, 2012), the current study has been addressed to teachers of a specific subject (EFL) in a specific context (the inclusive classroom).

In chapter 3 of the current work, the development and structure of the questionnaire was described. The SEIET scale has got three aims: first of all, to measure the sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices of Italian EFL teachers; secondly, to give teachers the possibility to express their opinion about what they feel they need in order to improve their ability to complete the tasks described in the questionnaire; thirdly, to explore which demographic factors can influence their sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices. Consequently, the questionnaire is made of three sections: the first one has the purpose of collecting anonymously some demographic data of the respondents; the second one has the purpose of measuring the sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices of the participants; the third one has the purpose of giving the opportunity to provide some future recommendations on teachers' training needs. Section 2 is the biggest and most meaningful part. For the development of the items of section 2, the complex set of inclusive practices has been taken into consideration, along with the tasks that EFL teachers have to complete in their life as teachers at school. The items may be divided into 5 groups, according to the type of task they describe:

11. Tasks regarding the management of the environment where the learning process takes place;
12. Tasks regarding the principle of customization of means;
13. Tasks regarding the principle of customization of objectives;
14. Tasks regarding the principle of customization of contents;
15. Tasks regarding the ability of teachers to collaborate with other professionals.

The results of the survey were described and discussed in chapter 4 of the current thesis. The questionnaire was administered online to a sample of 105 Italian EFL teachers, the majority of which were female, with an average age of around 40 years old. Overall, the participants had a medium-high level of education; almost half of them had less than 5 years of experience; they had worked either at primary, lower secondary or upper secondary schools. At the time when the survey was conducted, some of them were not employed. The collection of demographic data has brought to light curious information. For example, despite the fact that in Italy, since the closure of special schools in the 70's, students with disability have been included in regular schools, almost a fourth of the sample claimed to have never once participated at least once in a course about IE or how to deal with students with disability. On the other hand, almost all of them claimed to have worked at least once with students with SEN. This means that a large portion of the sample actually had to work with students with SEN without having received any proper training on the matter.

Concerning the first aim of the study, the results of the survey brought to light that Italian EFL teachers appear to have a medium-high sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices. More precisely, the study has also shed light on the fact that there are some tasks more respondents appeared to feel confident about, that are:

- promote positive social interactions among students;
- set an optimal learning environment in class;
- collaborate among teachers to design IEPs;
- adapt teaching goals to the students' abilities;
- help students through moments of emotional distress.

On the other hand, the tasks more respondents seemed to feel less confident about appear to be:

- teach how to use the English language through alternative communicative techniques;
- Foresee and prevent disruptive behaviors;
- Collaborate with health professionals to design IEPs.

The results appear to be consistent with other studies selected for the literature review conducted for the current thesis, in which the sense of self-efficacy measured in teachers appeared to be high or medium-high (Cimermanová, 2017; Hecht et al., 2017; Aldabas et al., 2020; Raguindin et al., 2020). What is more, the studies conducted by Aldabas et al. (2020) and Tan et al. (2019) had already suggested that teachers appear to have a low level of confidence about their ability to manage students' behavioral problems, and this is consistent with the results of the current research. On the other hand, this result appears to be in contrast to the results of older studies selected, like the study conducted by De Boer et al. (2011), from which it emerged a low level of self-efficacy of the teachers involved, with a negative effect on their attitude, therefore on their disposition to implement IE in their teaching.

Regarding the second aim of the study, the respondents suggested that the key factors to improve their sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices (therefore, to higher the probability of the implementation of inclusive practices) may be to have at their disposal more adapted/adaptable learning material, to be more trained on the matter (either attending courses or reading books), to improve the ability to collaborate among professionals or with the families, to have more time to dedicate to the preparation of lessons. These findings appear to be consistent with those of Cullen et al. (2010), who found that teachers tend to have reservations towards IE, especially due to two fundamental ideas: that the inclusion of SEN students in regular classes requires too much work for teachers, and that it requires special skills that general educators do not possess.

The fact that the teachers involved in the current study suggested that to improve their sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices they need more teaching material, more time to plan lessons, more preparation about SEN students, the help of other teachers during their classes, seems to suggest that they also think that the inclusion of pupils with SEN in regular schools requires a lot of time and special skills.

Concerning the third aim of the study, it has been decided to explore whether there appears to be a correlation between the participants' perception of self-efficacy and their age, their years of experience, the level of school where they were employed at the

time of the research, and whether they had ever participated in a teacher training on IE or not. For this purpose, the aforementioned variables have been correlated to the variable “final score”. The variable age does not seem to be correlated to the participants’ sense of self-efficacy, and this appear to be consistent with the findings of Avramidis et al. (2002), who claimed that demographic teacher-related variables should not be considered as good predictors of the probability that teachers’ implement inclusive practices in their teaching.

In addition, the author suggested that teachers’ level of preparedness may have an important role, and in agreement with this assumption, despite the lack of statistical significance, the results of the current study seem to suggest that teachers that claimed to have participated in training courses on IE actually reached higher final scores. On the other hand, the results seem to suggest no correlation between final score and the participants’ years of experience. Lastly, the current study has brought to light that among the teachers involved in the sample, those who were working at primary schools at the time when the survey was conducted appear to have a lower sense of self-efficacy compared to that of their lower or upper secondary school colleagues. This result appears to contrast with what would be expected, since in Italy, training courses on IE are usually included compulsory in the curriculum of primary school student-teachers, while they are not compulsory for secondary school student-teachers. For this reason, it would be expected to find that primary school teachers to be more prepared on students with SEN, and therefore they would be expected to have a higher sense of self-efficacy than their secondary school counterparts, but the findings of the current study appear to be in contrast with this assumption. This may be due to the fact that self-efficacy refers to the ability to complete a task not only thanks to personal knowledge but also thanks to the available resources.

The limited size of the sample may be considered the greater limitation of the current study. In particular, it influenced negatively the possibility to explore the correlation between the demographic factors and the perception of self-efficacy of the respondents. Secondly, the survey conducted for the current study was aimed at measuring only teachers’ perception of self-efficacy for inclusive practices, while as highlighted in chapters 3 and 4, self-efficacy appears to be only one among other factors which have been proved to influence the probability that teachers actually implement IE in their teaching, as for example attitude towards IE. Additional studies combining the SEIET

scale with other instruments aimed at measuring either attitude or other personal factors would give the possibility to explore how they correlate between each other.

In addition, further investigations should explore more in depth in which fields or in which areas of tasks more teachers appear to feel weak, in order to reveal which areas teachers' preparation courses should target, in order to improve teachers' sense of self-efficacy.

On the other hand, it seems that the current study brought to light that even though they appear to be a minority, a lot of teachers still have a low or medium-low sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices and may therefore have a low probability of implementing IE in their teaching, since teachers' positive attitude towards IE and their high sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practices have been proved to be key predictors of the actual implementation of IE at school. Therefore, it appears that despite the great efforts made by the Italian government, as described in chapter 1 of the current thesis, to support the inclusion of pupils with disability in regular classes, a lot of work is still needed to help teachers realize the ambitious process of implementation of IE at school.

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RIASSUNTO DELL'ELABORATO IN ITALIANO

Il presente elaborato riguarda la creazione di uno strumento volto a misurare il senso di autoefficacia di insegnanti italiani di inglese riguardo pratiche didattiche inclusive.

Nel primo capitolo viene presentato il concetto di didattica inclusiva, che nasce in Italia attorno agli anni '70, quando le scuole speciali vengono chiuse e gli studenti con disabilità vengono inclusi nelle classi comuni. In seguito a questa decisione, si è reso necessario mettere in atto una serie di strategie volte a supportare la partecipazione dello studente con Bisogni Educativi Speciali (BES). Con questo fine, negli anni '90 viene introdotta la figura dell'insegnante di sostegno, e con essa la possibilità di creare Piani Educativi Individualizzati (PEI), documenti grazie ai quali gli insegnanti insieme all'insegnante di sostegno possono adattare gli obiettivi che pongono per i propri studenti, gli strumenti attraverso i quali la didattica si realizza, i contenuti che vengono proposti. In seguito, l'Italia insieme ad altri paesi ha preso parte alla Convenzione Europea delle Persone con Disabilità del 2006, nella quale si stabilisce il pieno diritto della persona con disabilità ad avere pari diritti di fronte alla legge. La convenzione aveva inoltre lo scopo di diffondere un nuovo modo di vedere la disabilità, promuovendo una visione della salute che si allontana dal modello biomedico per abbracciare quello bio-psico-sociale. In breve, mentre il modello biomedico propugna l'idea che le cause che sottostanno alle condizioni di malattia siano meramente biologiche, il modello bio-psico-sociale abbraccia una visione olistica della persona, ritenendo che le cause sottostanti alle condizioni di malattia possano essere non solo biologiche, ma anche psicologici e sociali. Da questo punto di vista la persona con disabilità smette di essere vista unicamente dal punto di vista della sua condizione, dalla quale deve essere curata, ma piuttosto delle sue abilità residue, che possono essere potenziate. Per questo motivo, in seguito alla convenzione gli specialisti che collaborano con gli insegnanti alla stesura di Piani Didattici Individualizzati, sono tenuti non più a fornire diagnosi di malattia, ma Profili di Funzionamento, ovvero strumenti attraverso i quali gli insegnanti possono individuare le abilità residue dello studente con disabilità per adattare l'insegnamento alle capacità dello studente e includerlo nella classe insieme al resto dei suoi pari.

In seguito, viene fornita una definizione di Didattica Inclusiva (DI) e vengono spiegati i mezzi attraverso i quali si realizza. Con DI si intende un approccio alla didattica

estremamente flessibile e malleabile, capace di andare incontro alle necessità di tutti gli studenti, in base alle loro diverse abilità, stili di apprendimento, a prescindere dalla presenza o meno di BES. I mezzi attraverso cui si concretizza sono la personalizzazione degli obiettivi di apprendimento, la personalizzazione dei mezzi attraverso cui l'apprendimento avviene, oppure la personalizzazione del contenuto proposto agli studenti. I principi sui quali si basa sono il presupposto che ogni studente dovrebbe avere pari opportunità di apprendere e il presupposto che ogni persona ha delle abilità che possono essere sviluppate, per cui ogni studente ha la possibilità di raggiungere degli obiettivi di apprendimento (Nota et al., 2015). Viene poi messo in luce il fatto che oltre alle strategie appena citate, vi sono alcune metodologie glottodidattiche che possono essere particolarmente d'aiuto per rendere la classe di inglese come lingua straniera una classe inclusiva. Più nello specifico, Daloiso (2014) suggerisce che l'insegnante di lingue può fornire materiale glottodidattico accessibile seguendo le linee guida fornite dalla Associazione Britannica per la Dislessia²⁰, che danno indicazioni riguardo ai font e ai layout più opportuni per rendere il testo scritto maggiormente accessibile a studenti con difficoltà di lettura. Inoltre, l'autore suggerisce che la chiave per promuovere l'elaborazione dell'input linguistico da parte dello studente è cercare di fornire lo stimolo attraverso più canali comunicativi contemporaneamente, per esempio fornendo la parola in via orale supportata da immagini o dalla parola scritta.

Successivamente, vengono indicate altre metodologie glottodidattiche che sono state dimostrate efficaci per promuovere un ambiente scolastico inclusivo, come le attività basate sul mutuo aiuto o l'apprendimento cooperativo. In conclusione, dati i numerosi strumenti a loro disposizione e il supporto legislativo di cui possono vantare, ci si aspetterebbe che gli insegnanti italiani siano a loro agio con la presenza di studenti con BES nelle loro classi comuni. A questo proposito, nel secondo capitolo del presente elaborato viene presentata una revisione di letteratura riguardo studi che sono stati condotti tra il 1998 e il 2021 per capire come si sentono gli insegnanti riguardo alla didattica inclusiva e alla presenza di studenti con BES nelle classi comuni. Inoltre, tali studi hanno in genere l'obiettivo di identificare quali fattori personali sembrano influenzare la probabilità che gli insegnanti adottino pratiche inclusive in classe, e come questi fattori sembrano interagire tra loro. La ricerca ha messo in luce che un alto grado di preparazione a proposito di DI sembra influenzare positivamente il senso di

²⁰ British Dyslexia Association.

autoefficacia degli insegnanti riguardo le pratiche inclusive, inteso come la loro convinzione di poter portare a termine le mansioni richieste dalla didattica inclusiva. A sua volta, un alto senso di autoefficacia pare aumenti la probabilità che gli insegnanti adottino pratiche inclusive nelle loro lezioni, nonché il loro atteggiamento riguardo le persone con disabilità e l'inclusione scolastica sembra. Un atteggiamento positivo (inteso come insieme di pensieri, sentimenti e intenzioni positive) riguardo la DI e un alto senso di autoefficacia riguardo le pratiche inclusive sembrano insieme aumentare la probabilità che gli insegnanti decidano di mettere effettivamente in pratica misure per favorire l'inclusione di tutti gli studenti all'interno della classe.

Per trarre queste conclusioni, numerosi strumenti sono stati creati con l'obiettivo di misurare o l'atteggiamento o il senso di autoefficacia degli insegnanti, per poi vedere come questi due fattori possono influenzarsi a vicenda, oppure stabilire se vi sono altri fattori personali che li influenzano. La letteratura selezionata per il presente studio ha messo in luce che ogni strumento volto a misurare il senso di autoefficacia dovrebbe essere riferito ad una specifica materia (inglese come lingua straniera), uno specifico contesto (la classe inclusiva) e dovrebbe essere orientato su compiti da portare a termine. In questo contesto si inserisce il presente studio, per il quale è stata creato uno strumento volto a misurare il senso di autoefficacia degli insegnanti di inglese in Italia riguardo le pratiche inclusive, ovvero il questionario SEIET²¹.

Il metodo di sviluppo e la struttura del questionario sono descritti nel capitolo 3 del presente elaborato.

Innanzitutto, il questionario SEIET è stato creato con tre scopi:

1. Misurare il senso di autoefficacia degli insegnanti del campione, composto da insegnanti di inglese in Italia;
2. Dare l'opportunità agli insegnanti del campione di dare suggerimenti riguardo a cosa pensano che potrebbe essere utile per migliorare il loro senso di autoefficacia;
3. Esplorare la possibilità di una correlazione tra senso di autoefficacia e alcuni altri fattori personali.

Per questo motivo, il questionario è stato strutturato in tre sezioni: la prima sezione volta a raccogliere anonimamente informazioni demografiche riguardo i partecipanti; la

²¹ Self-Efficacy in Inclusive English Teaching.

seconda sezione volta a misurare il loro senso di autoefficacia; la terza sezione volta a raccogliere suggerimenti per il futuro.

La sezione numero due è quella centrale e più corposa del questionario, che contiene in tutto 23 voci che descrivono compiti che gli insegnanti di inglese dovrebbero essere in grado di portare a termine per poter rendere la propria lezione di inglese una lezione inclusiva. I 23 compiti o mansioni sono stati pensati sulla base delle pratiche inclusive descritte nel capitolo 1 del presente elaborato, ma anche sulla base dell'esperienza dell'autrice come insegnante di inglese. Ad ogni voce, i partecipanti dovevano dichiarare quanto, in una scala da 1 a 4, si sentivano in grado di portare a termine i compiti proposti, considerando non solo le loro abilità ma anche le risorse che avevano a disposizione. Le voci possono essere divise in 5 gruppi, in base al tipo di mansione descritta:

1. Mansioni che riguardano la gestione dell'ambiente di apprendimento;
2. Mansioni che riguardano la personalizzazione dei mezzi attraverso cui la didattica si realizza;
3. Mansioni che riguardano la personalizzazione degli obiettivi previsti per gli studenti;
4. Mansioni che riguardano la personalizzazione dei contenuti delle lezioni;
5. Mansioni che riguardano la capacità di collaborare con altri professionisti.

Il questionario è stato sviluppato online ed è stato inviato ai partecipanti tramite link tra marzo e aprile del 2023, ed ha coinvolto un campione di 105 insegnanti di inglese, provenienti dalla scuola primaria o secondaria di primo o secondo grado, per lo più donne.

Al momento in cui è stato condotto lo studio, i partecipanti avevano un'età media di circa 42 anni; quasi il 23% di loro ha dichiarato di non aver mai partecipato a un corso sulla didattica inclusiva, mentre quasi tutti hanno dichiarato di aver avuto esperienze lavorative con studenti con BES.

Per quanto riguarda il primo scopo dello studio, la rilevazione del senso di autoefficacia dei partecipanti, i risultati suggeriscono un senso di autoefficacia medio-alto, dato che il punteggio medio è 68.1 (deviazione standard \pm 11.5). Per quanto riguarda il secondo scopo dello studio, i partecipanti hanno suggerito che migliorare il loro senso di autoefficacia avrebbero bisogno di più materiale adattato e adattabile disponibile, ricevere più formazione riguardo studenti con BES e la didattica inclusiva, migliorare la collaborazione tra professionisti e con le famiglie degli studenti. Per quanto riguarda il

terzo scopo dello studio, i fattori per i quali si è provato a cercare una correlazione con il senso di autoefficacia sono: l'età, gli anni di esperienza, il livello di scuola nel quale i partecipanti erano impiegati al tempo dello studio, il fatto che abbiano ricevuto formazione riguardo alla didattica inclusiva. A questo scopo le variabili sono state correlate con la variabile "punteggio finale". L'analisi ha rilevato che non sembrano esserci correlazioni tra il punteggio finale e l'età o gli anni di esperienza dei partecipanti. D'altro canto, i risultati del presente studio sembrano suggerire una correlazione tra l'aver partecipato a corsi di formazione riguardo la didattica inclusiva o alunni BES e un più elevato senso di autoefficacia. In ogni caso, questo risultato sembrerebbe statisticamente non significativo, anche se ciò potrebbe essere dovuto alla scarsa numerosità del campione. Contrariamente, i risultati del presente studio sembrano suggerire che gli insegnanti che al tempo del sondaggio insegnavano presso scuole primarie hanno un senso di autoefficacia riguardo le pratiche inclusive più basso rispetto ai loro colleghi di scuola secondaria, e questo risultato sembra essere statisticamente significativo, anche se i risultati sono influenzati dalla scarsa numerosità del campione, che è il limite principale del presente studio. Inoltre, il presente studio è stato condotto considerando solo il senso di autoefficacia e alcuni fattori demografici, mentre ulteriori analisi potrebbero essere condotte combinando il questionario SEIET con altri strumenti volti a rilevare altri fattori personali, come per esempio l'atteggiamento, per studiare come possono influenzare il senso di autoefficacia degli insegnanti.

Il presente elaborato ha dunque portato alla luce che nonostante gli studenti con disabilità abbiano pieno diritto di fronte alla legge italiana di partecipare alle classi comuni, gli insegnanti hanno ancora bisogno di ulteriore supporto per riuscire a realizzare l'ambizioso progetto di una didattica inclusiva per tutti. Per quanto riguarda gli insegnanti che hanno partecipato allo studio, molti di loro ancora non si sentono in grado di garantire l'inclusione totale degli studenti con BES, o comunque non hanno ricevuto una formazione adeguata a garantirla.

APPENDIX A – THE SELF-EFFICACY IN INCLUSIVE ENGLISH TEACHING SCALE

Prima sezione: dati personali.

1. In quale genere ti identifichi?
 - Maschio
 - Femmina
 - altro
2. Quanti anni hai? _____
3. Ada quanti anni insegni a scuola? _____
4. Livello di studi:
 - Diploma
 - Laurea di primo livello
 - Laurea di secondo livello
 - Dottorato di ricerca
 - Master di primo livello
 - Master di secondo livello
 - Altro (specificare)
5. Hai conseguito il tuo titolo di studi più alto:
 - Negli ultimi 5 anni
 - Tra i 10 e i 5 anni fa
 - Più di 10 anni fa
6. A quali livelli di istruzione hai lavorato?
 - Scuola primaria
 - Scuola secondaria di primo grado
 - Scuola secondaria di secondo grado
7. Attualmente lavori:
 - Scuola primaria
 - Scuola secondaria di primo grado
 - Scuola secondaria di secondo grado
 - Attualmente non lavoro
8. Hai mai partecipato ad un corso sulla didattica inclusiva?

9. Se sì, era un corso:

- Master universitario
- Corsi di aggiornamento per insegnanti
- Corso universitario durante il tuo percorso di studi
- Altro (specificare)

10. Il corso riguardava:

- La didattica inclusiva in generale
- Metodologie glottodidattiche inclusive
- Interventi riguardo studenti con specifiche disabilità o Bisogni Educativi Speciali (BES)

11. Hai mai lavorato con studenti con bisogni educativi speciali (accertati o presunti)?

- Sì
- No
- Non lo so

12. Se sì, con quali di queste disabilità ti è capitato di lavorare in classe come insegnante di lingua?

- Disabilità fisica lieve
- Disabilità fisica grave
- Disabilità cognitiva lieve
- Disabilità cognitiva grave
- Disturbo nello spettro dell'autismo lieve
- Disturbo nello spettro dell'autismo grave
- ADHD
- Disturbo specifico dell'apprendimento
- Cecità o sordità
- Disturbo del linguaggio
- Altro

13. Hai mai avuto contatti con persone con disabilità (accertate o presunte) al di fuori del contesto scolastico? (amicizie, famiglia...)

- Sì
- No

14. Se sì, con quali tipi di disabilità ti è capitato di entrare in contatto?

- Disabilità fisica lieve
- Disabilità fisica grave
- Disabilità cognitiva lieve
- Disabilità cognitiva grave
- Disturbo nello spettro dell'autismo lieve
- Disturbo nello spettro dell'autismo grave
- ADHD
- Disturbo specifico dell'apprendimento
- Cecità o sordità
- Disturbo del linguaggio
- altro

Seconda sezione: senso di autoefficacia.

Nelle seguenti affermazioni, indica quanto ti senti in grado di portare a termine i seguenti compiti in una scala da 1 a 4, considerando non solo il tuo grado di conoscenze personali sull'argomento, ma anche gli strumenti che hai a tua disposizione e il supporto che ti fornisce l'istituzione per cui lavori. Se insegni o hai insegnato altre materie oltre all'inglese, mentre leggi questi compiti cerca di pensare alla tua esperienza come insegnante di inglese come lingua straniera.

1	Stimolare gli studenti a integrare la lingua inglese nella loro vita quotidiana.	1	2	3	4
2	Organizzare l'ambiente della classe in base alle necessità degli studenti	1	2	3	4
3	Instaurare in classe un ambiente che garantisca le condizioni ottimali di lavoro per tutti gli studenti.	1	2	3	4
4	Favorire l'interazione tra tutti gli studenti, agevolando l'instaurazione di un clima di inclusione scolastica.	1	2	3	4
5	Fornire un numero adeguato di pause per favorire l'attenzione degli studenti, motivandoli e coinvolgendoli allo stesso tempo a partecipare attivamente alla lezione di lingua inglese.	1	2	3	4

6	Individuare e quindi prevenire comportamenti disadattivi. (es. reazioni emotive eccessive).	1	2	3	4
7	Individuare la strategia (o le parole) più adatta per aiutare gli studenti nei momenti di frustrazione.	1	2	3	4
8	Progettare attività di cooperative learning che permettano la partecipazione di tutti gli studenti con le loro differenti abilità o attitudini.	1	2	3	4
9	Suggerire e/o fornire strumenti compensativi per il supporto dell'apprendimento del processo di letto-scrittura.	1	2	3	4
10	Suggerire e/o adottare strategie per il potenziamento dell'abilità di problem solving.	1	2	3	4
11	Fornire la spiegazione attraverso canali di comunicazione differenziati in base alle necessità degli studenti (supporti visivi e/o uditivi, tattili...)	1	2	3	4
12	Suggerire e/o fornire strumenti tecnologici di supporto all'apprendimento della lingua inglese per far fronte alle necessità degli studenti.	1	2	3	4
13	Individuare le situazioni che richiedono di dispensare gli studenti da alcuni compiti, in base alle loro capacità.	1	2	3	4
14	Valutare i progressi degli studenti nell'apprendimento dei processi di letto-scrittura della lingua inglese.	1	2	3	4
15	Prevedere obiettivi personalizzati in base alle capacità degli studenti.	1	2	3	4
16	Creare un piano didattico personalizzato per la lingua inglese (PDP)	1	2	3	4
17	Fornire e/o reperire materiale semplificato tarato sulle capacità di letto-scrittura in lingua inglese degli studenti.	1	2	3	4
18	Adattare o creare materiale scritto che sia ad alta leggibilità.	1	2	3	4
19	Adattare o creare materiale per l'apprendimento della lingua inglese graficamente coinvolgente e che favorisca una finestra attentiva più lunga possibile.	1	2	3	4
20	Progettare attività adattabili alle necessità individuali degli studenti.	1	2	3	4

21	Insegnare a (o fornire gli strumenti per apprendere a) comunicare in lingua inglese utilizzando tecniche di comunicazione alternative alla lingua orale o scritta (es. CAA, lingua dei segni, braille...)	1	2	3	4
22	Collaborare con gli altri insegnanti per la stesura di un piano didattico personalizzato (PEI) che coinvolga anche l'insegnamento della lingua inglese.	1	2	3	4
23	Collaborare con professionisti dell'area sanitaria per l'individuazione delle misure adeguate da attuare per favorire l'apprendimento della lingua inglese in base alle capacità e necessità degli studenti.	1	2	3	4

Terza sezione: indicazioni per il futuro.

Se non ti sei dichiarato del tutto in grado di affrontare tutte le situazioni proposte, che cosa pensi potrebbe servirti per riuscirci?

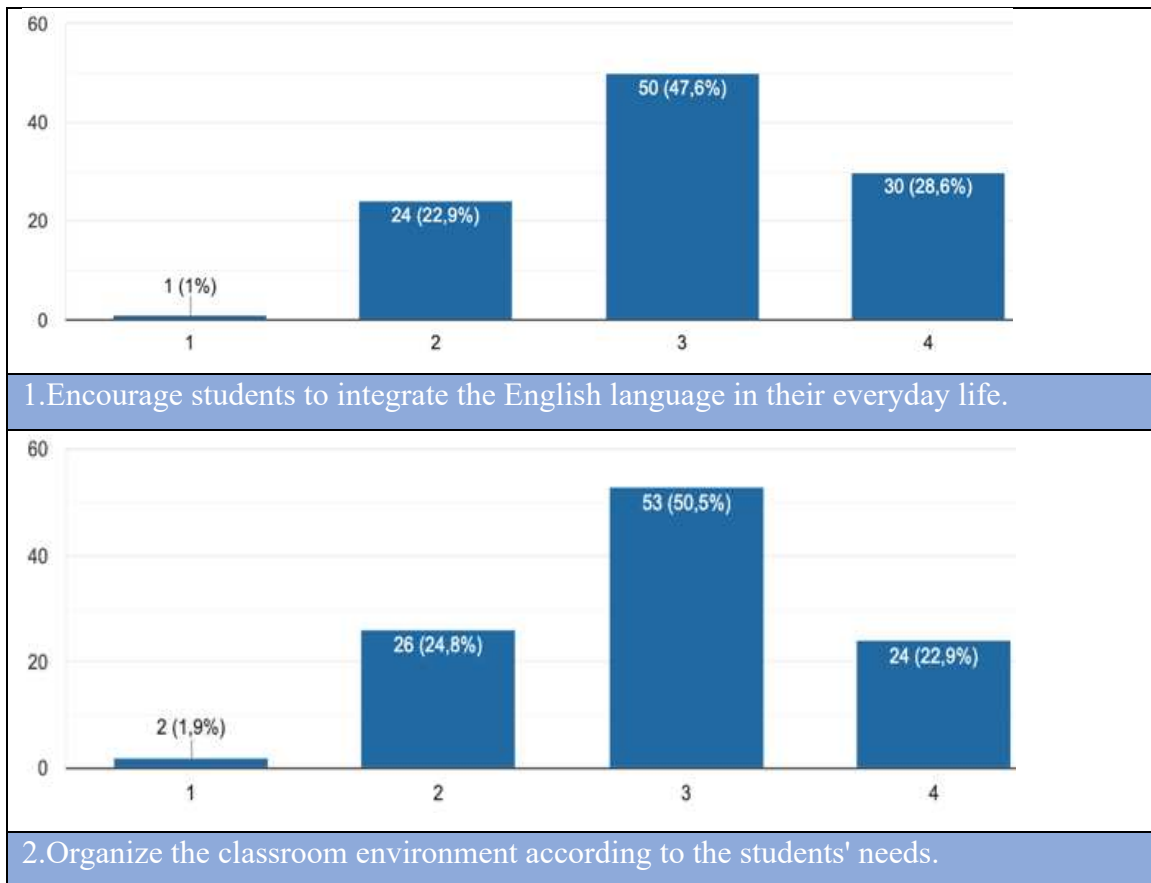
Oppure, se ti sei dichiarato di saper affrontare tutte le situazioni proposte, che cosa suggeriresti agli altri utenti per sentirsi di poterci riuscire?

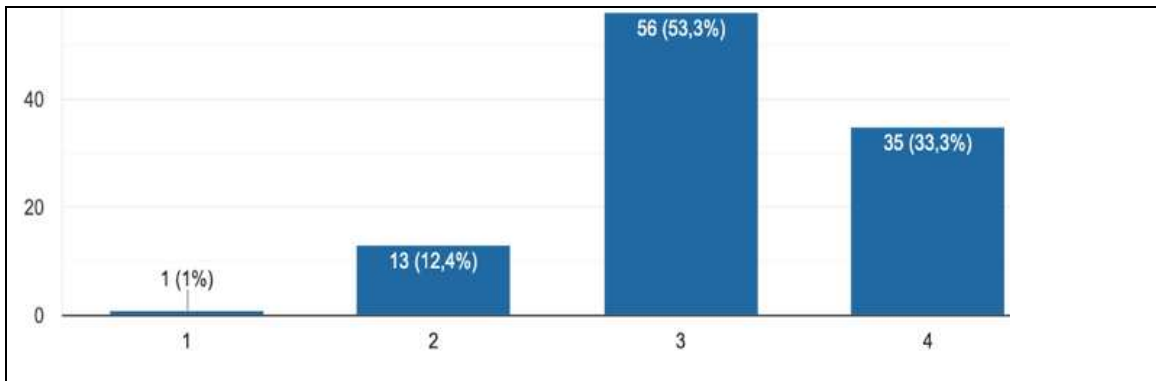
- Seguire corsi su studenti con BES/Disabilità/didattica inclusiva
- Leggere libri su studenti con BES/disabilità/didattica inclusiva
- Avere altri insegnanti in compresenza durante le ore di lezione (di sostegno o in potenziamento alla didattica)
- Avere a disposizione materiale scolastico più vario/ materiale adattato da fornire agli studenti con BES/disabilità
- Avere meno ore frontali di didattica e più tempo a disposizione per programmare le lezioni e reperire materiale

Altro (specificare).

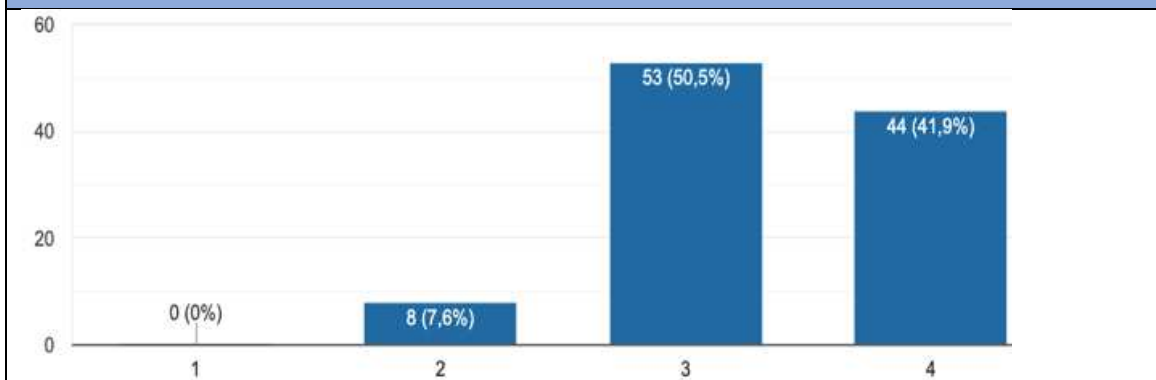
APPENDIX B – HISTOGRAMS OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF RESULTS

The current appendix shows the results of the answers to each item of the questionnaire. The histograms (one for each item of the survey) represent the distribution of the answers on the four-point scale offered (from 1=not at all able to complete the task to 4=completely sure to be able to complete the task). The *y* axis of the histograms represents the number of answers, while the *x* axis represents the four-point scale. Therefore, the columns of the histograms represent the number of people (and the percentage in brackets) that gave a certain score to that item.

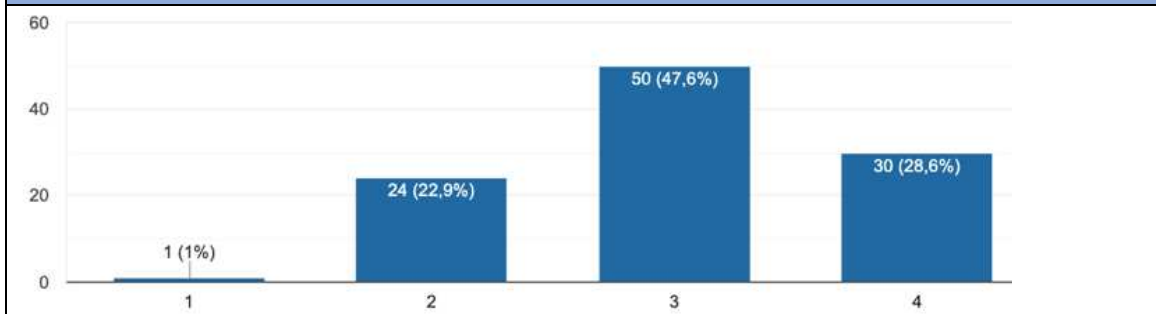




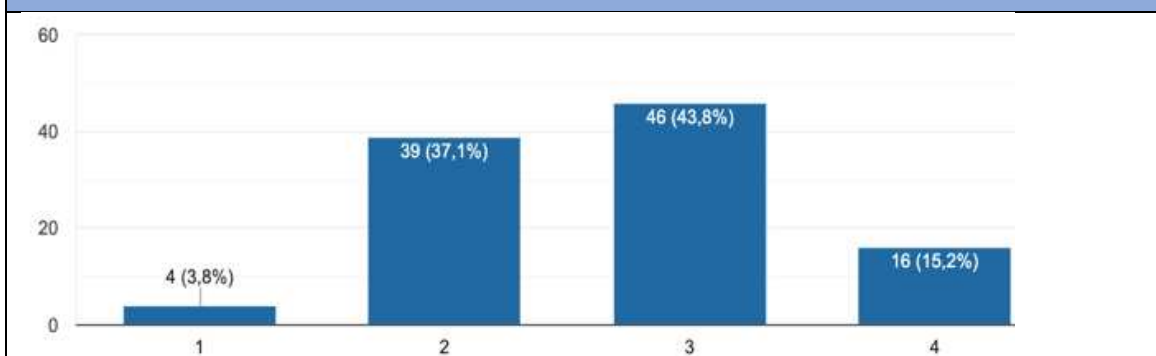
3.Establish an atmosphere that guarantees optimal learning conditions to all students.



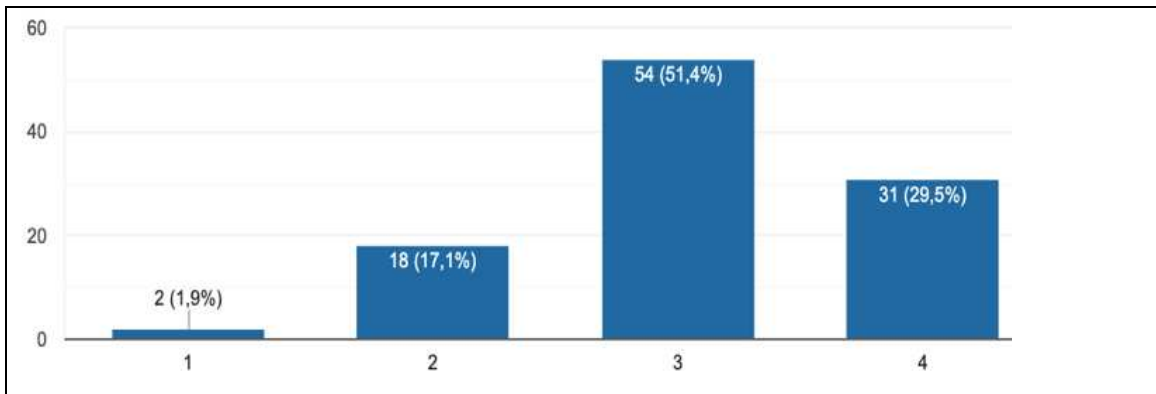
4.Encourage social interactions among all students, facilitating the creation of an inclusive environment.



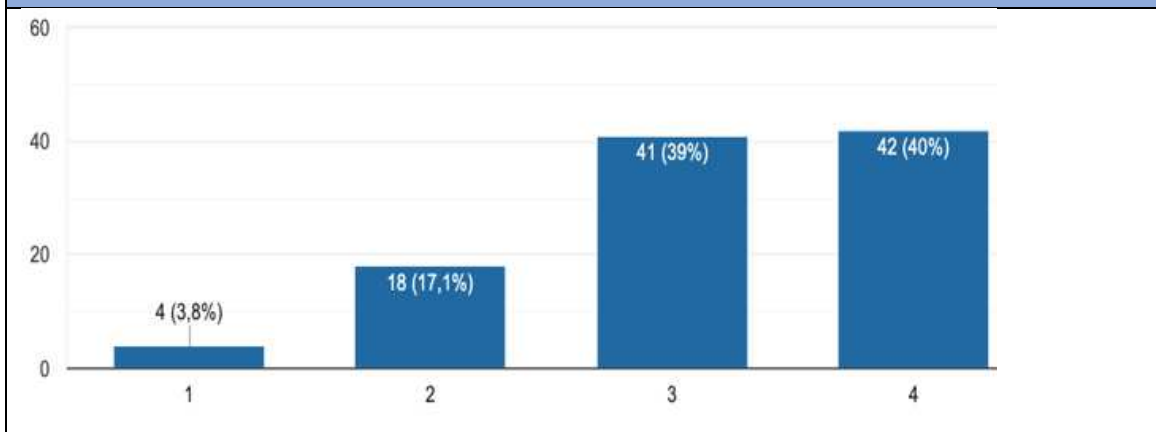
5.Guarantee and adequate number of pauses, encouraging all students to be focused on the lesson, pushing them to be actively involved in the lesson.



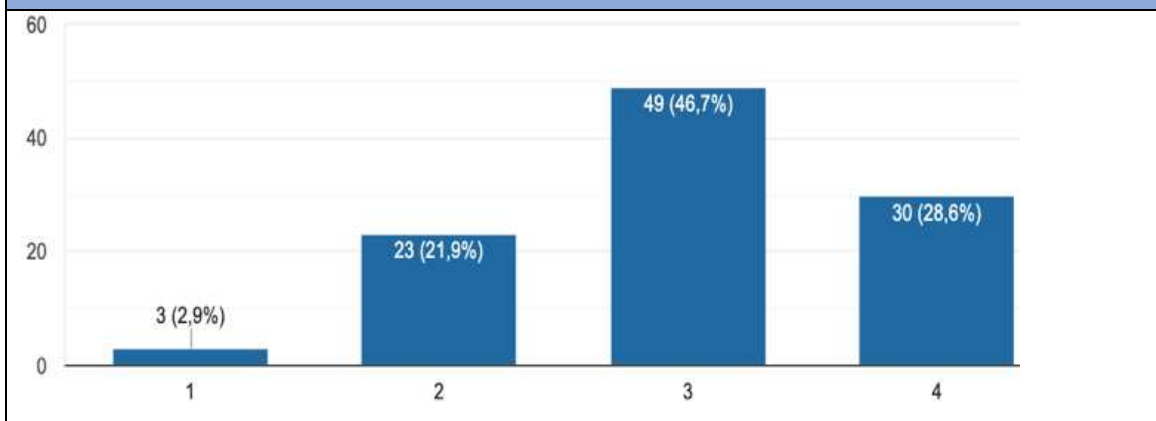
6.Foresee and prevent disruptive behaviors



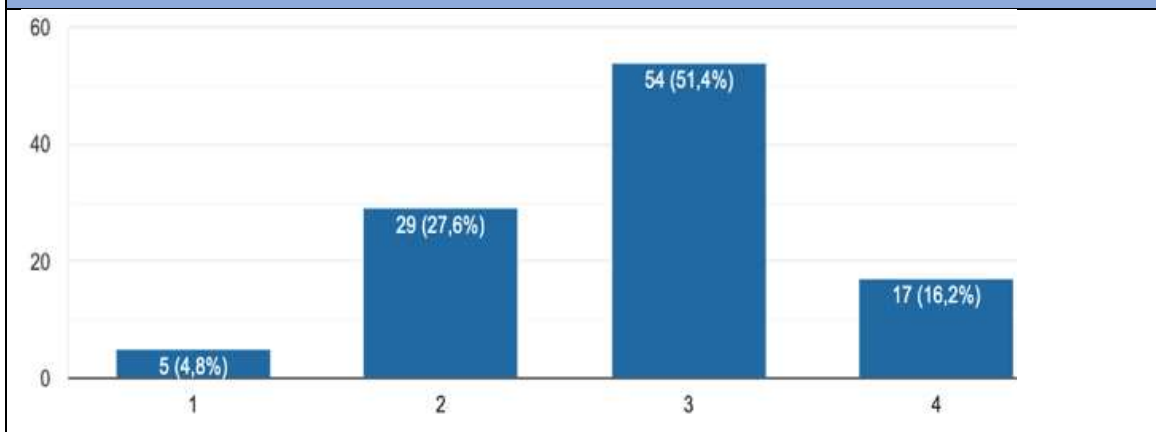
7. Identify the appropriate strategy to guide students coping with frustration and anger



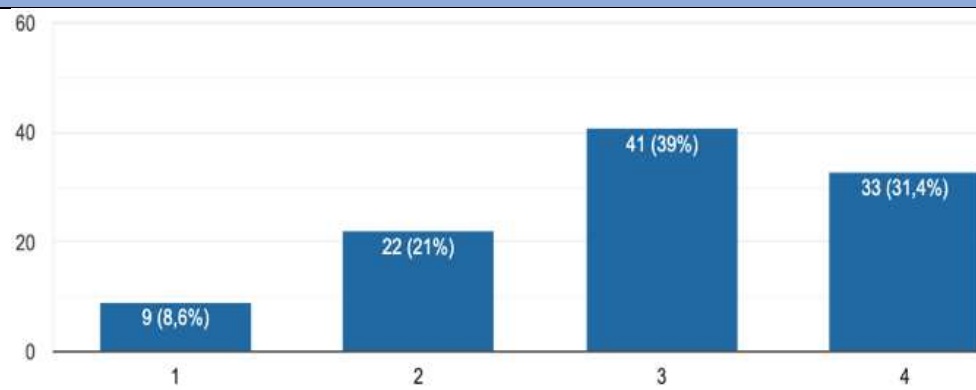
8. Design cooperative learning activities, granting the active participation of all students



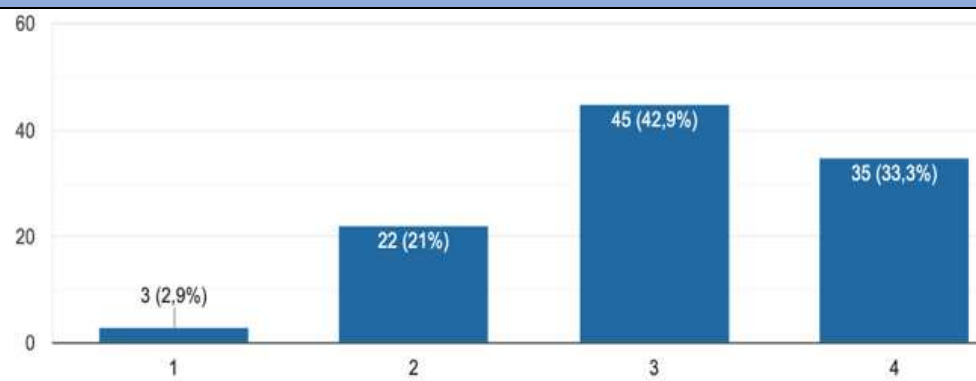
9. Suggest instruments or tools to support learning of reading and writing.



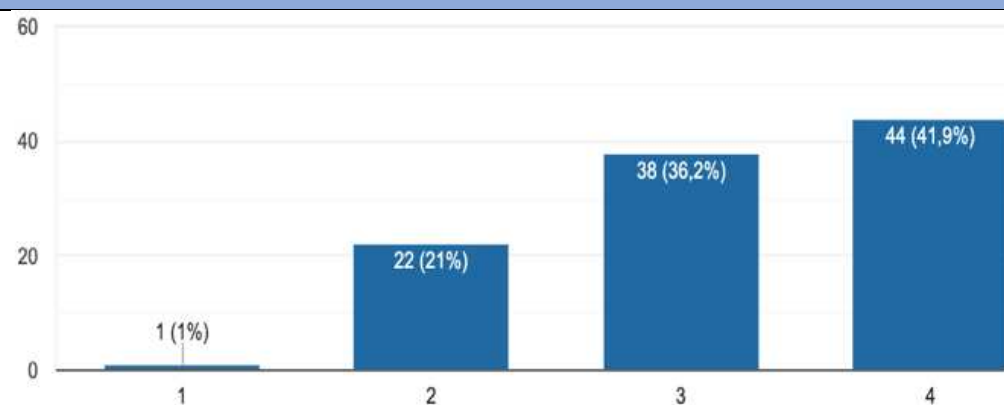
10. Identify strategies or suggest instruments to enhance the ability to solve problems



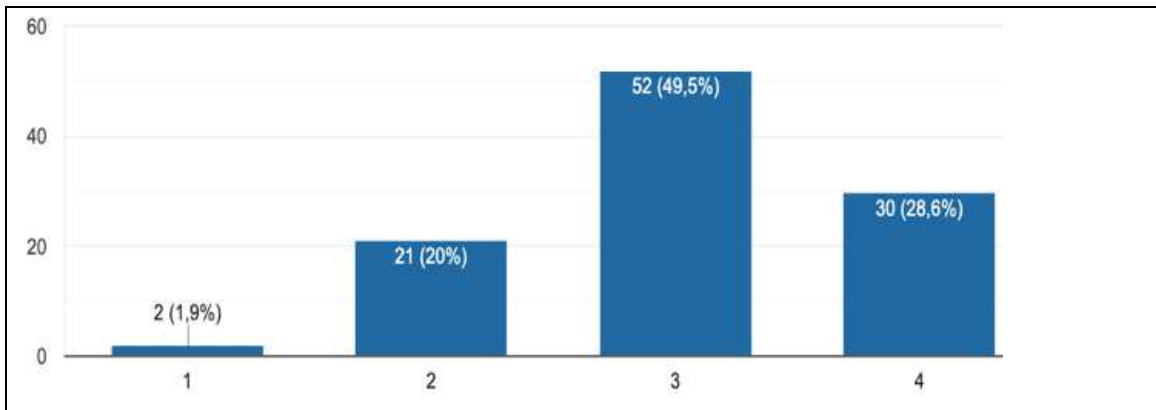
11. Provide the explanation through different channels, also thanks to differentiated tools such as visual, auditive, tactile aids.



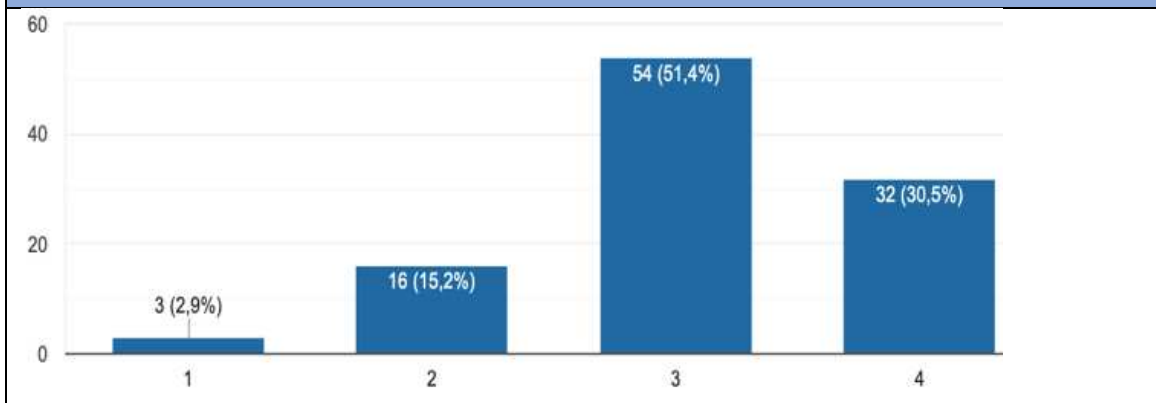
12. Suggest or provide technological tools to support the EFL learning process.



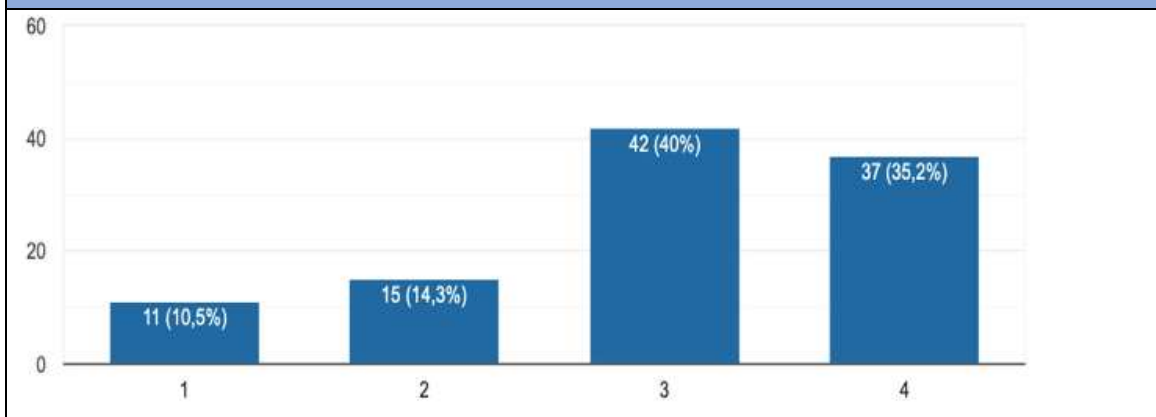
13. Understand the situations that require to relieve students from certain activities, according to their abilities.



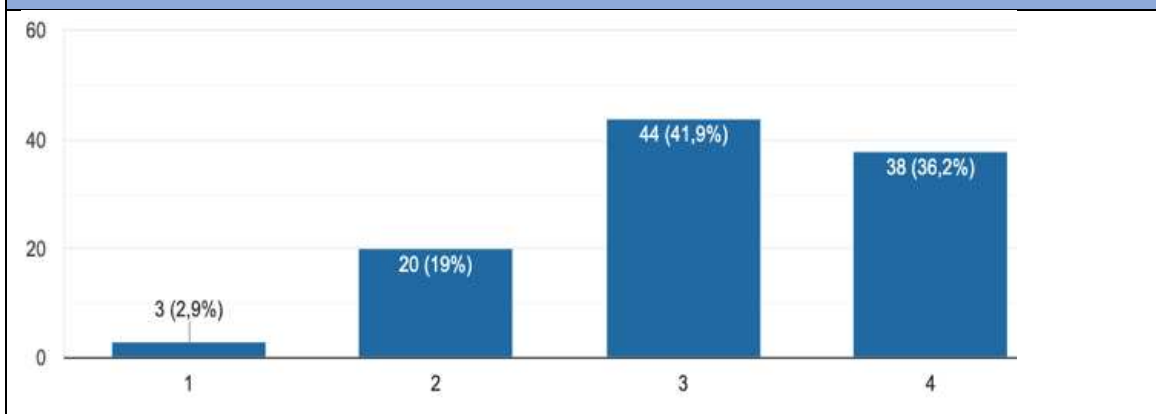
14. Assess students' progresses on EFL writing and reading skills.



15. Set customized goals/objectives according to students' abilities.

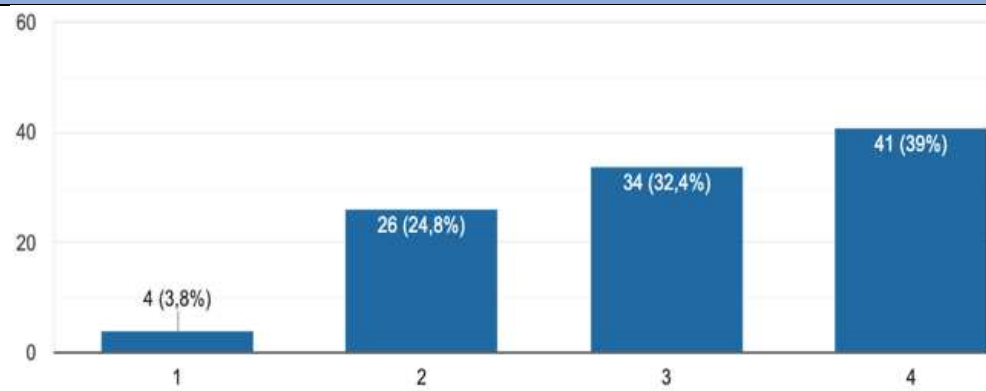


16. Design an individualized educational program for EFL learning. (PDP)

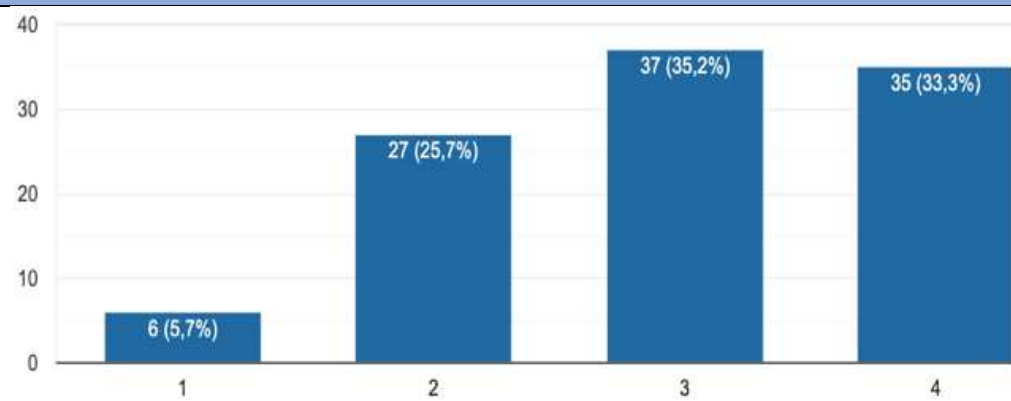


17. Provide or find simplified material based on students' English writing and reading

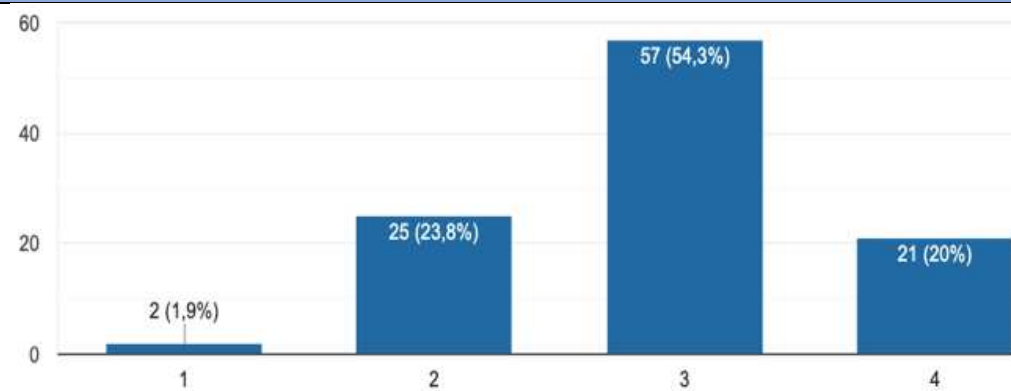
skills.



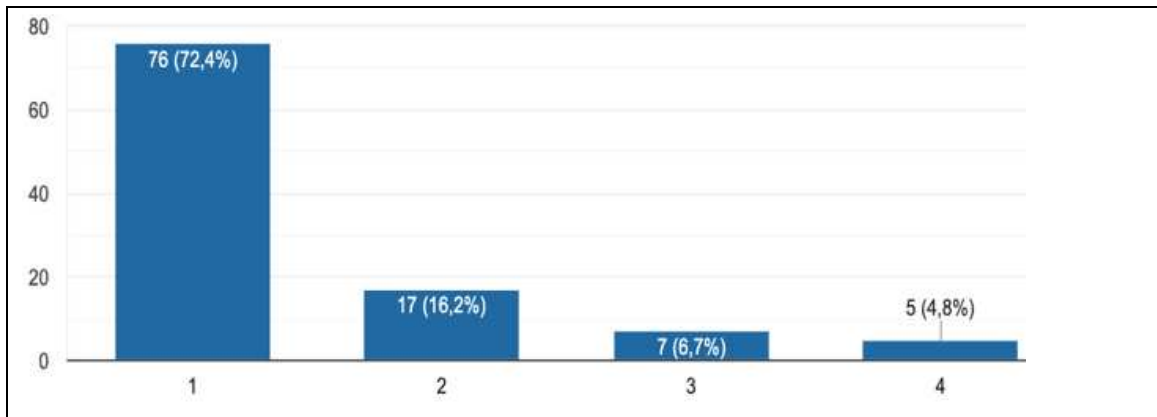
18.Adapt or create highly readable written material.



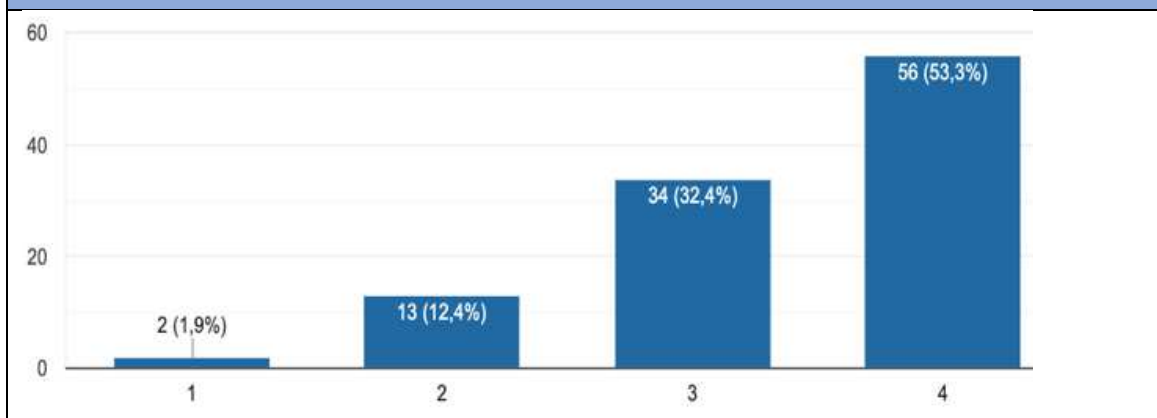
19.Adapt or create graphically engaging learning material, promoting longer attention spans



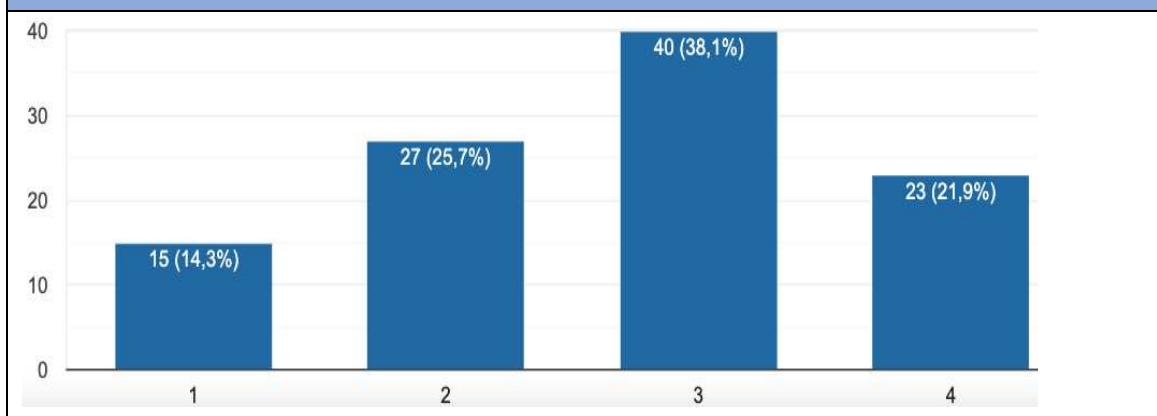
20.Design activities that are adaptable to the students' individual needs.



21. Teach how to (or suggest instruments to learn how to) communicate in English with alternative communicative techniques (AAC, sign language, Braille).



22. Work together with the other teachers in order to design an IEP which involves EFL teaching.



23. Work together with health professionals to define the best instruments and methodologies to promote EFL learning, based on the students' abilities and needs

